

# 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 30, 2014

---

Members present: Byng Hunt, Mono Supervisors; Jon Regelbrugge, USFS/Inyo; Ryan Dermody, Caltrans; Jeff Ulrich, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; John Wentworth, Mammoth Lakes Town Council; Heidi Calvert, CDFW; Deanna Dulen, Devils Postpile National Monument; Doug Power, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center; Brianna Bergen, Lahontan (by phone)

Members absent: Justin Nalder, Bridgeport Indian Colony; Chris Plakos, LADWP; Adora Saulque, Benton Paiutes

Staff present: Scott Burns, Wendy Sugimura, Courtney Weiche, C.D. Ritter

Guests present: Sandy Hogan; Wendi Grasseschi, Mammoth Times; Danna Stroud, Sierra Nevada Conservancy; Stacy Corless, Mono Supervisor-elect; Angela Evans, The Sheet; Dr. Jim Paulus, biologist

---

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS: Acting Chair Byng Hunt called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m. Attendees recited the pledge of allegiance and introduced themselves.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: No items

3. MEETING NOTES:

MOTION: Approve draft meeting notes from July 31, 2014. (Regelbrugge/Ulrich. Ayes: All but one who abstained due to absence.)

4. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE: Agencies reported on planning issues & pending projects.

5. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM (*continued to next meeting*) Tim Alpers, Mono Supervisor. Scott Burns presented a brief overview, and Byng Hunt added comments. Burns read aloud and presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Byng Hunt for his years of participation and leadership in the CPT, and attendees applauded.

6. INYO FOREST PLAN UPDATE: Deb Schweizer, USFS, summarized 7,200 comments received into draft report. Multiple uses lead to multiple conflicts. Many comments were either/or, separation of uses; no discussion of middle ground. How to accommodate users and for them to be respectful of each other? Now need to frame alternatives aided by scoping comments. Meeting Nov. 20 will present summary document on range of issues. USFS reached a settlement agreement on 10-year lawsuit by environmental groups NRDC, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, etc., using 2012 planning rule revision process. Take into account new science. Agreement would be useful tool.

Update on wilderness inventory: Draft report by maps is available. Start big, and then shrink down. Prescriptive processes determine areas suitable for wilderness. Incorporate public comment now. The USFS is monitoring equipment sites. Five areas: Glass Mountains, Excelsior, others east of Whites. Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative helps take ownership.

**Type of meeting Nov. 20?** *Stations to discuss range of alternatives. Fire, recreation, species conservation. Get away from Q/A to avoid grandstanding, tying up meeting. Refining needed.*  
**When will wilderness evaluation resurface publicly?** *Unknown. Focus on use more than other considerations. Enough of wilderness character in five areas to look at.*  
**Decision?** *April 2015 draft alternatives (draft EIS). By end of October 2015, approval of plan.*  
**More complicated process?** *Avoid level of detail in earlier plans. Give basics on how recreational spectrum looks. Take complication out of planning. Agency and public learning on streamlined plan.*

7. TRAVEL SYSTEM MODIFICATION: OVERVIEW OF PHASE I: Jon Kazmierski, USFS, spoke about motorized trails near Mammoth Lakes. In 2009, Jim Upchurch signed decision to establish motor-vehicle routes. Some mapping errors occurred, and public requests for change led to a formal NEPA process. Primary reason is access, but recreation as well. Trail system is not very diverse, lacks single-track motorcycle trails. Try to establish loops as iconic experiences. The 30-day scoping ends Nov. 15. Proposed action based on notice and comment would lead to an Environmental Assessment.

Scott Burns wondered if dog sleds would impact trails. Dog sled musher Jim Ouimet is concerned with barriers that could impede tours, and closed/blocked route would be half open, half closed. Would like entire route open for dog sleds. Kazmierski will confer with him.

Motorcycle enthusiasts are organizing, have concerns about routes removed in Dry Creek area. Roads dead-end at Owens headwaters; no practical way to loop out of there. Single track was received enthusiastically.

Danna Stroud noted travel management changes are occurring, correcting oversights. Jon Regelbrugge explained that Subpart A is required of all national forests in non-decision-making process. Identify needs, costs, and re-examine handful of routes. Keep group small so interdisciplinary team and public can actually visit routes. Separate from travel analysis. **Timing for subpart to come forward?** *Next summer. Comments might lead to more field work and delay. Important considerations were missed on some routes, so want to deal with those.* **Field trips?** *Review public comment, gauge interest.* Sandy Hogan recalled many unauthorized roads started closing down after thinning. Fuelwood program exacerbated the problem. USFS conducted field trips. NEPA is costly, so worked in former timber areas. Travel Management Plan was pilot force to begin inventories. Flat terrain allowed people to go anywhere. A lot of restoration, barriers. If permittees use it, why not public? Kazmierski stated EA would cost \$40,000-\$50,000. Hogan noted no EA for trail paralleling US 395. She suggested getting rid of dead ends, re-routing.

Byng Hunt envisioned a place out there for all users, but was concerned with monitoring and enforcement. Motorcyclists tear down barriers. Let user groups take on more responsibility. A few years ago a state group on a motorcycle tour of the area went off road, created new tracks through sagebrush. Regelbrugge acknowledged a challenge with >2,000 miles of road available. More than 2/3 is in the system, closing less than a third. USFS mission is a place for lots of activities. Which activities go where, how do users get along? Hard to be 100% successful in efforts. Kazmierski noted State supports patrols, law enforcement grant. Success with Eastern Sierra 4-WD club - group brought funds and implemented projects on the ground with USFS guidance. Partnerships considered.

8. EASTERN SIERRA RECREATION COLLABORATIVE: John Wentworth, Mammoth Town Council, noted constraints on resources. The truly grass-roots effort included Inyo and Mono counties and Mammoth Lakes. Sierra Nevada Conservancy provided staff time, and USFS prepared framework for Sustainable Recreation. Goals and areas of focus were noted. Meetings were set for Bishop, Big Pine, and June Lake. The wrap-up Nov. 12 will form common voice to enhance and complement USFS work, looking at common landscape, not

jurisdictional areas. Public lands experience will benefit everyone. What do all have in common? Desire to make conservation and recreation come together.

9. MAMMOTH ZONING CODE UPDATE & MAIN STREET PLAN (*continued to next meeting*).  
*Sandra Moberly, Town of Mammoth Lakes*

10. BI-STATE SAGE GROUSE, Opportunities & Constraints: Jeff Ulrich, USFS, noted efforts to avoid listing of distinct species. USFS and NRCS are committed to funding for 10 years. Agencies from Wyoming to California are coming up with rules for managing sage grouse - grazing, motorized trails, campgrounds, etc. Draft EIS was released, and team is working on comment analysis. Pinyon removal and conversion to sagebrush is occurring and planned, as the grouse depend upon sagebrush for survival. Needs: native perennial grass and forb understory; lack of predator perches; riparian brood-rearing habitat; and winter cover to stay out of wind and have food. Two-thirds of former sagebrush terrain is now pinyon/juniper. As woodlands increase, native grasses, forbs, and shrubs decrease. Catastrophic wildlife, erosion, and invasive species increase, whereas wildlife habitat and water sources decrease. If fire attacks primarily pinyon, grasses are removed and cheat grass grows. Fires now are more intense, larger in scale. The challenge is to improve sage habitat and restore ecosystem health.

Pinyon removal is set for 8,000 acres of land. Use for wood includes firewood and heat generation. Problem is hauling wood to site. Engaging with local tribes as potential contractors. All projects now are in Nevada, and haul distance is too great. No portable power generation facilities exist. Esmeralda mine has infrastructure, but no interest. Danna Stroud noted Sierra Nevada Conservancy is tracking region, involved in feasibility discussions. Met with Mono residents to get idea of interest in utilization. Could just burn pinyon, but maybe utilize it for benefits. Jeff Ulrich suggested chipping and spreading on ground, and then moving to something more productive. Stroud noted possible job opportunities to mill wood for furniture, etc.

Wendy Sugimura distributed press release. Spring Peak Fire planting, sage grouse forum in Salt Lake City Nov. 13-14 with live streaming to Lee Vining community center. Jeff Ulrich cited criticism of single-species management instead of actually restoring balance of ecosystems.

11. MONO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, Biological Resources: Scott Burns introduced Dr. James Paulus, who presented a PowerPoint on his biological resources survey. Field work involved mapping plant community types. Forests that abut properties in towns are part of the environment, and impacts to economics occur. Towns are discrete units, but can project outward, affecting downstream habitats.

12. MONO COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN UPDATE: Mike Beasley & Isabel Kusumoto, USFS, were unable to attend, so Jon Regelbrugge briefly reviewed the plan. Danna Stroud noted federal and state funding opportunities, including Cal Fire. Mammoth Lakes FPD was involved, and threats to town were addressed. Work with local fire chiefs association? Burns: Yes, Cal Fire has new regulations.

13. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: 1) Off-highway-vehicle proposal in Hammil Valley; 2) USFWS boundary change; 3) NRCS sage grouse overview; 4) re-evaluate MOU, consider NRCS & Cal Fire as members; 5) scenic byway; 6) DEPO plan/decision, state of park.

14. ADJOURN at 11:53 a.m. to Thursday, Jan. 29, 2015, at 9 a.m.

*Prepared by C.D. Ritter, CPT secretary*