

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

PO Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
760-924-1800 phone, 924-1801 fax

PO Box 8
Bridgeport, CA 93517
760-932-5420 phone, 932-5431 fax
www.monocounty.ca.gov

DRAFT MINUTES October 25, 2018

Members present: Bob Gardner, Mono Supervisors; Cleland Hoff, Mammoth Town Council; Ryan Dermody & Jill Batchelder, Caltrans; Deanna Dulen, Devils Postpile National Monument

Members absent: Steve Nelson, BLM; Margie DeRose, USFS/Inyo; Jan Cutts, USFS/Humboldt/Toiyabe; Steve Abele, USFWS-Reno (via phone); Alisa Ellsworth, CDFW; Mike Grahek, LADWP; Heidi Calvert, CDFW; Doug Power, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center; Erin Nordin, USFWS/Reno; Kathleen Morse, Yosemite National Park; Tina Braithwaite, Benton Paiutes; Jay Hall, Bridgeport Indian Colony

Staff present: Wendy Sugimura, Tony Dublino, CD Ritter

Guests present: Sandra Moberly, Town of Mammoth Lakes; Wendi Grasseschi, Mammoth Times; Kay Ogden, Eastern Sierra Land Trust; Jack Benham, The Sheet; April Sall, Bodie Hills Conservation Partnership; Jora Fogg, Friends of the Inyo

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ATTENDEE INTRODUCTIONS

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: Items of public interest not listed on the agenda

3. MINUTES

MOTION: Continue draft minutes of July 26, 2018, to next meeting, January 31, 2019

4. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE: Agencies discussed planning issues & pending projects.

5. USFWS SAGE GROUSE LISTING: Wendy Sugimura noted court determination to overturn USFWS listing to withdraw from Federal Endangered Species Act, have to revisit/redo. Publish in about a year, need info by end of calendar year, own administrative draft put together. Requests for information from Bi-State, updated commitment letters. Mono, ESLT (Eastern Sierra Land Trust) submitting. Wild card is new issue with LADWP change in water management practices. USFWS will consider latter at Sacramento meeting. Analyzing new data since 2015 decision.

Kay Ogden noted ESLT got funding to protect grouse, analyzing all projects.

Cleland Hoff saw sage grouse (?)at Tamarack Lodge, no fear of people. Could be city grouse.

6. LADWP LONG VALLEY DE-WATERING: Wendy Sugimura noted basic premise of 50 years of water practices was significant irrigation. No water for ranchers, part of sage grouse area. Populations track with precipitation data. Long Valley buffered grouse from tracking, now back into play. Not enough data yet, but certainly a concern. Three things: 1) EIR scoping till Oct. 16, comment letters on what to analyze in EIR. Issues to analyze, burden on respondents to show substantial evidence to analyze differently or come to different

conclusion. Determine how much water is needed for grouse. If not in EIR, need evidence to refute. 2) Bi-State offered to cooperate but no LADWP response to offer; and 3) Mono litigation against LADWP to do with baseline issue. Did not comply with CEQA before undertaking project. Sierra Club joined lawsuit.

Bob Gardner wanted to take this seriously but be open to settlement and compromise at any time. Silence from LADWP is deafening.

Kay Ogden attended wildlife agency meeting in Sacramento, slightly different focus: scope of regional area significantly larger.

7. EASTERN SIERRA RECREATION PARTNERSHIP: Bob Gardner supported effort to work together, coordinate regional recreation, fire management, and economic development. PowerPoint. Includes northern Sierra Nevada, with jurisdictional issues involved. Running out of parking, restrooms, people tired of putting up with issues. Mount Whitney has trash, human waste on trail. Prop. 68 benefits Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Prop 3 Nov. 6, funds toward Eastern Sierra. \$1.5 million directive grant program. SNC (Sierra Nevada Conservancy) developing guidelines, establishing grant program in early 2019. Focus on sustainable recreation. Nonprofits organizing to get projects done that contribute to economy and protect environment. Public, corporate moneys in Colorado. California does not have sustainable recreation entity. Eastern Sierra Office of Sustainable Recreation & Tourism (Inyo, Mono, Bishop, Mammoth) under ESCOG (Eastern Sierra Council of Governments). Expand CPT to include Inyo County. SNC meeting Dec. 6 on grants. Act as region like other states do, require funding and support. Requires collaboration: everybody gives up a little so everybody gets a lot. Moving ahead with JPA (Joint Powers Authority). Table of trust like CPT but more inclusive. Need big group working together. None of four entities can afford to move ahead on own. Request for Mono at Dec. 6 meeting in Sacramento. ESCOG never legally created as JPA, now trying to do that. Two from each of four entities. Trails Coordinator position? Meeting last week, lots of applicants, moving along.

8. TOWN WILDFIRE PLANNING: Sandra Moberly noted projects under way are tied to Housing Element. Awarded consultants. Recommendations for Safety Element. Site visits, tours, stakeholder meetings. Not have to adopt but considering as part of Safety Element. Finish CWPP by March 2019. SB 1 grant from Caltrans. Safety and Housing by June 2019.

Gardner coted uphill battle to educate people on forest health. Communication important, better understanding of fire and smoke.

Moberly recalled healthy public discussion, consultants explaining why sometimes let fires burn. Town/USFS discussion Nov. 7. Tree thinning activities, fire management.

Ogden mentioned Prop 68 and Prop 3 have lots funding for educating communities.

Gardner acknowledged chipper days, etc. by Fire Safe Councils.

Moberly recalled Thom Heller wrote grant applications. Town always looks for grant funding.

Gardner cited fire suppression, forest management (thinning, prescribed fires). Significant reductions in USFS/NPS. Fire should be treated like hurricanes but steal from other parts of budget. Remove fires from USFS budget, treat like disaster.

Dulen mentioned money for suppression.

Grasseschi noted being surrounded by lot of dead trees not here five years ago.

9. HIGHWAY KIOSKS THROUGHOUT MONO COUNTY: Ryan Dermody brought Jill Batchelder back to understand CURES original kiosks, USFS permits, do inventory. Wayfinding signs for 23 kiosks. Visited all sites, people used them. Deterioration, lack of maintenance,

lack of leadership and ownership. Request for GIS information. Spoke with Jan Cutts, sent emails to Upham and Bramlette on duplicate signs. Gardner thought USFS might have signs.

Dulen recalled duplicates in huge map cases. Saw cases in engineering conference room at USFS in Bishop. Dermody meeting with USFS next week, will check on it.

Adopt-a-kiosk opportunity? Batchelder: Death Valley updated this winter. Maybe ask Lee Vining.

Hoff noted one kiosk unclaimed, difficult access.

Batchelder: Get subcommittee to take ownership. Find duplicate plans.

Gardner: Keep on agenda.

--- Break: 10:25-10:30 a.m. ---

10. DEVILS POSTPILE DRAFT EA FOR FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN: Deanna Dulen presented a Power Point. Sequoia partner supports. Updated 2005 plan. No EA (Environmental Assessment) longer than 75 pages, 125 pages into appendices. Two alternatives: No action (suppress at all times, limited fuel reduction) or tackle fire management on monument-wide scale, fuels treatment. Blowdown of 2011 increased accumulated fuel by 25%. High concentration of visitors, single access. Didn't do tribal outreach in 2005 but did this time. Public comment open till Nov. 16. Decision document due in February. Increased knowledge in last decade.

Fire frequency: Generally, fire occurs every five to 30 years. In 1875 shepherders put out fires. Since then, 120 years of fire suppression. Most lightning strikes occur in July and August. In 2005 no fire crew, reduce fuels in non-wilderness area. Mammoth Lakes FPD (Fire Protection District) came down, advised. Devils Windstorm in 2011 blew down 25% of large trees. Heightened cumulative risk after blowdown. Pile burning in 2013. Repeating burn this weekend.

Dulen has spent 18 seasons at DEPO. New goals: Respond aggressively to all unwanted wildfire. Devils Postpile is high-density spot that attracts lots of visitors. NPS initiated collaborative process with Town, FPD in interagency plan. Goal: Reduce risk to natural and cultural resources from unwanted wildfire and fire suppression operations. Minimize air-quality impacts Madera, San Joaquin Valley, Great Basin. Smaller events, less severity, less smoke. Not enough information on climate change. Fires open floodgates to invasive plants. Wildfire protection zone, protect resources. Wildfire restoration, maintenance. Reduce fuels, prescribed burns. Keep building defensible space around high visitation area.

Who determines fire response? *Various partners.*

Fuel reduction limit? *Small/medium. Aiming at understory trees. Cooler, wetter, shadier sections along San Joaquin.*

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: 1) Keep all on agenda; 2) overview of Inyo Forest Plan (Tammy); 3) overall purpose, expansion of CPT. Sugimura noted historically better attendance on regular schedule. Maybe get on calendars. Gardner ultimately wanted to include more people, region.

12. ADJOURN at 11:19 a.m. to Thursday, January 31, 2019, at 9 a.m.

Prepared by CD Ritter, CPT secretary