



Tree Mortality Task Force Forest Health and Resilience Working Group Minutes

April 11, 2018

California Natural Resources Agency
1416 9th Street, Sacramento, CA

- I. **FHRWG Member Roll Call:** Stewart McMorrow (CAL FIRE), Dr. Tom Smith (CAL FIRE), Kelly Larvie (CAL FIRE-FRAP), Chris Fischer (USFS), Joe Sherlock (USFS), David Pegos (CDFA), Liz van Wagtendonk (SNC/UW), Coreen Francis (BLM), Mark Rosenberg (CAL FIRE-FRAP), Emily Meriam (CAL FIRE-FRAP), Margarita Gordus (CDFW), and Pete Cafferata (CAL FIRE).

FHRWG Participants: Sarah Campe (SNC), Len Nielson (CAL FIRE), Dr. Curtis Ewing (CAL FIRE), Matthew Reischman (CAL FIRE), Topher Henderson (CAL FIRE), Kelly Keenan (CAL FIRE-RA), and Rebecca Ferkovich (CAL FIRE-FRAP).

Note that the TMTF Mapping and Monitoring Working Group (Chair-Mark Rosenberg) merged with the Forest Health and Resilience Working Group, effective April 9, 2018.

- II. **Approval of March 2018 Meeting Minutes:** The March 2018 meeting minutes were approved. Minutes from past FHRWG meetings are posted on the TMTF website: <http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/workinggroups>
- III. **Update on the Third White Paper on the Long-Term Outlook for the Sierra Nevada**
Pete Cafferata provided a brief review of the status of the third FHRWG white paper titled "Synthesis of Relevant Studies Exploring the Long-Term Outlook for Sierra Nevada Forests following the Current Bark Beetle Epidemic." The current working draft dated April 9th has been revised to include summary information from the March 12th Sierra Nevada Tree Mortality 2017 Field Season Results Workshop held at the McClellan Wildland Fire Training Center. Kelly Larvie and Tadashi Moody will finish the modeling work for determining areas most likely to experience type conversions from mixed-conifer forest to shrub lands prior to the May meeting. GIS layers for this analysis will include fire threat, climate change (using Dr. Jim Thorne's past work), and topographic position index (TPI) metrics. The end result of the GIS modeling will inform landowners regarding the general locations where successful reforestation will be most challenging. Dr. Jodi Axelson, UC Berkeley, has reviewed the current draft and stated that it could be a good review with modifications for a scientific journal such as Ecosystems or Forest Ecology and Management.
- IV. **Discussion on Development of a Reforestation Strategy for California**
Stewart McMorrow summarized the history of the project and the current version of the revised reforestation strategy for the Tree Mortality Task Force. There are four main topics



areas that are included in the reforestation strategy: (1) evaluation and monitoring, (2) reforestation resources, (3) reforestation and forest management education, and (4) cooperation and communication. Each of these topics is composed of a suite of actions related to reforestation and forest management, most of which are already occurring.

One component of the reforestation education topic is the development of a Forest Restoration Guidebook directed at forestland owners implementing reforestation and management projects on their lands in the Sierra Nevada. CAL FIRE is actively reviewing a proposal for the guidebook from Dr. Steve Ostojka, California Climate Hub. This proposal would produce a 40-50 page user-friendly handbook that is a straight-forward resource for landowners who want to reforest and manage their forestland with an emphasis on managing for resilience, focusing on forests impacted or potentially impacted by extensive tree mortality. The plan is to have Dr. Peter Stine, retired Research Ecologist from the USFS Pacific Southwest Research Station, write the document (completing it by the end of 2018).

Stewart requested that comments/edits on the draft Word version of the Reforestation Strategy previously emailed to the FHRWG be submitted in track changes to him by April 20th. After modifications are made, Stewart will submit the document to the TMTF leaders for their approval.

V. Progress Made by the Seed Zone Map Update Group (FHRWG Subcommittee)

Stewart McMorrow informed the group on the status of the Seed Zone Map Update Group. The subcommittee last met on February 6th and plan to meet again shortly. The full FHRWG (including the Mapping and Monitoring Working Group members) email list will receive an invitation to participate. The contract for funding a research project with Dr. Jessica Wright, USFS PSW, to develop species-specific climate-based seed transfer guidelines is currently in the approval process at CAL FIRE's Business Services Office. This project will inform strategic planning and decisions with regard to updating the seed zone framework for the collection, curation, propagation, and planting of tree species in California.

VI. Update on Progress Made by the Sierra Nevada Forest Science Coordination Group (FHRWG Subcommittee)

The Sierra Nevada Forest Science Coordination Group was formed to identify ongoing research and focused monitoring projects related to tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada. A web-based survey tool allows researchers to delineate a polygon(s) around their research or monitoring project area; they are then prompted to enter information about the project:

<http://calfire-forestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3d9ca2f2bc524d40a1ecedf078b6f5bc>.



The survey tool was launched on November 15th, with a detailed email message sent to 60 researchers requesting data input by December 15th. To date, we have received input from 21 researchers who have input data for 102 polygons. This total has not increased recently, even though (1) a follow-up email message was sent on March 5th with links to a video demonstrating use of the geodatabase and a short online survey form, and (2) Susie Kocher sent an email message requesting participants at the McClellan workshop held on March 12th to enter their research data in the online geodatabase.

Pete Cafferata used several sources of information to develop a list of 33 researchers that potentially have data that should be entered in the database. **It was decided that the people on the list, with supplemental names added, will be called by subcommittee members.** Additional suggestions included (1) contacting Drs. Jodi Axelson and John Battles, UC Berkeley, and having them review the list for additional missing contacts, and (2) adding the researchers involved in the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project (<http://snamp.cnr.berkeley.edu/>). **Pete Cafferata will email the current spreadsheet with all researchers to the FHRWG email list, highlighting those that have submitted geospatial data. When the SNFSCG determines that sufficient data have been received, the subcommittee will (1) work to identify additional research needs, and (2) determine how to best summarize the data to benefit current field researchers.**

VII. **Future Direction for the FHRWG—Presentation on Prescribed Burning**

One of the five ideas that were expressed at the February FHRWG meeting regarding future directions for the group addressed expanding the use of prescribed fire. To expand our knowledge on this topic, Len Nielson, CAL FIRE Southern Region VMP Coordinator, provided a PowerPoint presentation on CAL FIRE's Vegetation Management Program (VMP), one of several of the Department's fuels reduction-related programs. VMP allows both public and private landowners to enter into a contract with CAL FIRE to participate in fuel reduction projects on State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands. Originally, it was a chaparral burning program (1981), but it was enlarged to cover forests and grasslands in 1989. Benefits of the program include having CAL FIRE assume prescribed fire liability, and low cost to the landowner. Typically, CAL FIRE pays 90% of the project cost, with the landowner covering 10%--which can be "in-kind" resources. VMP focuses on prescribed fire use, but includes other treatment options (e.g., mechanical removal). Prescribed fire is used to accomplish a combination of fire protection and resource management goals, including the reduction of catastrophic wildfire. Implementation of VMP projects is achieved by working with the CAL FIRE Unit VMP Coordinator, and a detailed environmental checklist is completed for CEQA compliance.

To expand fuel treatments throughout California, CAL FIRE and the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF) have produced a draft Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP) EIR that covers all of California's vegetation types and several possible treatment types. The draft VTP-EIR is posted on the BOF's website at:

http://bofdata.fire.ca.gov/board_committees/resource_protection_committee/current_proje



[cts/vegetation_treatment_program_environmental_impact_report_%28vtpeir%29/](#)). It is anticipated that the document will be approved by the Board in the near future. The VTP-EIR plans for 60,000 acres to be treated on an annual basis. The current goal set by CAL FIRE is to treat 20,000 acres with prescribed fire this year, and an additional 20,000 acres with other types of fuel treatments. Additional information on the VMP is posted at: http://calfire.ca.gov/resource_mgmt/resource_mgmt_vegetation.

VIII. New Business and Announcements

Stewart McMorrow announced that Boggs Mountain Demonstration State Forest had an overrun of approximately 5,000 Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine seedlings that are currently in cold storage at the L.A. Moran Reforestation Center in Davis. The seed zone for these seedlings is 380 in the Coast Ranges. They are currently available for free—contact Stewart for additional information.

UCCE Cooperative Extension will be hosting two two-day workshops in May 2018 designed for landowners and land managers looking to gain skills in prescribed fire planning and implementation. They will include a day of presentations and training, and a day for a field trip with a live burning demonstration. Register online by May 7th at:

<http://UCANR.edu/blodgettrx2018>

May 14, 2018 – May 16, 2018, Georgetown, CA

May 16, 2018 – May 17, 2018, Browns Valley, CA

Preliminary planning work continues on Governor Brown's new task force dealing with forest health issues. Larry Camp met with the Governor and a small group of individuals to help develop this new task force. More details are expected in the near future.

Kelly Larvie announced that CAL FIRE-FRAP has provided funding to Dr. Kristen Shive, UC Berkeley/Yosemite NP, to adopt her post-fire regeneration model for post-tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada (see notes on Dr. Shive's presentation to the FHRWG provided at the January 2018 meeting posted at: <http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/workinggroups>).

IX. Next FHRWG Meeting

The next meeting will be held on May 2nd, 2:00 p.m. in Sacramento (note that this is the first Wednesday in May). The location will be the California Natural Resources Agency conference room (Room 1305).