



## Tree Mortality Task Force Forest Health and Resilience Working Group Minutes

January 4, 2017

CAL FIRE, Natural Resources Building, 1416 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Sacramento, CA

- I. FHRWG Member Roll Call: Stewart McMorrow (CAL FIRE), Paul Mason (PFT), Cedric Twilight (SPI), Margarita Gordus (DFW), John Amodio (YSS), Larry Camp (FLOC), Rich Wade (BOF), Rick Carr (CAL FIRE), George Gentry (CFA), Susie Kocher (UCCE), Staci Heaton (RCRC), and Pete Cafferata (CAL FIRE).

FHRWG Participants: Emily Meriam (CAL FIRE-FRAP), Coreen Francis (BLM), Tadashi Moody (CAL FIRE-FRAP), Kelly Larvie (CAL FIRE-FRAP), Eric Huff (CAL FIRE), Heather Williams (CAL FIRE), Russ Henly (CNRA), Liz van Wagtendonk (SNC), Mark Rosenberg (CAL FIRE-FRAP), Scott Conway (USFS), Van Kane (UW).

- II. Approval of December 2016 Meeting Minutes: All concurred to approve the December meeting minutes. Minutes from past FHRWG meetings are posted on the TMTF website.  
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/workinggroups>

- III. Presentation on Using LiDAR Imagery on the Tahoe National Forest (TNF)  
Scott Conway, USFS Region 5 Remote Sensing Laboratory, provided a PowerPoint presentation titled "Landscape LiDAR and Managing Forests at Multiple Scales." Numerous GIS layers exist for the TNF, with LiDAR data available for the entire National Forest (flown 3 years ago). LiDAR data have proven to be a helpful tool for land management challenges, since the data can be used to quantify prescriptions and inform vegetation mapping, including mapping individual larger dead and live trees. Groups of trees are aggregated into polygons, as are open areas and brush areas, allowing 3-D representation and development of numerous GIS layers. High quality wildlife habitat can be displayed, as can areas of the National Forest requiring fuel treatments. The Upper Yuba River Landscape Analysis Unit (~150,000 ac) was used to illustrate these concepts. Hypothetical fire starts were modeled using a positive feedback model developed for the King Fire, both with and without fuel treatments.

Scott also described the Big Jack East Project that used LiDAR imagery to develop improved land management treatments. This project is located in the Truckee Ranger District, south of Truckee and east of State Route 89, and is surrounded by several neighborhoods. Aerial photographs from 1939 show much lower tree density, and current conditions include homogeneous conditions (60 year old Jeffrey pine) with considerable ladder fuels. LiDAR-aided restoration treatment analysis was utilized for the project, including a comparison with the Illilouette Creek basin in Yosemite NP, which has an extensive history of managed wildfire and no historical logging. Approximately 1700 acres in the WUI will be treated to improve defensibility and resiliency, using mechanical removal, pile burning and underburning (see: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49215>).

High resolution LiDAR was stated as providing improved resource protection, providing more stakeholder trust, and improving efficiency for focused field work, which frees up more funds for project implementation.



IV. Continued Discussion on the Tree Mortality Seed Zone Mapping Project

Emily Meriam, CAL FIRE-FRAP, explained the changes she made for the tree mortality Seed Zone map based on input provided by the FHRWG at the December meeting. This project overlaid GIS data for tree seed zones, 500-foot elevation bands, and forest type vegetation maps in the 10 county high hazard area. Tree mortality data spans 2012-2016 and are from the USFS Aerial Detection Survey (ADS). The changes made to the map included (1) modifying the footprint of mortality so that it does not equal density of mortality, (2) providing greyscale ranking of mortality, and (3) reducing the size of the data table. Mark Rosenberg suggested reviewing the Excel spreadsheet columns and eliminating confusion over the column names. Paul Mason stated that it would be beneficial to add a short summary/overview of the project, possibly as a second page or a paragraph within the map. Russ Henly suggested reporting acres to nearest single acre, not to 100ths (as well as reporting percentages only to 10ths, not 100ths). **Emily agreed to make final changes and submit final products for FHRWG review at the next meeting.** Rick Carr stated that the FHRWG can release the map and spreadsheet when the group is satisfied with the products.

V. Continued Discussion on the Draft Sierra Nevada Forest Health Report

John Amodio led the discussion on the draft white paper he and Larry Camp wrote titled "Recommendations for Comprehensive Sierra Nevada Ecological Restoration." He stated that at this point, the paper is a group product, not the work of two authors; he also provided a brief background and rationale for the report. The main goal of the paper is to achieve robust implementation of the SNC's Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). He stressed that it is imperative to finalize and transmit the paper in time to influence the Governor's May 2017 revised budget. Rich Wade stated that he finds the document more applicable to National Forest lands, and not a vehicle for funding from the Governor's office. Paul Mason stated that the WIP requires a more meaningful evaluation process for potential projects. Liz van Wagtendonk, SNC, agreed that the WIP is a framework in its infancy, and that it would benefit from improved analysis approaches (e.g., LiDAR, hyperspectral imaging). Russ Henly stated that there are similarities between the report and the draft California Forest Carbon Plan, and that there may be advantages to waiting to release the white paper until the Forest Carbon Plan is made public.

Twelve FHRWG participants signed up to use Google Docs to edit the version of the paper submitted on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. A new version reflecting edits made through December 16<sup>th</sup> was emailed to the FHRWG on December 21<sup>st</sup> for review prior to the current meeting. This draft did not incorporate input from John and Larry. There was considerable discussion on how to move forward with the document, and what TMTF review should occur. All participants agreed that there needs to be a short overview statement in the document clearly stating its intent (what is currently lacking and what needs to be done immediately).

In order to generate a finalized document in a timely manner, it was agreed to proceed as follows:

1. **John Amodio and Larry Camp will incorporate their comments and changes in the December 16<sup>th</sup> draft. They will discuss any issues or seek compromise on existing comments in the draft privately with the commenters.**
2. **John and Larry will submit their revised document to the FHRWG co-chairs by January 13<sup>th</sup>.**



If there remain any outstanding issues that they can't resolve, they will leave those comments in the document for the FHRWG to consider.

3. Upon receiving the revised document, Stewart McMorrow will post it on Google Docs so that FHRWG participants have an opportunity to comment. This period will be from January 13<sup>th</sup> - January 20<sup>th</sup>.
4. John and Larry will review and make any final changes to the document. They will have from January 20<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> to finalize the document and submit it to the FHRWG co-chairs with no comments unless there remain unresolved issues. John and Larry will be expected to personally resolve any issues with the commenters during this time.
5. The FHRWG co-chairs will email the document to the FHRWG email list in its final form on January 27<sup>th</sup> so FHRWG participants can review the final document prior to our meeting on Feb 1<sup>st</sup>.
6. During the meeting on Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, we will devote a significant amount of time to discussion of the document with intent to seek closure of unresolved issues. Members and participants who have unresolved concerns will have an opportunity to make their case with the group to seek compromise.
7. John and Larry will make any final adjustments to the document and will submit the final version to the FHRWG co-chairs within two days following the meeting.
8. The FHRWG co-chairs will submit the document to Gabe Schultz and Rick Carr, TMTF co-leaders, for final review by CAL FIRE Executive staff and eventual distribution to the TMTF and posting on the TMTF website.

#### VI. Discussion of Draft FHRWG Charter Statement

A draft FHRWG charter for reviewing documents was emailed to the group prior to the meeting for discussion. The charter was developed to due to lack of agreement on how to address comments when there is a failure to achieve consensus, which occurred for the FHRWG document titled "Achieving Long-Term Forest Health and Resilience in California" (see: <http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/FHRWG%20White%20Paper.pdf>).

Paul Mason stated that while we want to strive to achieve consensus, when it does not occur, there must be the ability to include some type of minority report/statement in the document. It was agreed to edit item no. 7 in the charter to include this concept, listing possible options (e.g., footnote, short minority report, etc.). **The FHRWG co-chairs will edit the draft charter and email the revised version for FHRWG review prior to the next meeting.**

#### VII. Continued Discussion on Reforestation Strategies

Stewart McMorrow briefly updated the FHRWG on reforestation strategies he is currently working on for CAL FIRE. These include (1) using CFIP funding, including Highspeed Rail Authority funds, for reforestation; (2) conducting a CFIP workshop in Auberry on February 11<sup>th</sup>, one of a series of workshops, emphasizing reforestation for small nonindustrial landowners; (3) having the next issue of the Forestland Steward Newsletter address reforestation; (4) working with the CAL FIRE Communications Program staff on a campaign on reforestation; and (5) establishing seedling sowing orders. The initial order is 130,000 seedlings (ponderosa pine, sugar pine, and giant sequoia), available for purchase by small landowners in fall 2017/winter 2018. Further seedling orders will be placed by CAL FIRE to assist private landowners with the process of reforestation.



VIII. New Business

Meeting announcement: The Little Hoover Commission will hold a hearing on January 26<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. in Room 437 of the State Capital in Sacramento. The Commission will examine California's response to the tree mortality crisis in the Sierra Nevada. The event will be webcast. See: <http://www.lhc.ca.gov/studies/activestudies/forestmanagement/forestmanagement.html>

IX. Next FHRWG Meeting

The next meeting will be held on February 1<sup>st</sup> at 2:00 p.m. at the CAL FIRE FRAP office.