Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative
Regional Coordinating Council Meeting Minutes
March 21, 2011
The Ridge
2020 Golf Course Road
Auburn, CA 95602

Present:

SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council Members:
Dave Bischel – California Forestry Association
Bill Haigh – Bureau of Land Management
Terry Davis - Sierra Club, Mother Lode Chapter
Mark Rentz – Association of California Water Agencies
Jonathan Kusel – Sierra Institute for Community and Environment
Jay Francis – The Collins Companies
Frank Stewart - California Fire Safe Council
Eric Holst – Environmental Defense Fund
Steve Brink -California Forestry Association
Warren Alford - Sierra Forest Legacy
Jim Branham – Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Steve Wilensky (Co-Chair) – Calaveras County Board of Supervisors
Bob Kirkwood – Sierra Nevada Conservancy Governing Board Member
Patricia Megason – Regional Council of Rural Counties
Craig Thomas – Sierra Forest Legacy
Bill Wickman - Sustainable Forest Action Coalition
Mike Chapel – U.S. Forest Service

By phone:
Bill Nunes (Co-Chair) – Sierra County Board of Supervisors
Mike DeBonis – Forest Guild
Steve Frisch - Sierra Business Council

Council Members and Advisors Not in Attendance:
Valerie Klinefelter – California Association of Resource Conservation and Development Districts
Dave Graber – National Parks
Kim Carr - Sierra Nevada Conservancy

SNC Staff and Consultants:
Mark Stanley
Brandon Sanders
Mandy Vance
Bob Kingman
Terri Ruggiero
Pete Dufour
Lynn Campbell
Julie Griffith-Flatter
Elissa Brown

II. Recap of Decisions made During November meeting

Collaborative Consensus Based Process - The Coordinating Council discussed the new version of the document as included in the meeting packet. This version allows a council member to abstain from a consensus decision without prejudice, which will not prevent the Coordinating Council from moving forward with a position or action.

Action: The policy was approved based on that addition.

III. Local Forest Collaborative Working Group Report Out

Inventory of Sierra Activity – The Local Collaboratives working group compiled an initial list of activities that both met the definition of a 'collaborative effort' and were organized generally around the principals in the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Resolution. There was a fair amount of the debate about what fit into this category. The group is targeting efforts that address comprehensive issues, (e.g., not just forest health but also economic and social vitality) and which have a larger, regional focus (e.g., watershed, multi-county, etc.) The group is happy to hear about other activities and efforts. There is great value from learning and sharing about those efforts.

These collaborative efforts will be organized into a matrix. The working group is in the process of determining the best categories, such as the stage of organizational development. This will facilitate an exploration of the tools that can be used by these groups for their organizational needs at each stage.

The Coordinating Council discussed the need to have more information on which groups are actually implementing projects, details about the number of acres to be treated in those projects, jobs created, etc. Another issue was the scale of the project and how this might impact the amount of support provided by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). What has become clear is that there are some places that are working to scale – they have infrastructure (mills) that are threatened, have immediate needs that have to be met to stay alive. There are also places that have had all such infrastructure liquidated but still have needs for fuels and forestry work. There are different needs in different places. We don't want to get caught up in the same arguments that have been going on in the Region. Or end up with the results of doing nothing. We don't want an 'either or', but a set of criteria that meet the actual forest and community needs.

Social and Community Issues on Equal Playing Field with Environmental and Economic Issues – The Coordinating Council discussed the need to have social and community issues addressed in the 'triple bottom line' analysis. Some groups take the perspective that environmental sustainability is a key item in community

benefit, but it is also important that social and economic benefits are considered in their own right. The working group has engaged in this type of robust discussion. It is important to raise these issues but not get caught in the same arguments that have stalling us. If we're going to succeed, we need to focus on the triple bottom line, including all of the three bottom lines.

There was a request that the working group provide more of a definition of 'social and community' issues.

How Local Forest Collaboratives can Support Federal Planning and Project Implementation – The Coordinating Council considered submitting joint comments on Planning Rule. The array of community forestry projects that SNFCI is compiling has great benefit to give guidance and information to the Forest Service in developing and implementing its Planning Rule. A lot of the answers on how to integrate community benefit in restoration activities are going to come from these projects. It was felt that putting together a joint statement from the group would not be feasible at this early stage of the group's development and with the time constraints (comments must be in by May 16th.) However it would be beneficial for the Forest Service planning staff to hear and be part of the conversations that take place in the coordinating council.

Action: The SNC will arrange a special meeting of the Coordinating Council with the Forest Service to discuss the Planning Rule. Each organization will bring their individual organizational comments on the Rule. Then (with help of each organization's individual documents) a well-staffed policy committee will try to distill what consensus came out of the meeting into a written comment, if possible. Also, this process should include the archive– try to draw the things in our existing documents out that could be helpful to the process. And the Coordinating Council should continue to engage with the Forest Service, both in our individual communications and as a council.

The question was raised whether the SNC Board has to adopt any such position in addition to the Coordinating Council. The issue of 'authorization' is being addressed at the next SNC Board meeting.

Local Collaboratives Addressing Fire Risk and Supporting Stewardship Contracting – The potential for stewardship contracting is a great tool going down the road. This is related to Secure Rural School re-authorization. The Working Group discussed some of the issues related to this re-authorization, including the return of some of the forest reserve revenues to the county or surrounding forests.

This is an issue to discuss with the Counties before taking a position. Other issues include the time period of the agreements and the use of the reserve funds.

IV. Forest Service Leadership Intent

The Coordinating Council discussed whether to adopt the Region 5 Economical Restoration Leadership Intent. The generally-held view was that this was a good document but could be made more Sierra specific. There also may be a few minor wording changes that could be appropriate.

The big contribution of the document is the idea that some part of the federal government is talking about putting all the land ownership together in the watershed. As it is, each piece of land has different policies, different ownership, etc. when they may be right next to each other. Our discussions could help identify what this means on the ground in the Sierra Region. Another improvement would be to add performance measures to the document. How do we quantify success? Transforming the bullets (ecosystem services and community benefits) into performance measures for managers on the ground will both assist those managers and assure that they are held accountable for accomplishments.

There may be an opportunity to achieve synergies through collaboratives that are looking at the triple bottom line. This group may be able to identify models of where this is happening. That would be a good contribution.

Action: The Coordinating Council supports the Leadership Intent document. Staff will write a letter communicating this to the Forest Service and will also note that the value of the document is how it translates into action on the ground, especially as they move into next round of developing forest plans. We will also convey an invitation to the special meeting (to discuss the Forest Plan).

What can we do to make this document more valuable?

- **Develop more detail for bullets (Sierra specific)**
- **Funding silos – how do you involve an all agency approach, all funding approach that facilitates the 'all lands' approach?**
- **Assign a working committee after the special meeting to go into this.**

While it is important that as we communicate to the Forest Service about how to achieve these goals, we need to make sure that some of other the bottom lines (in addition to ecological restoration) are addressed. Also, we need to look both at the communities where there is infrastructure and communities where there is not infrastructure. It is easier to accomplish the triple bottom line in the former, but we can't ignore the latter where these communities are dying on the vine.

If we are concerned with 'pace and scale', we need to support the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act (CFLRA). It is a vehicle providing the funding for the projects/the agreements to integrate disparate folks and move the projects forward. This is a tool that brings people together: outside economic development people, operators, outside 'restoration' people - to focus on large areas with multiple agencies. It is a powerful way to organize people. It was suggested that the various groups that have applied for the CFLR funding share their proposals. This could be part of the Archivists work.

V. SNC Grant Funds and Support of SNFCI

The SNC is considering options for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 grant program. The SNC has $10 million left, with two years left to grant it. The SNC Board has directed staff to go out to the public and get comments on the proposal of awarding $5 million each for the next fiscal years and to target:

- Working Landscapes
- Healthy Forests

It has been initially proposed that the majority of funding be spent for on-the-ground projects, but some portion will still be available to fund pre-project planning. The SNC needs help defining what this means in terms of grant opportunities. The Coordinating Council will be notified of the opportunity to comment on issues such as what kind of projects and how to target funding to get the greatest effect. It was suggested that SNC take a 'letter of intent' approach so groups don't have to spend an enormous amount of time creating an application when they don't meet the criteria.

VI. Key Policy Issues to Consider

Reauthorization of the Stewardship Contracting Authority – A bill has been proposed which would give the agency 20 year contracting authority and have 25% of gross revenues going back to the county. The remaining revenues can be made available for stewardship work projects on other projects. The group discussed the benefits and disadvantages of the longer time period. It encourages more investment in infrastructure and equipment, but can also allow delay in implementation of the work. There was concern that the funding be allocated in such a way to encourage more work getting done on the ground. Also that it encourages involvement of local contractors and small businesses. This policy position should be discussed with counties when it is more specific to get feedback before submitted.

Action: The policy committee will rework the proposed position and come back to the next meeting with some recommendations. The Policy committee is expanded to include Terry Davis, Mark Rentz and RCRC (Patricia Megason) will identify a representative.

It was suggested that the committee approach as white paper (a couple pages with a little more explanation). The policy group could consider not only improving the Stewardship Contracting authority, but also how to improve its implementation.

Reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Funding – There is no current bill regarding this, it is just conceptual.

Action: The Coordinating Committee endorses the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act in concept and a letter stating this should be drafted and circulated.

VII. Coordination to Compile Data and Tell the Story

There are a lot of efforts and activities going on related to the issues discussed. The Coordinating Council has been talking about how to tie all the efforts together to make the point of the needs and activities in the region. The SNC can be a clearinghouse for best practices. For instance there is significant break-through in the licensing of the Buena Vista biomass plant which can be attributed to the intervention of collaborative partners. This should be part of the Archiving project so those details and solutions can be shared.

VIII. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

IX. Next Steps

Meeting Schedule for 2011

- June 21, 2011 (Confirmed)
- September 19, 2011 (Suggested)
- December 15, 2011 (Suggested)