

Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)

General Meeting Summary 8/21/2024, via Microsoft Teams only

MEETING BRIEF

- Meeting facilitator: Michael Pickard
- Presentation by Dr. Eric Knapp, USFS, Pacific Southwest Research Station, *Severity of the Antelope Fire; Brodie et al. 2024, Forest thinning and prescribed burning treatments reduce wildfire severity and buffer the impacts of severe fire weather*
- Roundtable
- ACCG Field trip update
- July 2024 SCALE Meeting ACCG update
- MAC Phase 1 and Phase 2 update
- Work Group updates

ACTION ITEMS

Actions	Responsible Parties
Post agenda and last month's general meeting summary as final to the website.	Layhee, Sarkis
Continue to prepare for the ACCG field trip in September.	Layhee, Amador RD staff
Post Dr. Knapp's presentation recording to ACCG website.	Layhee

MEETING OPENING/HOUSEKEEPING

Draft agenda and last month's meeting summary approved without modification. Administrator will post the final versions to the ACCG website.

GUEST PRESENTATION

Presentation by Dr. Eric Knapp, USFS, Pacific Southwest Research Station, *Severity of the Antelope Fire; Brodie et al. 2024, Forest thinning and prescribed burning treatments reduce wildfire severity and buffer the impacts of severe fire weather.*

Go to the ACCG website to view Dr. Knapp's presentation: <https://acconsensus.org/resources/videos/>

Link to Brodie, Knapp et al. 2024 publication: <https://acconsensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/03-Brodie-Knapp-et-al.-2024.pdf>

Key presentation discussion topics:

- Mastication & mulching vs. thinning & Rx fire treatments on fire behavior and intensity:
Mastication paired with small tree thinning and mulching the mastication into the soil and

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whether this is a surrogate to the thin and Rx burn scenario, by making those ground fuels unavailable to fire. Dr. Knapp's response was that no, because those fuels are still available to fire. Slows the rate of spread, but intensity of fire is still relatively high. Mastication is most effective when followed up with Rx fire. However, with that said mastication does improve accessibility and safety for firefighters. Clarification on whether mulching after mastication is an improvement on mastication alone. Dr. Knapp's response was that mulching into soil may speed up decomposition of fuels, but may not reduce the intensity of fire

- Shrub response & effects on fire intensity/behavior: It was noted the interesting results about shrubs suppressing the fire in the thin, Rx fire units. Dr. Knapp added that often it takes wind (high fire conditions) to push a fire through shrubs (e.g., ceanothus), but can reduce fire intensity in moderate fire conditions. Essentially shrubs have a nuanced effect on fires.
- Information on fire suppression activities during the fire and possible impacts to study results: Later the study team did learn that a bulldozer line was put in on the eastern side of the project area.
- Question about how wide fuel breaks should be: Dr. Knapp responded that fire intensity suppression effectiveness is determined by a lot of variables (e.g., fire conditions, topography). For instance in extreme fire conditions, embers can fly right over an entire fuelbreak.
- Fuel treatment outcomes national study: A national study looking at fuel treatment outcomes was mentioned, including changing fire severity, altering firefighter response, infrastructure effects. Also noted that the hope would be that studies like Dr. Knapp's is informing fire behavior models, in the sense of treating a certain area can be effective at reducing fire risk on a larger area than the treatment footprint. to a larger are than just those areas treated. Dr. Knapp confirmed that the empirical data from these field-based studies are routinely provided to modelers and help calibrate models.
- Edge effect: question was asked about where the plots were placed within the treatment units and the concern that edge effect might affect your numbers if your plot was near the edge. Dr. Knapp clarified that these were 100-acre units and plots were located in the center of the units.
- Canopy bulk density: treatments that didn't reduce canopy bulk density below threshold had the largest canopy consumption during the fire, that is validation that canopy bulk density is a good predictor variable and shows that modeling did point to something that made a difference. Follow up question about whether one could directly compare percent canopy cover and canopy bulk density. Dr. Knapp pointed out that canopy bulk density is a volume measurement whereas percent canopy cover is not, and that there is probably a relationship there between the two, but that you can't directly compare canopy bulk density and percent canopy cover.
- Tuolumne-Stanislaus Experimental Forest update: field crew out there all summer. Prescribed fire planned for in the variable density thinning units this fall. Noted that up to this point they don't have a lot of data on fire regime (multiple cycles of prescribed burning), mentioned a pyrosilviculture initiative. Noted that another study is happening with Sara Bisbing, which is an adaptive management experiment of common garden plots, including giant sequoias, all planted in 2021. In the context of adapting to climate change, these common garden plots are set up to address the question of where should the next trees come from for planting (e.g., species, seed zones). Common gardens will not be part of the prescribed burn this fall.

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ROUNDTABLE

- Michael Pickard - state is still going through a budget crisis. SNC is still not getting any pots of money through general funds. So as far as SNC grants go, it seems to be highly dependent on Prop 4 (Climate bond) on the November ballot. If that passes, SNC and other resource agencies will be getting a considerable pot of funding for 2025.
- Richard – board authorized agreements with 3 companies for 4 contracts for Phase 1 Arbor and Birch, for mastication and hand work, 4,700 acres. Work possibly to start later this summer. Phase 1 Highway 88 project still underway, 500 acres completed so far. In November, UMRWA’s WCB grant application for additional Phase 1 implementation and Phase 2 planning, will be considered. However, WCB requested UMRWA to cut the scope down to about 1,500 acres because of state budget crisis. Also, CAL FRAME pilot project that UMRWA is involved in for the state to assist in the effectiveness of biomass removal, to get this to scale, the state will need to assist financially, can report back at the October general meeting.
- Megan Layhee- Sitting in on call with Amador FSC/RCD about spatial data organization as representative of ACCG/SLAWG to answer any questions and see if we can support them in their efforts.
- Steve Brink- FS national program for biomass removal includes \$25M for this fiscal year. \$20M left over for the future. Applications due for this year by Sept 5 and award announced in late October. Eligibility requirements- existing contracts, by agreement purchase piles from FS and apply for grant to be eligible for this grant. Link to program: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/forest-management/products/hazardous-fuels-transport-assist-grants>
- Amanda Watson- pre committee meeting for developing a county wide mapping, database program that can be used internally, but also for partners and the public. Also starting CWPP process, will be figuring out partners in Sept. for the CWPP development.
- Ray Cablayan- been on back-to-back fires the last couple of weeks, still in PL 5 nationally. Carinna is also on a fire and will most likely be back next week. Jason has also been out, Susan Beale is Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor. Beth Martinez is Acting Forest Sup on Tahoe NF currently.
- Kelsey- we are bringing back up our forest wide hazard tree project, at some point we will be coming out for an objection period. Not clear on dates for that yet.
- Chuck- Plumas corp and FS out on Little Indian valley, Indian valley including frog and toad surveys last week; Highway 88 projects ongoing. Also lots of staff on fire assignments. Acting Forest Supervisor, Amy Reid, should be on the forest by next week.
- Jim – 160 acres burned in North Grove in Big Trees Park. For fall, have West Moran units (100 acres) and South Grove burn planned. Indian Grinding Rock crew on fuels reduction (piles, pile burning) in the north section of park near Mitchell Mine. Stan Dodson asked Jim if Rim Road was still closed and noted that the last time he was out there the fuels work looked great. Jim confirmed the road was opened and fuels work completed.

ACCG SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP UPDATE

Briefly discussed that Megan Amador RD staff are continuing to plan out the September 10th ACCG field trip that will be on the Amador District to view projects that have received recent treatments and also

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areas right along the Caldor Fire footprint in order to have discussions about treatment specs, monitoring, lessons learned and other considerations for the MAC project Phase 2 planning effort.

SCALE MEETING UPDATE

Briefly discussed that Megan attended the Friday session of the SCALE meeting in Sacramento at the end of the month to provide the brief ACCG and UMRWA presentation update.

MAC PROJECT UPDATE

- Phase 1 Update: See Richard’s update above provided during the Roundtable.
- Phase 2 Update: official name change to the Mokelumne Amador Calaveras Forest Health and Resilience Project, MAC. The NOI is still in review at the Washington Office. And we are expecting approval from the WO in and publishing on Sept. 6th. Public scoping period to follow. Alternative development is currently underway. Presentation at the September ACCG general meeting. UMRWA executed a grant with SNC for Phase 2 planning for just over \$700K, also recently executed a grant with SNC through the RFFCP Round 3 bring on the FPP Monitoring Coordinator to develop the FPP Monitoring Strategy, funding to bring on the MAC Tribal Liaison and also to fund the ACCG Administrator for the next year to year and half. And As part of the UMRWA’s wildlife Conservation Board implementation grant for Phase 1 Cedar project mentioned earlier, we did ask for a portion of that for Phase 2 planning.

WORK GROUP UPDATES

- Admin work group met last on August 12th via Zoom. The group approved this month’s general meeting agenda and briefly discussed the upcoming ACCG field trip in September.
- The Planning work group met last on July 24th and used the bulk of the meeting to continue discussions on potential herbicide uses in the MAC project Phase 2.
- The Forest Plan Amendments Ad Hoc group met last in July. The group has rescheduled their August meeting, which will be next Thursday via Zoom to discuss the USFS Region direction on project-specific spotted owl-related forest plan amendments.
- The Monitoring Work Group did not meet in August. No update.

MEETING CLOSE

Next general meeting: September 18th hybrid via Zoom and in person at the Amador RD office in Hathaway Pines.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Count	Name	Affiliation
1	Megan Layhee	Acting ACCG Administrator, UMRWA
2	Eric Knapp	Guest presenter
3	Stan Dodson	CSERC
4	Amanda Watson	Amador RDC, FSC
5	Michael Pickard	SNC, volunteer meeting facilitator

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6	Rich Farrington	UMRWA Board, AWA
7	Tom Hofstra	CSERC
8	Chuck Loffland	USFS, ENF, Amador RD
9	Steve Brink	CFA
10	Sue Holper	private citizen, ACCG member
11	Kelsey Retich	USFS, STF, Calaveras RD (in-person)
12	Gavin Jones	USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
13	Marc Young	USFS, ENF
14	Ray Cablayan	USFS, STF, Calaveras RD
15	Helen Loffland	IBP
16	Richard Sykes	UMRWA
17	Jim Suero	CA State Parks, Big Trees
18	Aimee Lorincz	USFS, ENF
19	Kellin Brown	USFS, STF, Calaveras RD