

**Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative  
Regional Coordinating Council Inaugural Meeting – 11/30/10  
Columbia, CA**

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**Council Attendees:**

Steve Wilensky (Co-chair)  
Bill Nunes (Co-chair)  
Terry Davis  
Valerie Kleinfelter  
Mike Chapel  
Warren Alford  
Bill Haigh  
Craig Thomas  
Bob Kirkwood  
Jay Francis

Steve Brink  
Emily Coles  
Dave Bischel  
Jonathan Kusel  
Frank Stewart  
Mike DeBonis  
Eric Holst  
Jim Branham (SNC)  
Kim Carr, (SNC)

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**Public Attendees:**

Mark Stanley  
Emily Coles  
Bob Kingman  
Lyle Turpin  
Mandy Vance  
Brett Storey

Julie Griffith-Flatter  
Rick Breeze-Martin  
Kevin Kalkowski  
Emily Creeley  
Vance Russell  
Brandon Sanders  
Paul Roen  
John Buckley

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**Discussion Relative to the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Regional Coordinating Council's Purpose and Function: member role's, responsibilities, structure, and operation/protocols.**

Public lands are best suited for this effort, although the importance of private forest lands will continue as it relates to the economic and environmental issues associated with Sierra forests.

The Coordinating Council should focus on consensus issues, with the intended outcome being an increase in the pace and scale of forest restoration work in the Sierra.

Decision-making within the Coordinating Council will be based on consensus. A framework was provided which encompasses various facets of local collaborative decision making processes. There was a concern expressed that the process in place for the Quincy Library Group (QLG) was not reflected in the consensus document. The response was such that all collaboratives were considered as models, and the resulting guidance piece on decision-making was derived from a thorough review of those.

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Relative to the decision-making process, a few concerns were raised. The first is what the Coordinating Council does when consensus can't be reached. There may be a need for an "abstain" option, especially for representatives who would need to consult with a governing body, such as a Board, before issuing any firm position. The need for abstention as an option is reinforced by concerns that a single dissenting party can derail important processes or time-sensitive decisions.

However, even with the option of abstention it is critically important the Coordinating Council retain and adhere to the need for a consensus-based process, as this was the message conveyed to counties and other endorsers. There will also need to be a good-faith effort on the part of anyone abstaining to formulate possible alternatives and address those through a subcommittee of Coordinating Council members.

It was clarified that Federal partners are present in an advisory role, similar in nature to their place on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Board, and will not participate in actual decision-making.

**ACTION: Council will operate on a consensus basis as proposed, with the addition of an option for a member of the Coordinating Council to abstain. A revised draft document will be presented at the March meeting.**

Meeting frequency was discussed at length, and the decision to hold quarterly meetings was approved by the Coordinating Council. There was a request for teleconference capability; however members of the council see value in holding the meetings in-person. An option for teleconference participation will surely be present for the subcommittee work which may take place, however Coordinating Council members are encouraged to attend the full meetings in person. In the event that is not possible, accommodations will be defined and provided.

**ACTION: Auburn was decided on as the fixed location for the March and June meetings, after which council members will re-assess. Also, SNC staff will prepare a meeting calendar and disseminate that to the Coordinating Council. Site visits and project tours may be incorporated into future meetings as well.**

**Consider adoption of guiding documents to help define our desired outcomes**

- a. United States Forest Service (USFS) Leadership Intent – Memorandum of Intent
- b. Forest Guild Biomass Policy
- c. GTR-220 - An Ecosystem Management Strategy for Sierran Mixed-Conifer Forests
- d. 2010 Strategic CA Fire Plan for California Goals

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The Coordinating Council reviewed some documents to consider adopting them as guidance to support the group's work. Extensive discussion on the USFS Region 5 (R5) Leadership Intent document took place. The point was made that USFS documents are important but to also include documents that focus on lower elevations in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). Bill Haigh, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), committed to determining if a comparable policy document from BLM existed, and if so, sharing it with the Coordinating Council. Concerns were expressed as to the Leadership Intent document being a work in progress, which was reaffirmed by USFS representative.

The USFS perspective on the leadership intent is such that it is not final. Keeping the document general and broad-based is the approach USFS will take. Very little additional editing is foreseen, as extensive stakeholder input has already been gathered. While definitions are constantly debated, it is likely those contained in the current draft will remain. It was acknowledged that new science will continually inform the intent and be reflected where appropriate in the future. This should be seen as general guidance, and the Coordinating Council acknowledged there are many other resources which are similar in nature and must be considered.

The Coordinating Council expressed a desire to identify what definitions are missing from the leadership intent and form a subcommittee to define those items and advocate for inclusion in the final version. It was also stated the Coordinating Council should identify gaps and continually relay those back to the USFS. Implementation documents related to the leadership intent must be incorporated into the Coordinating Council's work.

The "triple-bottom line" of social, environmental, and economic considerations must remain the focus of the group. This stems from the clearly stated intent of the SNFCI Resolution.

A second document the Coordinating Council discussed was the Forest Guild's Biomass Policy. Concerns were voiced over the seemingly singular focus on "biomass-to-energy." In follow-up to that concern, Sierra Forest Legacy shared that they were able to support it because of the strong emphasis on community. The Sierra Club shared it was supported due to the inclusion of the "appropriately scaled" concept into the document.

The Coordinating Council had a brief discussion on how documents are to be incorporated into a reference library. There may be a need to establish some criteria or protocol based on a number of factors, including relevance to the council's work, timeliness, and general agreement as to content or message associated with a given piece of material. After some discussion of a subcommittee to address the need for a reference library, it was generally agreed that it is not necessary at this time.

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Brief mention was given to the ongoing CARB process associated with AB 32 implementation. Some concern was expressed that Federal forest lands were not included.

A need to move away from the word “subsidy” was expressed, as it is felt by some that the public and ecosystem services associated with the work undertaken on Federal Forest lands is more of an investment in both the community and the ecosystem. Some also view various Federally-funded management activities as fair compensation for local and State contributions to the Federal government.

Concerns were expressed over the number of definitions given to the term biomass. This has arisen within local collaboratives and may take an entire stand-alone process to address. The definition may be addressed as part of the Forest Service’s Sierra Cascade Dialog Group.

General Technical Report (GTR) 220 was discussed, and a need for this to be applied toward collaboration was mentioned. It is seemingly geared toward collaborative process. The “fire” GTR will be published soon, which could further inform the discussion. Concerns were expressed over an apparent lack of emphasis on the social and community aspects for forest restoration. The implementation addendum to the GTR will have a chapter on the social implications for such work.

Brief comments on the State Fire plan included a general endorsement from a set of Coordinating Council members. The desire to have the plan focus on structure protection was voiced. The inter-jurisdictional nature of the plan was appealing as well.

Looking forward to March, the need to maintain focus on issue development and not allow the document library dominate the discussions was expressed.

**ACTION: The Coordinating Council decided that rather than adopt documents as guidance, instead they would agree to use specific documents as “reference documents,” understanding that the groups represented do not necessarily subscribe to every aspect of the documents. Members were asked to submit other documents that could be useful to SNC staff for consideration by the full Coordinating Council. A workgroup to review and consolidate critical portions of relevant documents was proposed, with Bob Kirkwood volunteering to serve on this committee.**

#### **Key policy issues to consider**

One-page policy overviews were provided to the Coordinating Council in advance. The purpose was to provide them a variety of policies that impact forestry and community issues in the Sierra to help the Council discuss how they would like to

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address policy issues in general and more specifically, which, if any to focus on initially.

Questions arose as to whether or not the Coordinating Council was the appropriate venue through which to address legislation and conduct advocacy. The Coordinating Council generally acknowledged the need for members to work through their relative governing bodies on any substantial advocacy or legislative actions. There may also be a need to focus on what can be accomplished outside of the various local collaborative groups.

A suggestion was made that future meetings be formally facilitated. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was suggested as a potential resource for this. However, there is some hesitation on the Coordinating Council about focusing on process as opposed to tangible pursuits with measureable outcomes.

It was agreed that messaging will carry more weight given the diversity of the Coordinating Council, which is seen as strength in affecting change based on identified priorities.

A list of potential focus areas was provided to the Coordinating Council based on information and feedback SNC staff has received over time working with the local collaboratives. The Coordinating Council should determine which items to focus on and prioritize actions around those. For example, the Secure Rural Schools Act is of critical importance to many Sierra counties. The group may wish to advocate for reauthorization of that legislation. State policy relative to biomass energy is also an area of interest for many council members.

The Farm Bill should also be a focus for the Coordinating Council, although there is not the same level of urgency as this will probably be addressed in 2012.

Perspective was shared about certain Federal funding priorities, and it seems as though priority projects are those in the WUI, however the focus is not on California, but rather the inter-mountain west, at least relating to BLM funding. This may not be the case for all Federal agencies. Fire Safe Council grants will continue to play a key role, as do resource advisory councils.

In addition to a need for increased attention on the part of Federal entities relative to California's needs, the SNC has a role to play in conveying Sierra interests to other State agencies. This could tie in to State biomass-to-energy policy among others. The Coordinating Council will consider developing policy positions relative to the reauthorization of both stewardship contracting authority and the secure rural schools act. This will be presented to the Coordinating Council at the March meeting.

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The upcoming Woody Biomass Utilization Grant seems to be focusing on bioenergy projects this year, so applicants and partners should keep this in mind.

Concerns expressed over National Environmental Policy Agency included the amount of funding applied toward planning, whereas some on the Coordinating Council feel that should be lessened in favor of actual implementation of forest restoration projects. Concerns were also expressed over the potential for funding reduction in existing programs in favor of new programs, which poses problems for a number of stakeholders, including Fire Safe Councils.

The USFS sees a strong correlation between the leadership intent and the local collaboratives that are forming or have formed. The Coordinating Council would be well-served to learn about those and what is taking place within those distinct locales. This could lend focus to the expansion of the model throughout the entire Sierra.

Coordinating Council member requested that both BLM and USFS R5 Leadership be present at the March meeting. The point was made several times throughout the meeting to keep the Coordinating Council actions focused on supporting on-the-ground activities. Some members expressed a desire to have a better understanding of the active collaborative conducting work aligned with the Coordinating Council's focus. Others shared a willingness to provide such information since they are engaged in some of these processes and projects. Interest was expressed to keep the Coordinating Council aligned with local forest collaborative work by establishing a working group to serve this function.

**ACTION: (1) A working group consisting of Mike DeBonis, Eric Holst, and Steve Wilensky was formed to develop position papers supporting the reauthorization of stewardship contracting authority and the Secure Rural Schools Act. These papers will be circulated to the Coordinating Council in advance of the March meeting and be considered for adoption at this time.**

**(2) A working group consisting of Craig Thomas, Bill Nunes, Mike Chapel, Frank Stewart, Steve Wilensky and Jonathon Kusel was formed to summarize community collaborative activities and report out at the March meeting with an overview of need expressed and potential actions the council can take in support of these efforts.**

**The SNC will coordinate the next meeting to occur in Auburn in March.**