

# Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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## MEETING NOTES

April 28, 2016

(Adopted August 25, 2016)

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Members present: Fred Stump, Mono Supervisors; Jon Regelbrugge, USFS/Inyo; Gayle Rosander, Caltrans; Steve Nelson, BLM; Sandra Moberly, Town Council alternate; Alisa Ellsworth, CDFW; Deanna Dulen, Devils Postpile National Monument; Doug Power, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center

Members absent: Joanne Lowden, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; Erin Nordin, USFWS; Justin Nalder, Bridgeport Indian Colony; Rana Saulque, Benton Paiutes; Mike Gautier, Yosemite National Park

Staff present: Wendy Sugimura, Brent Calloway, CD Ritter

Guests present: Jeremy Mitchell, Cal Fire; Danna Stroud, Sierra Nevada Conservancy; Wendi Grasseschi, Mammoth Times;

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- 1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ATTENDEE INTRODUCTIONS:** Chair Fred Stump called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. at the Town/County Conference Room at Minaret Village Mall in Mammoth Lakes. Attendees recited the pledge of allegiance.
- 2. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Fred Stump described California 2014 Water Law that rates water basins between very low and high. One basin in Mono, contiguous to Inyo, rated medium, so mandatory compliance is needed. Inyo Water Department and Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District requested basin split, based on USGS study. That feature prevents water from flowing south, shunts it toward Fish Slough. Public comment closes end of April, tentative decision by August, final by fall. If split, Tri-Valley would be management agency, but without funding. If split, both Inyo and Mono will do EIR for Fish Slough. District 2 Supervisor sits on Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District, whose primary mission is to control and limit water export.
- 3. MEETING NOTES:** Review/approve draft meeting notes from Jan. 28, 2016 (*Power/Ellsworth. Ayes: All.*)
- 4. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE:** Agency planning issues & pending projects
- 5. FUEL REDUCTION & WILDFIRE PREVENTION PLANNING**
  - A. HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION:** Jon Regelbrugge, USFS/Inyo, reviewed fires in Mammoth area. Efforts are being made to reduce intensity, improve resistance to control. Periodic fires are needed. Vegetation communities now are more prone to fire. Efforts to reduce wildland fuels adjacent to communities, remove ladder fuels, and create defensible space. Other factors: lightning strikes, house fires. Must get rid of limbs and tops of trees thinned, and mow/mulch shrubs. Prescribed fire maintains low fuel accumulations on forest floor. Pile burning in snow and broadcast burning (more complicated, higher risk). Tree mortality from drought, insect and disease worse on west side of Sierra, tens to hundreds of acres. Smoke will emanate from vegetation burning. Human health impacts ensue.
  - B. MONO COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PREVENTION PLAN (CWPP):** Brent Calloway, Mono County, described CWPP as tool of healthy forests. Fifteen projects for INF completed, 25 for BLM. Funding available by BLM comprehensive sage grouse efforts. Range fire gets attention now to protect grouse habitat. Consulting with agencies, special districts, and fire safe councils. Hopefully end of worst drought. CWPP is small project with big impact on funding of fuels projects. Bigger issues will emerge from communities; e.g.,

escape routes. Wheeler Crest fire safe: Revisit fire hazard ratings? Misleading to say “low” when significant hazard exists. No information sent to Wheeler Crest. Steve Nelson commended Brent Calloway for his many contributions, as he joins Inyo-Mono Agriculture Commission after this week.

**C. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE ON WILDFIRE PREVENTION PLANNING:** Stump asked Sue Farley about cambium layer of Jeffrey to dry out so beetle would have no food source. Farley said Forest entomologist regularly visits regarding insect disease outbreaks. Design features into project, such as taking material off site, removing hazard trees, and covering with black plastic. Standard practice is to remove spread of root diseases with borax.

Dave Parker, Wheeler Crest, asked if anything FPD/fire safe councils can do toward funding? Sue Farley noted collaborative approach with partners. Look at federal financial assistance grants. Danna Stroud cited State funding, access, partners ready.

Farley stated different streams of funding could help with CEQA compliance.

Stump recognized two most active, successful fire safe councils: Wheeler Crest and June Lake.

Stroud indicated Sierra Nevada Conservancy has Proposition 1 funding till Sept. 1, 2016, and is looking for projects. She distributed A fact sheet on watershed improvement program.

Farley noted funding for forest health, and a list of Congressionally designated watersheds.

Moberly suggested letting public know early on of fire issues – what to expect, how to prepare. Probably smoky this summer.

Stump added that public needs to realize agencies not fully staffed or equipped, be proactive. Small subdivisions of 50-60 homes not coverable when needed. Takes long time to get help.

**6. DEVILS POSTPILE (DEPO) DRAFT STATE OF THE PARKS REPORT:** Deanna Dulen, DEPO superintendent, stated report was completed in time for 2016 centennial celebration. Focus is envisioning next century, with park resources and values passed on in as good as, or better than, conditions that exist today. Park pulse report will be posted on website, nps.gov. Only 40 parks were selected to produce reports. Visitor satisfaction was determined by annual survey responses and comments on experience. Committed to youth engagement; e.g., Bishop Paiute kids. Grants are available to take kids to national parks. Rating noted air quality warrants significant concern. Many days exceed state ozone levels. Warm air rises, brings particulates in sundowner winds, when ozone spikes. Meadows are water filters and air filters (convert to oxygen and water). DEPO has high biodiversity: invertebrates, plants, animals, birds, and insects. Fire regime, so compromised by putting out fires last century, leads to large, catastrophic fires. Night sky has very little light pollution, ideal for star talks. Cultural resources are exchanged by tribes of west and east. Areas of significant concern: air quality; shoulder seasons without shuttle offer 60-80 parking spots; and climate change impacts wetlands, streamflow, and has multiplier effect on air quality; increasing visitor impacts; partnership with USGS & Scripps. “Icebox canyon” traps cold air. Taking care of protected areas helps counteract climate change. Positive management actions and collaborative support are needed.

**7. LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENT SUBCOMMITTEE.** Wendy Sugimura said California Department of Fish & Wildlife reported conservation easements and state acquisitions.

**8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:** USFWS update

**9. ADJOURN** at 11:46 to next meeting: Thursday, July 28, 2016, at 9 a.m.

*Prepared by CD Ritter, CPT secretary*