

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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DRAFT SPECIAL MEETING NOTES February 25, 2014

Members Present: Larry Johnston, Mono Supervisors; Jon Regelbrugge, Deb Schweizer & Leeann Murphy, USFS/Inyo; Ryan Dermody, Caltrans; John Eastman & Sandra Moberly, Town of Mammoth Lakes; Doug Power & Dave Brillenz, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center; Deanna Dulen, Devils Postpile National Monument; Carl Benz, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service/Ventura (by phone)

Members Absent: Steve Nelson, BLM; Jeff Ulrich, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; Heidi Sickler, CDFW; Mike Gauthier, Yosemite National Park; Justin Nalder, Bridgeport Indian Colony; Chris Plakos, LADWP; Adora Saulque, Benton Paiutes

Staff Present: Scott Burns, Wendy Sugimura, Brent Calloway, C.D. Ritter

Guests Present: Wendi Grasseschi, Mammoth Times; Lisa Cutting, Mono Lake Committee; Danna Stroud, Sierra Nevada Conservancy; Ted Carleton, The Sheet; Kirk Stapp, District 5 supervisorial candidate

1. CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / INTRODUCTIONS: Chair Larry Johnston called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. and the pledge of allegiance was recited. All attendees introduced themselves.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT. None.

3. MEETING NOTES.

MOTION: Approve draft meeting notes from October 31, 2013. (Ayes: Regelbrugge/Eastman. Ayes: 4. Abstain due to absence: Johnston, Dermody.)

4. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE. Agency planning issues & pending projects

5. ORIGIN & DESTINATION STUDY: Ryan Dermody, Caltrans, presented a PowerPoint of results -- where people came from, where they were going. A 1979 study took license plate photos, and later sent questionnaires. However, an inadvertently revealed affair brought that to a halt. Zone maps for origin were designated, most (30%) from South Coast. Eastern Sierra destination > 60%. Main link for southland warehouses to Reno is US 395. Number of surveys conducted varied from study to study. RV counts continue to drop. Recreation as purpose = 61%. Survey time took less than a minute (original five-page surveys were deemed too long). Truckers were asked about commodities. Should Caltrans continue this study? Yes, important to know trends and to coordinate efforts for regional analysis.

6. INYO FOREST PLAN UPDATE: Debra Schweizer, USFS/Inyo, presented deadlines and issues. Forest Plan is big picture, not specific. Plan affects project-level work. Working under 2012 planning rule to streamline process to six to eight years. Big part is collaboration with communities, getting comments. Plan writing starts in April. It'll be a science-based plan with peer review. Planning Rule 2012 is new territory for INF. A joint EIS will be prepared, as forests share issues such as wilderness areas and wildlife. Eastside is separated out from western slopes, but there's room to share commonalities. Three separate plans for Inyo, Sierra, Sequoia forests, with Inyo Forest supervisor at the helm. Meeting Thursday in Bishop will focus on water. Scoping is coming up in April at beginning of NEPA process.

What makes a good comment? Provide suggestions, not just more of this or less of that. Example: demographics of visiting public are changing, so need more campsites. Many laws mandate how forest is managed. Most comments were on wild horses, but did not necessarily rise to top of concerns.

Leeann Murphy noted assessment phase was done in December, and information is being compiled from public workshop with 70+ folks. Determine desired conditions, and then how to attain them. Notice of Intent will be published in federal register April 10, followed by 30-day scoping period, and then write draft EIS by October. Comments about larger scheme are more helpful. Look at economic, environmental and social sustainability. Update or new plan? *Both. Some really good stuff came from 1988. Subtle difference in language in 2012 plan. New science, new issues on ground for need to change. Forest supervisors are still talking.*

Does existing plan have specific direction to communities, still working with them? *Yes. New plan is broader, integrated, not as site specific. Finish plan and then monitor to see if it's doing what it's supposed to do. Assess and revise as needed. Partnerships and collaboration are endemic.*

What will change the most? *Recreation is biggest (uses, machines, vehicles, facilities like campgrounds, etc.). Fire management is next biggest shift. Climate change also, but issue much larger than INF. Look at use patterns.*

7. GENERAL PLAN UPDATE: HOUSING ELEMENT: Brent Calloway, Mono County, presented a PowerPoint on the Housing Element, one of seven required elements of general plans. Updated every five years, it must be approved by Housing & Community Development (HCD). It can be controversial, and is the most-litigated component of general plans in California,

An annual, smaller subset survey emerged from 2010 Census, expanding designated places, better for measuring demographics. Don't preclude affordable housing by burdensome regulations, major environmental constraints. Parcel-level analysis shows land available. Format is changing from stand-alone document to fit better into web-based General Plan.

Stats showed 110-year population trend, decline of 200+. Mammoth Lakes' percentage of county population is > 60%. Impressive boom/bust trends have occurred. Only Alpine County compares with Mono in messing with HCD numbers - a house for almost every resident. Building permit data showed housing boom in early 2000s. Key regulatory factors have been reduced dramatically. Currently, 52 programs exist, two completed, most ongoing. Programs came from existing Area Plans being updated.

Land tenure: Land exchanges can go through Congressional route or district office, such as Pine Glade exchange, which has no parcel to exchange. Dave Brillenz: Look at withdrawal by public agencies; USFS does not have that capability. Other USFS housing tracts were considered, but ruled out.

Kirk Stapp: Where's money coming from if not assessed at affordable costs? *Financial barriers exist. Standardized federal rule for assessing property, cash match only 25%. Stapp: Still a monetary issue. Wendy Sugimura: Every potential exchange has its own circumstances; at Pine Glade, it's homeowners. Meets State requirement, but viability is unknown.*

Jon Regelbrugge explained that owners have permit for lot on forest land, but own cabin, which County assesses for taxes. Permittees pay fee for lot based on appraised value. Private ownership vs. permittees increases tax fees to County. USFS has authority to conduct exchanges for lands of comparable value into and out of public domain. Owners who want to acquire something they do not have now must pay for it at fair market value. Land designated for affordable housing would be appraised for that. INF must look at resort development. Cabin tracts were intended as recreational summer homes, not housing. Each tract is viewed individually. Someone has to offer money to support equal-value land exchange. Scott Burns: June Lake Area Plan had different policy in 1980s. When seasonal use became year round, many refurbished, expanded, maybe sold to second homeowners.

Inventory agency housing areas, and then consolidate services and land uses to free up land for housing adjacent to communities. Kirk Stapp: People are leaving Mammoth, as they can't afford to stay. Middle class has moved out and is not coming back, and renters are doubling up. Analyzed in Housing Element? *Current data don't show population loss. 2010 Census has errors on commuting. Stapp: Should Town and County collaborate on Housing Element? Town impacts County hugely with transit and population shift. Calloway cited Regional Housing Authority. Scott Burns: When times were good, impetus to provide housing existed and emphasis was regional.*

8. ENDANGERED/SENSITIVE SPECIES ISSUES: Carl Benz, USFWS, added nothing on amphibians. Sage grouse: No dates when economic analysis will be published. Critical habitat exclusions granted? Will try, but insufficient time to go through all. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is restoring private lands, doing conservation. Rangeland-quality is unresolved. Finding *whether it's warranted*. Collecting comments on threats, conservation efforts. Three peer reviews are sought to assure best science for ultimate analysis. USFWS is not allowed to indicate direction process is moving.

John Eastman heard that Long Valley population numbers actually increased to largest since mid-1950s. If population is doing really well, why lump it in with other areas? An act designed by Congress charges USFWS with listing certain entities. Able to list higher taxonomic level, look at subspecies. Look at mammals, birds, amphibians defined by genetic aspect, how isolated or connected. A distinct population is smallest grouping allowed. Long Valley population is doing well, but USFWS has no authority to exclude that part. Some population segments are not doing well at all.

Dave Brillenz asked about a central repository website for all species. *Unknown, will get it and send.* Wendy Sugimura suggested Center for Biological Diversity website. Concern with unsuitable GIS layer. Does it mean unoccupied? Actually includes some lek sites. Data available on unoccupied areas? *Communicated to consultants.*

Larry Johnston questioned county courthouse and community of Bridgeport as critical habitat. *Asphalt, lawns, etc. are not critical habitat.* Sugimura: Problem for private development, which needs documentation to not preclude future activities. *Mapping process is not to level of detail requested.* Johnston: Sophisticated GIS systems information should be no-brainer for large-scale errors. Important to Mono's 80% private lands. Digital 395 would not exist today [if listing had occurred]. If sage grouse is listed, remove obvious non-habitat areas. *Will convey to Reno office.*

Johnston described Sacramento hearing on amphibians as poorly run - two minutes/person for public comment was totally inadequate; extend at least to five minutes. He drove 10-hour round trip for two minutes, but also spoke two minutes on behalf of Town of Mammoth Lakes.

9. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS

A. LAND ADJUSTMENT SUBCOMMITTEE: Subcommittee did not meet.

B. BIOMASS FEASIBILITY STUDY: Larry Johnston thought biomass could avoid burn piles in future and be economically viable. Study will be posted after meeting March 3. Financial realities probably mean no Mammoth Mountain Ski Area submittal, as it's converting from propane-fired to wood-fired boilers. Consult with USFS/Inyo. Johnston thought if hearing costs were significantly lower, may be willing to do capital upgrades. Grants are possible.

10. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: 1) INF alternative transportation study; 2) General Plan update.

11. ADJOURN at 12:05 p.m. to Thursday, April 24, 2014, at 9 a.m.

Prepared by C.D. Ritter, CPT secretary