

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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DRAFT MEETING NOTES

January 29, 2015

Members present: Stacy Corless, Mono Supervisors; Ryan Dermody, Caltrans; Jeff Ulrich, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; John Wentworth, Mammoth Lakes Town Council; Sherri Lisius, BLM alternate; Heidi Calvert, CDFW; Deanna Dulen, Devils Postpile National Monument; Doug Power & Bradley Hurley, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center

Members absent: Jon Regelbrugge, USFS/Inyo; Justin Nalder, Bridgeport Indian Colony; Chris Plakos, LADWP (retiring Feb. 1, 2015); Adora Saulque, Benton Paiutes

Staff present: Scott Burns, Wendy Sugimura, C.D. Ritter

Guests present: Justin Fuller, Cal Fire; Wendi Grasseschi, Mammoth Times; Danna Stroud, Sierra Nevada Conservancy; Lisa Cutting, Mono Lake Committee; Tom Moore, NRCS, Steve Abele & Thad Heater, USFWS (by phone)

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS: Acting Chair Stacy Corless called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Attendees recited the pledge of allegiance and introduced themselves. Three participants attended by phone.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: Danna Stroud indicated Sierra Nevada Conservancy is finalizing grant deadlines as part of Proposition 1 Water Bond allocation of \$25 million.

3. MEETING NOTES:

MOTION: Approve draft meeting notes of Oct. 30, 2014. (Wentworth/Power. Ayes: All.)

4. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM. Tim Alpers, Mono Supervisor, recounted initial events in the 1990s. At that time, competition for resources began heating up, and environmental considerations came into play. He cautioned about underestimating ranchers, as they know rules/regulations and have legislative contacts. Proponents of a movement in the West called Sagebrush Rebellion and/or Home Rule wanted control of public lands. He cited Beaverhead County in Montana and Nye County in Nevada. Activism involved cutting fences and defying rules, with confrontation possible. "Success leaves clues." Mono Supervisors Bill Reid and Andrea Lawrence were concerned about issues from opposite poles. Reid traveled to Montana and reported on team efforts in planning, collaboration, and communication, with grievances being heard by someone who cared. Mono Supervisors set up CPT in March 1996 in uncharted waters. By birth, family, and ranching experience, Alpers dove in.

Alpers showed attendees the original CPT Memorandum of Understanding from Dec. 3, 1996, with agency signatures. Back then, everyone was protecting turf, but a synergistic effect of egos and intelligence generated activity around the table. Policy on public land? CPT presented a united front. Two meetings set groundwork to sacrifice a bit of turf and come together. CPT was a body where people could be asked, "What is your complaint"? Issues were prioritized with big ones that could be successful ("measurable progress in reasonable time"). The CPT became a credible forum, where issues were handled by agencies that refined operation and moved forward. Public had confidence in CPT. Maybe years would go by without major issues, but then it was needed for

something new. The CPT is a real tool -- keep it simple, stick with original tenets, and remember its importance. Press coverage was huge, and media relations were developed. Even though items might be important in agencies, can't set policy. Working from bottom up in rural California, agency people blend together.

Corless requested scanning original MOU and suggesting projects for CPT to address.

5. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE: Agencies presented planning issues & pending projects.
6. CAL FIRE ACTIVITIES: Justin Fuller presented an overview of Cal Fire activities, emphasizing defensible space for structures on private lands. Cal Fire is open to inmate assistance on clearing.
7. EASTERN SIERRA RECREATION COLLABORATIVE RECREATION STRATEGY: John Wentworth presented a PowerPoint titled "A Framework for Sustainable Recreation." In 2012, a 115-page Planning Rule for USFS was instituted to strengthen role of public planning. Collaboration has seen successes such as sage grouse, travel management plan, Sherwins Working Group, and Lakes Basin. Decisions can be front-loaded if people have buy-in, and lawsuits are less likely. USFS/Inyo is one of eight forests to function as canaries in coal mine. Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra are coordinating.

Framework for Sustainable Recreation provides roadmap. Public kickoff meeting was held October 2014 in Bishop, and gateway communities met at Big Pine and June Lake. A proposed recreation strategy was compiled Jan. 14, 2015. Letters were addressed to regional forester and USFS/Inyo supervisor, requesting integration into forest plans and looking at regional and national implications. Danna Stroud indicated Sierra Nevada Conservancy partnered in the effort. Interests in collaboration were coming out in a variety of efforts: Lahontan wants to get out to public prior to drafts, as there's value in public participation/buying into. Other uses for these collaborations? Stacy Corless noted opportunities for CPT to approach issues through recreation lens, an oblique way to get resource issues in front of the public. Wentworth cited synergy with resource protection and users. Corless suggested incorporating recreation into General Plan.

Wendi Grasseschi asked about response from USFS/Inyo. *Armenta and Schweizer shared information.* Wentworth noted three forests met with ESRC. Corless commended Steve Nelson, who "literally does not see agency boundaries."

8. DEVILS POSTPILE (DEPO) GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN: Deanna Dulen, DEPO superintendent, indicated plan would be made public tomorrow. The chosen alternative aimed to connect people to nature and heritage. Key to experience in public lands through interpretation, trails, emergency response service, etc. Main components were outlined. Low-impact recreational activities such as camping, hiking, sightseeing, fishing will continue. Proposals to close campground emerged, but it will remain. Parking lot and campground are too close to river, so make into day-use area and move facilities back. Good hiking loops are facilitated by ESTA and YARTS shuttles. Migratory corridors exist for animals and plants. School groups want to learn about the area. Expand space at welcome center, extend season to new audiences, and find funding. Dulen submitted budget increase for staff and year-round interpretive activities. Potential legislation: Wild and Scenic River; small boundary adjustment to connect trail to Rainbow Falls; and national monument at Minaret Vista and Upper Middle Fork of San Joaquin.

Wentworth mentioned opportunity to leverage Digital 395. Effects of winter moving around due to climate change might establish a new normal. In low snowpack years, DEPO could open longer, and agencies could work to respond and adapt.

Danna Stroud commended management effort to engage with public.

Ryan Dermody asked about Reds Meadow Road. *Out of DEPO's jurisdiction.*

Corless noted Mono will work on Convict and Rock Creek roads this summer. Add Reds Meadow Road to LTC discussion.

9. COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE: Doug Power, Mountain Warfare Training Center (MWTC), distributed maps showing intent to modernize, reach entire training area. Old system is degraded, falling apart, needs updating and a smaller footprint. All training is high risk, so communication is important. Bradley Hurley noted agencies have communications networks. Completion by summer of 2017, update involves base, Coleville housing, and Sweetwater range, with focus on emergency services, power requirements, passive heating/cooling, and going as green as possible. Power noted a tower with solar panels and antennae near military housing area in Coleville. John Wentworth attended ribbon cutting for Digital 395, citing footprints on ground for MWTC, deploy regional capacities. Infrastructure is needed. Hurley noted microwave repeater site in Lost Canyon area which Digital 395 would cover, saving lots of money. Power stated MWTC's own police and fire crews could communicate on base. Stacy Corless indicated Emergency Medical Services needs updating, according to Sheriff Ingrid Braun. Wentworth suggested setting up consortium to provide interface on public needs to leverage capacity.

10. SAGE GROUSE: Wendy Sugimura cited many agencies involved in sage grouse efforts. Sherri Lisius, BLM, expected USFWS decision soon. Steve Nelson works across agency boundaries, sharing resources and involving people with different skills, such as nonprofits and ranchers. Bodie Hills restoration project involves grouse and other species. Fire restoration coordination includes seeding, planting, and working with Nevada Department of Wildlife. Leave sagebrush islands where collared grouse can hang out after fire. The 10-year effort cost \$38 million. Population status was noted except Parker Meadows near June Lake (no new breeding, change in habitat use). Justin Fuller volunteered Cal Fire inmate help at Bodie.

Jeff Ulrich, USFS, described restoring balance between pinyon and sagebrush. Pinyons are filling valley bottoms, fires move faster, bigger, hotter. Cheat grass is endemic in area, takes over. Release of final EIS Bi-State Sage Grouse, but draft decision. In Nevada, East Walker Environmental Assessment public review is finalizing, maybe by late summer. Wheeler Creek stream restoration project, with two new treatment areas. Biochar = product made out of any wood for soil additive, hauled on semi-trailer. Pinyon/Juniper Partnership working on grant for test run on feasibility. Grace Newell is new Bi-State coordinator. Looking toward BLM heritage survey group for Nevada efforts. USFS & NRCS are collaborating on soil surveys for tribes who gather pine nuts. Local Working Group needs to meet again, share info, and explore opportunities not currently realized. It's Carson BLM in Nevada and Tonopah, not Bishop. No word from Lahontan RWQCB, a key component before projects come out, not after. Will produce 30,000 tons/year of biomass.

Heidi Calvert indicated CDFW is looking for lands.

Sugimura noted tracking projects as a way to communicate value and tell a story. Work needs to be shown in political world. Potential project at landfill? USFWS showed Eastern Sierra Land Trust video at international sage grouse conference. All are on track to protect sage grouse, prevent listing. Tell of accomplishments by participants.

Tom Moore, NRCS, noted collaboration with BLM. In addition to funding projects on public land, if County has grazing lands, it's eligible for NRCS grants. Conifer conference is coming up.

Wentworth found story on grouse inspirational. Legislators in DC need to hear the story.

Danna Stroud, introduced to sage grouse in 2012, wondered why nobody knew about it. She was inspired by Mono's engagement. Peripheral partners were interested in biomass resulting from pinyon removal. Agencies set aside boundaries, worked together to prevent listing. Sierra Nevada Conservancy as a source of funding? Focus on healthy forests in Prop. 1.

Steve Abele, USFWS/NV, stated the agency continues moving toward decision on species, maybe in late April. Lots of discussions regard land use plan changes and efforts. Sherri Lisius

noted unclear wording on bill. Could USFWS write decision in April? Abele indicated the agency could do everything except final listing decision April 28. Could keep sage grouse as candidate species; i.e., warranted but precluded.

Doug Power suggested that Melanie Bengston attend the April meeting. Sherri Lisius took Marines out to leks in Bodie Hills.

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: 1) DEPO Centennial; 2) listing decision; 3) Digital 395; 4) Mono Strategic Planning effort; 5) summer project updates; 6) State of Parks report by Deanna Dulen

12. ADJOURN at 11:54 a.m. to next meeting: Thursday, April 30, 2015, at 9 a.m.

Prepared by C.D. Ritter, CPT secretary