

Tree Mortality Task Force – Forest Health and Resilience (FHR) Working Group

Monthly Meeting Notes – July 12, 2016

Members Present (in person or on the conference call line): Chris Keithley (CAL FIRE-FRAP), Tom Smith (CAL FIRE), Brian Nowicki (CBD), Coreen Francis (BLM), Gabe Schultz (CAL FIRE), Rick Carr (CAL FIRE), John Amodio (YSS), Margarita Gordus (DFW), Staci Heaton (RCRC), Vance Russell (NFF), Lisa Thornley (BLM), Brian Ruger (Tule River Tribe), and Pete Cafferata (CAL FIRE).

Approval of June 2016 meeting minutes—all concurred.

FHR Working Group Changes

- New FHR co-leader Chris Keithley introduced Pete Cafferata, CAL FIRE Watershed Protection Program Manager, as one of the new FHR Working Group co-leaders. Chris Keithley and Tom Smith will continue to be members of the working group, and Chris led the current meeting.
- Gabe Schultz announced that the Prescribed Fire Working Group will be integrated into the FHR Working Group.

Revision of IAP Objectives for the FHR Working Group

The Tree Mortality Task Force leadership has directed the FHR Working Group to focus priorities on reforestation issues in the high hazard areas. Rick Carr summarized four new, focused FHR Working Group Objectives:

- Reforestation: Develop a plan to reforest areas deforested by bark beetles; investigate if ponderosa pine should be replanted or other species.
- Seed Collection: Work/coordinate with the CAL FIRE LA Moran Seed Bank and expand collection of seed from seed zones impacted from tree mortality.
- Turning-the-Corner: Prepare for implementation of the reforestation plan when the appropriate time comes; plan the recovery phase.
- Coordinate the recovery plan and reforestation plan with the Private Landowner Assistance sub-group of the TMTF Regulations Working Group.

Action items/tasks for the new FHR Working Group objectives and monitoring needs

Task 1: FHR Working Group co-leaders will revise IAP objectives to include objectives for prescribed burning and reforestation.

Task 2: Seed inventory assessment discussion. FHR Working Group co-leaders will contact Stewart McMorrow, CAL FIRE LA Moran Reforestation Center Supervisor and Stewardship Forester, and Gary Cline, US Forest Service Placerville Nursery Manager, regarding their current inventory of seed for conifer species present in the high tree mortality areas in the 10 identified counties. Pete Cafferata will add Stewart as a member of the FHR Working Group.

Task 3: Discussion on which conifer species to plant. Chris Keithley will invite Dr. James Thorne, UC Davis, to provide a presentation on his FRAP contract work modeling expected shifts in tree and shrub species under future climate conditions (confirmed). The modeled results will be made available to the Task Force and provide information on which species to plant given anticipated climate change.

Discussion on different approaches for monitoring forest health and tree mortality. The Aerial Detection Surveys are still considered the primary source, but there is interest in other monitoring approaches.

Task 4: Chris Keithley will pursue a proposal with the USFS and Dr. Greg Asner, Stanford University, to (1) conduct a second aerial flight over the central and southern Sierra Nevada detecting tree moisture stress, and (2) ground truth the aerial data in selected locations (e.g., Dinkey Creek watershed). Results of the first assessment were well documented (see, for example, <https://carnegiescience.edu/news/tens-millions-trees-danger-california-drought>). Funding is jointly proposed by CAL FIRE and the US Forest Service (\$200,000 total). The contract will include an interpretive report (not just GIS maps).

Task 5: Tom Smith will contact USFS Regional Entomologist Sheri Smith and USFS Research Entomologist Dr. Chris Fettig regarding their green tree insect monitoring program currently in place. The goal is to be proactive and identify where treatments can be used to save remaining conifer stands in the high impact counties.

Update on the Sierra Forest Health Treatments and Options Report

John Amodio, Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS), summarized the two page report outline he is working on with Larry Camp (FLOC). The target audience is both decision makers and the general public, and it will include a "toolbox" for landscape level restoration approaches that address declining forest health. They will have a draft report for the August FHR Working Group meeting.

Task 6: FHR Working Group members are to provide John Amodio with comments on the draft outline by August 4, 2016 (two weeks prior to the next FHRWG meeting). He will endeavor to have a draft available for review by August 11th.

Update on the FHR Working Group Landowner Guidance Document

Dr. Tom Smith, CAL FIRE, stated that he has, with one exception, incorporated member edits into the four page document titled "Achieving Long-Term Forest Health and Resilience in California."

Task 7: When this change is made, Tom Smith will provide the document to Gabe Schultz and Rick Carr for distribution to the full Tree Mortality Task Force.

New Business Items

- Kelly Larvie, CAL FIRE FRAP, will have the Tier I high hazard zones updated by August 1, 2016, and the Tier II zones by mid to late-August. This information is based on aerial detection flights, public utilities information, and local knowledge.
- Chris Fischer, USFS, stated at the TMTF meeting held on July 11, 2016 that the Forest Service would conduct another Aerial Detection Survey of the entire state (federal and private ownerships).
- Chris Keithley briefly summarized the Science Team meeting held on July 11, 2016 in Sacramento at the Capital. Scientists present or on the conference line included Drs. Chad Hansen, Scott Stephens, Malcolm North, Brandon Collins, and Hugh Safford. This meeting was characterized as the start of a dialogue regarding management options for Tier II areas.
 - Key questions addressed included:
 - Changes in fire severity now compared to prior to historic conditions.
 - Ecological ramifications of increased fire severity.
 - Management options available to address concerns.
 - Healthy, resilient forests were characterized as having variable forest conditions (high heterogeneity).

Next meeting date

- The next FHR Working Group meeting will be August 18, 2016.
Location and Time: CAL FIRE FRAP office, 1300 U Street, Sacramento, CA, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.