

**Forest Carbon Action Team (FCAT)**  
**April 20, 2015, Meeting Minutes**

Draft: 5/6/15

**Meeting attendees:**

Whitney Albright – Department of Fish and Wildlife; Janet Barentson – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE); Liz Berger - US Forest Service (USFS); Jerry Bird –USFS; Jim Branham – Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC); Kim Carr - CAL FIRE; Colin Connor – State Lands Commission; Aaron Cuthbertson - Department of Water Resources; JR Delarosa – Natural Resources Agency (NRA); John Digman – Air Resources Board (ARB); Nic Enstice – SNC; Helge Eng – CAL FIRE; George Gentry – State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection; Keith Gilless – University of California Berkeley; Cyndi Hillary – Rural County Representatives of California; Russ Henly – NRA; Kevin Hunting – Department of Fish and Wildlife; Claire Jahns – NRA; Josh Johnson – CAL FIRE; Chris Keithley – CAL FIRE; John Lowrie – Department of Conservation; David Mallory – ARB; Carla Martinson – California Association of Counties; Ken Pimlott – CAL FIRE; Mark Rosenberg – CAL FIRE; Ashley Conrad-Saydah – CAL EPA; Duane Shintaku – CAL FIRE; Tom Smith – CAL FIRE; Patrick Wright – California Tahoe Conservancy; Chris Zimny– CAL FIRE.

**Agenda Items 1-3 Opening remarks and Agenda Review**

Ken Pimlott greeted the team and reviewed timeframes of FCAT work items and noted that things were mostly on schedule. Discussion included the potential need for coordination of FCAT timelines and work products with emerging direction from the 2030 emission goals and updates to the ARB Scoping Plan. Mr. Pimlott requested input from member on the timeframes. Some members ask whether fire season would affect CAL FIRE participation in FCAT and Mr. Pimlott stated most CAL FIRE staff will be available.

Janet Barentson noted that the goal for review of deliverables is to have draft products soon after the last public meeting in June.

**Action/Consent Items**

- Request for input from members on the FCAT timeframes and schedules.
- Approval of February 23, 2015, minutes with minor edits suggested by FCAT members Russ Henly and Mark Rosenberg.
- Post the timelines and work products on FCAT website .

**Agenda Item 4, CAL Fire Forest Health -2015 Forest Pest Update (video)**

Ken Pimlott discussed forest health issues and actions being conducted in cooperation with the USFS. The primary concern is drought induced bark beetle attacks in the southern Sierra Nevada conifer forests. A video presentation was shown on the current forest health situation in California.

Tom Smith reported on past bark beetle damage during a drought in the late 1970's and indicated it started in the lower elevation pine forests of the southern Sierra Nevadas and spread north. On federal lands it was estimated that 2-10 million trees died a year due to those conditions. Mr. Smith recommended tree thinning should be avoided during the drought periods but thinning should occur during normal precipitation years to improve forest health. Forests that have been thinned show substantial resistance to bark beetle infestations. He noted that most of the current tree mortality is related to areas north of the Tehachapi Mountains.

Discussion ensued on the status of joint aerial surveys to assess the forest damage. The USFS is planning survey flights and recently flew a survey in 2014. Most forest areas will be flown and surveyed in 2015, focusing mostly on USFS and adjacent private lands. Other pest damage survey methods are being considered by CAL FIRE as part of the update to their periodic resource assessment.

A question was raised on the availability of a federal categorical exclusion<sup>1</sup> for forest health projects specific to bark beetle forest tree mortality areas. Jerry Bird of the USFS stated that there is no USFS designation for use of a categorical exclusion for these types of projects yet, but the USFS is working with partners to establish a designation. The past process involved a letter from the Governor's office requesting the designation for certain areas.

Ken Pimlott noted a potential action item is getting a letter from the Governor supporting/requesting a federal categorical exclusion designation.

Members noted some areas that have received forest health federal funding would benefit from the categorical exclusion designation. These include the McCloud/ Pit River areas in Shasta/Siskiyou counties, the El Dorado National Forest, and the San Bernardino National Forest. It was also noted that the "Highways 50 Project" (El Dorado County near Pollack Pines) would benefit from the designation. Cyndi Hillary of the Rural County Representatives of California supported the designation and would submit a supporting letter.

#### **Action/Consent Items**

- Request a letter from the Governor supporting/requesting a federal categorical exclusion designation.
- Post the Forest Health video the FCAT web site.

#### **Agenda Item 5, Cal EPA/ARB update on C&T Investment Plan and Scoping Plan**

Ashley Conrad-Saydah reported that a new investment plan for 2016 for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) was underway. Between two and eight public meeting will occur beginning in the end of May through June of 2015. Based on comments from these meetings, a draft investment plan will be written that will identify programs that may be funded. Russ Henly noted that FCAT input to the investment plan might be useful.

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<sup>1</sup> A designation for a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and therefore do not require an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement.

A recent focus is to join many Natural Resources Agency/department projects into a GGRF "super project". Analysis indicates that 16 of the 45 GGRF programs were from Natural Resources Agency departments and aggregating programs could consolidate GHG emission reduction efforts and reduce the work load needed to justify project GHG benefits.

Ms. Conrad-Saydah noted that suggestions were brought up by others for rural counties to be eligible for the GGRF "disadvantaged communities" designation. She noted the approach may not be beneficial as too many small communities could be designated. A better approach would be to create a separate "rural community" category. ARB is looking for input on what programs would be a good fit for rural communities, and some interesting ideas such as expanding sidewalk networks were brought forward.

Claire Jahns of the Natural Resource Agency stated that the Agency is proposing and assessing GHG emission reduction opportunities for rural communities and will discuss this work with FCAT.

The 2030 Scoping Plan goals are expected to be announced in the near future by the Governor's office. The goals may identify certain sectors to reduce GHG emissions and provide more clarity on targets. FCAT may be involved in identifying sectors for further focus on emission reductions.

**Action/Consent Items**

- Provide FCAT input to the investment plan.

**Agenda Item 6. Video presentation: "The Fire Next Time"**

A video was shown discussing the effects of the Rim Fire in Tuolumne County. Duane Shintaku noted that it will be valuable to have other policy entities, such as those involved with the ARB Investment Plan and Scoping Plan, be aware of the issues and existing conditions of the state's forests relative to forest pests and drought. This may help understanding and decisionmaking on needs and priorities.

**Action/Consent Items**

- Video web link will be added to the FCAT web site.

**Agenda Item 7 – Subcommittee Reports/Updates & Discussion**

**Inventory Subcommittee report**

Mark Rosenberg reported on identification of carbon pool categories. It is important for the alignment between the with AB 32 and BOF carbon inventories to ensure consistent discussions and decisions.

**State/Federal Lands Subcommittee report**

Kim Carr noted the subcommittee had one meeting on the assessment of carbon in existing state and federal management plans and are heading towards a recommendation from the subcommittee. She noted that the subcommittee has major interests in policy and use of biomass. The subcommittee is coordinating with the Policy and Cobenefits subcommittees.

Jerry Bird noted that further evaluation of the BLM land management plans show that older plans did not widely include the carbon/GHG emission information but more recent plans will better align with these topics. This was a similar finding from the assessment of USFS plans. Mr. Bird noted that the plan alignment report was basically done with one more review for edits. It is basically ready to be posted as a final version.

### **Co-benefits Subcommittee report**

Helge Eng reported the subcommittee met one month ago and has draft information for identifying cobenefits. Information will be ready by the June meeting. The analysis approach will focus on the FRAP “priority areas” assessment. Management actions should be driven by needs in priority areas.

Jerry Bird noted that use of a table similar to that used for the State/Federal Lands Subcommittee report on plan alignment might also be useful for the cobenefits assessment.

### **Policy Subcommittee report**

Russ Henly noted that the subcommittee will meet in four weeks and will focus on providing input for the Investment Plan. The subcommittee is also still reviewing other subcommittees’ products and timelines. This effort will help ensure things are fitting together.

### **Agenda Item 8. Next FCAT rescheduled to Monday, June 15, 2015.**

#### **Action/Consent Items**

- Update on Scoping Plan to be presented at the next meeting.
- Review of timelines/work product schedules at the next meeting.

### **Agenda Item 9. Meeting Adjourn.**

Jerry Bird noted that Liz Berger of the USFS is on a detail in Sacramento and will be assigned and available to work with the various subcommittees.

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