DRAFT - SUMMARY

JOINT STAKEHOLDER SCIENCE COMMITTEE AND STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY
COMMITTEE MEETING

LAKE TAHOE WEST RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Tuesday, February 12, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, 128 Market St, Stateline, NV 89410

All meeting materials are publicly available on the Lake Tahoe West website
http://nationalforests.org/laketahoewest. For questions please contact the program manager/facilitator
Sarah Di Vittorio at sdivittorio@nationalforests.org or (530) 902-8281.

Meeting Synopsis

The Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership (LTW) Stakeholder Science and Stakeholder Community Committees met jointly to move forward with Landscape Restoration Strategy (LRS) development and discuss aspects of transitioning to Phase 3 of the Project. The Design Team presented draft maps to be associated with the LRS, and introduced a revised version of the LRS Matrix for Stakeholder edits/commentary. The maps use a bivariate choropleth to juxtapose two important variables against one another (such as: slope/trees per acre resilience, and seral class/trees per acre resilience), to help identify areas to treat and protect. Next, the Environmental Review Team (ERT) presented a proposed working approach to the environmental compliance process, along with a Phase 3 timeline.

The next Stakeholder Meeting will be a joint Stakeholder Science and Stakeholder Community Committee Meeting on Tuesday, March 26, 2019. The goals include discussing responses to the "online exercise" to inform set-up of the Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS).

Contents

1. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

Sarah Di Vittorio welcomed the group to the February 12, 2019, Joint Stakeholder Science and Stakeholder Community Meeting, providing time for introductions. After performing a review of the meeting agenda, Ms. Di Vittorio delivered general updates to the two Stakeholder Committees.

- Ms. Di Vittorio introduced Shannon Friedman, of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and Christine Aralia, of the California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC), who will be serving as Environmental Review Team (ERT) leads.
  - Christine Aralia is a new member of the LTW Partnership, joining CTC as the Landscape Conservation Coordinator.

2. Landscape Restoration Strategy – Preliminary Maps

Nadia Tase and Mason Bindl shared maps of the LTW project area, a recent product of the Design Team to help visualize priority areas to treat and potential constraints. The maps were developed by Mr. Bindl and take advantage of a "bivariate choropleth" to observe two spatial variables at once. The maps demonstrate different ways of representing Slope vs. Trees Per Acre (TPA) Resilience and Seral Stage vs. TPA Resilience, though other variables and combinations are possible to display.

Four maps were presented, where TPA Resilience was categorized as defined in the Landscape Resilience Assessment (LRA):

(1) Slope vs. TPA Resilience
(2) Seral Stage vs. TPA Resilience
(3) "Mid-to-Late" Seral Stage vs. TPA Resilience
(4) Seral Stage vs. "Mid-to-Less" TPA Resilience

Seral Stage and TPA Resilience were categorized as defined in the Landscape Resilience Assessment (LRA). Slope was categorized as an averaged value per unit area, as follows: 0<30%, 30<50% and 50<70%.

Slope vs. TPA Resilience:
- Areas with 0-30% slope and overly dense TPA could be, "low-hanging fruit," and make up approximately 22,000 acres.
- Areas with 30-50% slope and overly dense TPA could be in the, "middle," and represent approximately 10,000 acres.
  - This information is relevant to a potential TRPA code change regarding mechanical treatments on steep slopes.
- Areas with 50-70% slope and overly dense TPA could be the, "difficult," acres to treat and are composed of approximately 3,000 acres.
- Areas with less dense TPA could be areas to, "protect," or might be a good target for prescribed fire activities.
- Acreage figures only represent forested areas (ex. no built environment) and do not include wilderness.
- Acres are evenly split up between management zones: ~12,000 acres of WUI Defense, ~12,000 acres of WUI Threat, and ~12,000 acres of General Forest.

Seral Stage vs. TPA Resilience:

- Areas with late seral forest that are in resilience could be areas to "protect," or might be a good target for prescribed fire activities, and make up approximately 220 acres.
- Areas with lower tree densities perhaps should be left alone.
- Areas with mid-seral forest that are in average resilience may still need work.
- Areas that are overly dense will need treatment, and could be broken up by seral class.

The Design Team is currently exploring options, including a more detailed and complex mapping of the project area in select HUC-8 watershed panels. Other potential Design Team mapping ideas include the use of fire severity variables and Quadratic Mean Diameter (QMD), and combining Map (1) with shaded variations to Map (2). Suggestions for new maps, or improvements to existing maps, are welcome. Bivariate choropleth maps can be done for any two variables that do not auto-correlate, though ideally each variable should be able to be binned into three categories (ex. early seral, mid-seral, late seral).

Mapping represents a first step to teasing out different objectives and visualizing priorities and potential conflicts. The maps will also help with the Phase 3 planning process, and are a good visual to firm-up the language of the LRS.

Questions/Comments:

- Suggestion: Bringing in climate modeling could help prioritize where to begin treatment.
- Q: Do maps reflect recent treatments in the WUI?
    - It incorporates some of the treatment. The maps are based off 2010 LiDAR data. Mapping will need to be done with 2018 LiDAR.
- Q: What variables are important to map from a fire-risk perspective?
    - The main issue is that there are too many trees in the built environment. These acres can be the most difficult to treat, due to different ownerships. The result could be that public lands move to resilience, while the built environment falls behind.
    - Seral stage is not as important in the built environment.
        - Incorporate into the LRS language for the built environment – emphasize quality of life, hydrologic function, and fire risk.
    - Mapping should incorporate areas with the highest fire threat: build environment/defensible space/WUI, corridors, roads, power lines, and recreation areas.
        - TRPA have layers coded ~3 acres in side: developed, undeveloped, and power-line.
    - From a fire-risk perspective we would also map ingress/egress and social implications (disadvantaged communities, ESL, etc.).
- Fire effects variables:
    - Land Area Fire Risk Index (LAFRI) – focused in WUI defense (where most fires start); self-informative.
    - High severity patch size vs. TPA Resilience (also slope, PACs, distance-to-roads, management zones, ownership).
- Q: How will roads be incorporated?
    - Most of the areas are within ½ mile of the road, but there are nuances to access that need to be addressed. Some areas, for example, will need a field check regarding road access.
- Q: What is the % of area that we would like to treat but cannot access due to slope rule?
    - A minimum of 25%. EcObject takes a zonal average – there could be steep slopes within pixels that block access.
    - Suggestion: Look at different levels of slope to demonstrate the effect of increasing the current slope limit.
- Suggestion: Have a panel of slope and then map other variables to eliminate hill shading.

- Suggestion: When using a smaller HUC-8 scale, it might be useful to include the WUI outline, and show private, state and federal land ownerships.
  - More detailed, zoomed in maps will be critical to environmental planning. Need to be cognizant about what we include. May not need that level of detail for the LRS.
- Suggestion: LTW could inform TRPA code changes – keep in mind what it could look like in other areas of the Basin.
- LTW web-map showing planned projects is available on the National Forest Foundation (NFF) LTW Partnership web page: https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are/regional-offices/california-program/laketahoewest

3. Landscape Restoration Strategy Matrix

Jen Greenberg reintroduced the LRS Matrix to stakeholders. The Matrix has been presented and discussed in prior meetings, though has evolved significantly since the last version was shown to stakeholders. The Matrix will continue to be refined pending modeling results and further stakeholder comments. Word-smithing comments should be sent directly to Sarah Di Vittorio via email.

The Matrix will likely be translated into the narrative (word doc) of the LRS. The full matrix may be included in an appendix. In-text citations will be removed from the Matrix and included in the Justification appendix, which provides the rationale behind decisions made in the Matrix.

The narrative will explicitly call out the need to address all objectives, and for the objectives to be moved forward concurrently. However, the narrative may differ slightly in its messaging based on the intended audience. To accommodate the general public, communications staff members of the organizing agencies have advised the Design Team to revise goal statements to include a more active call-to-action.

Discussion followed:

Goal #1
- Suggestion: Goal 1: "Resilience" should be to all disturbances (ex. disease, changing climate, etc.), not just the three mentioned (fire, drought, and insects).
  - Address changing climate throughout - the overall "Vision" statement *does* include climate change and other disturbances.
- Suggestion: Goal 1A(i): Use "reduction" instead of "loss."
- Suggestion: Goal 1A(v): Address strategy for late seral/snags in built environment.
- Q: Is there overlap between the acres in Goal 1A (decreased tree density) and Goal 1B (seral stage representation)?
  - Yes, there is overlap. There is also overlap with the aspen area in Goal 1D, meadow/riparian area in Goal 3B, and defense area in Goal 5A.
- Q: Goal 1C: Are snowpack openings (from Goal 4) applicable to 1C?
  - Yes, but the Design Team needs to rectify discrepancies in specified opening sizes between each goal.
  - Suggestion: Have Goals reference one another.

Goal #2
- Q: Goal 2B: Is there an acreage target for prescribed fire?

- o Acreage targets are difficult to pin down, so "allowable burn days" are used as a proxy.
- o "80% of allowable burn days" needs to be further defined (not just based on Air Quality).
- o Suggestion: Staffing allocations should not be included in criteria of "allowable burn days." This assumes that staffing cannot be adjusted – need to think innovatively.
- Q: Goal 2C: Where does the 25% come from? Are there data that show how many naturally ignited fires have been put out that should have otherwise been managed?
  - o Full suppression has been the policy, so no data are available. Any number above zero is controversial, but it would be beneficial to have more managed fire – want to create room for opportunity (25% will allow for this).
  - o Ultimately, the amount of managed wildfire will depend on resource availability.
    - ▪ Suggestion: Include resource availability constraints in Goal.
      - Included in 6C(ii), but resource availability will depend on regional, state and national policies.
  - o Suggestion: Use the phrasing, "create conditions on the ground so that 1 in 4 fires could be managed…," instead.
- Q: Goal 2A: Where does, "contiguous patches less than 40 acres in size," come from?
  - o The 40-acre patch size is based on historic fires sizes in the Basin, and is included to suggest that some high severity fire is ok, but not at too large of a patch size.
- Q: Goal 2A(i): Is there other critical infrastructure that could be included?
  - o Suggestion: Add power line corridors and brainstorm others.

Goal #3
- Suggestion: Goal 3B(i): Areas that were historical floodplains/meadows may no longer show up as a "current" area. Include language in this Goal to take advantage of opportunities to uncover and treat historic areas that were floodplains/meadows.
  - o Think about how current development (esp. roads) could be modified to restore historic flow patterns.
- Suggestion: Goal 3B(iii)(a): Using "vegetation cover" as a metric might be missing some important pieces – adjust criteria accordingly (ex. vegetation function cover, rooting depths, etc.).

Goal #4
- Q: Goal 4A(v) – is completing regional storm water projects part of the charge of LTW?
  - o Suggestion: Add in language "work with local jurisdictions to…"
  - o Suggestion: Could play into communications pieces (ex. "this is how other jurisdictions can assist").
- Q: Goal 4B: How many miles of stream are actually in need of improvement?
  - o This figure is not known - a lot has been done or is in a natural state
  - o The "9 mile" figure is based on a historic rate of restoration, though Ward, Blackwood, Burton, Polaris and Meeks Creeks are called out in Goal 4B(i).
  - o Suggestion: Include language to "assess how much is needed."
- Goal 4B (ii)(d): It seems counterintuitive to address highly erosive areas first (cost/benefit of treatment may be less). May need a rethink.

Goal #5
- Q: Goal 5A: Will WUI Defense acres overlap with other goals?

- o   Would overlap with Goal 1A (reduced tree density).
- o   Would *not* overlap with openings.
  - ▪   WUI Defense treatment will be focused on modifying fire behavior.
  - ▪   Most WUI projects are already planned and do not incorporate openings.
- •   Q: Goal 5A: Why for first 10 years?
  - o   To underscore the need to prioritize WUI defense treatments first - work is already planned.
  - o   Other goals could be tweaked in the future to adjust priorities.

Goal #6
- •   Q: Goal 6B: Why is this a preferred outcome (i.e. more efficient)?
  - o   When performing projects concurrently, such as stream restoration and forest restoration, they will already have equipment, materials, and built roads.
  - o   Promotes "all lands/all hands" approach and discourages stopping at boundaries/jurisdictions.
  - o   Encourages consideration of the overall goals before moving into a landscape (rather than a specific objective).
  - o   Suggestion: Planning units/work types separately can be more efficient, even when implementing all together
- •   Q: Goal 6A(i): Is part of the goal is to create biomass and support the utilization economy? May not be received well with the public.
  - o   Currently, there is a need for biomass facilities – it is a mutually beneficial relationship. The phrasing is somewhat intentional, with the plan to provide a steady supply in earlier years and conduct more burning in later years.
  - o   Suggestion: It needs to be more explicit that LTW is not solely supporting the biomass industry.
    - ▪   Suggestion: Add that biomass supply should be "ecologically sustainable."
    - ▪   Suggestion: Use term, "restorative wood industry."

General Questions/comments:

- •   Suggestion: Be careful about how language is made more accessible (ex. having forest health as Goal 1 could exclude Goals 2 and 3 as important to forest health).
  - o   Language should not uncouple goals and should demonstrate interconnectedness of landscape.
  - o   Needs scientific accuracy.
- •   Commonwise would like to support a focused communications effort with LTW – would like to meet with LTW communications folks in next month.
  - o   Sagehen has formed large regional art response.
  - o   CA Natural Resource Agency and Forest Health Task Force (CAL FIRE) is also working on communications strategy – need to coordinate on messaging and not do the same work twice.
    - ▪   ==ACTION ITEM==: **Chris Anthony** will send names of communications contacts to Sarah.
- •   Thinning will not solve all forest health problems.
  - o   Suggestion: Explicitly include in the narrative or prioritization guidelines.
- •   Suggestion: Address the Governor's Executive Order priorities and different funding sources.

- o More and more, fires are starting in rural/remote areas and moving into communities (ex. Carr, Woolsey, Camp Fires).
- Q: Are goals in a priority order?
  - o No, all goals have equal weight, and all objectives should be completed concurrently.
- Q: Are there enough resources/capacity to weight all equally?
  - o Many goals will look heavily to other groups for assistance (ex. TFFT).
  - o The strategy needs to be optimistic and encourage innovation.
  - o Planning will also help to prioritize - not everything will be covered under the same environmental document, which will naturally lead to prioritization.
  - o All goals need to be considered - the EMDS questionnaire will help stakeholders to voice key values.
- Q: Would it be worthwhile to be explicit about a strategy for obtaining funding?
  - o This could be identified in Goal 6 – Economics and Capacity.
  - o Suggestion: Include in narrative.
- Suggestion: Embed sequencing/feasibility (the "how") into the strategy.

4. Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS)

Sarah DiVittorio reviewed EMDS and stakeholder involvement via the "online tool," and introduced Eric Abelson. Mr. Abelson provided a more in-depth presentation of EMDS and the process of integrating the "online tool" into modeling results. EMDS will assist in decision support through synthesizing outputs, at various levels of detail (topics, subtopics, etc.), to describe scenario performance over time. EMDS allows the user to define and then explore driving factors behind scenario performance. The "online tool" will assist in this process by bringing in various perspectives and allowing users to rank the importance of topics/subtopics. In doing so, it will help to identify points of alignment and disagreement in how much emphasis to place on different values when evaluating the modeling results. The results of the online exercise will be discussed at the next Stakeholder Meeting. Please note that all answers to questions are anonymous.

Questions/comments:
- Q: How were topics/subtopics developed?
  - o Topics/subtopics were decided through an iterative process and multiple meetings with the Design Team. Modeling outputs were used where available.
  - o The tool starts at the bottom (subtopics) and works its way up, which will assist in understanding what goes into defining the various topics.
- Q: How will answers to the online tool be used?
  - o EMDS is not an optimization model and will not make decisions for the user, but is designed to help facilitate the decision process and identify tensions.
  - o The default setting is that subtopics/topics are equal, and answers ask if there is a reason why one should be weighted more than the other in terms of assessing scenario performance.

5. Draft Environmental Planning Approach

Christina Aralia, CTC, Shannon Friedman, TRPA, and Michael Brumbaugh, USFS LTBMU, leads of the LTW Environmental Review Team, presented the general approach to environmental documentation.

Stakeholder opinion on the approach is welcomed, with the understanding that the Executive Team reserves the right to make the final decision. We are still vetting and refining this approach but wanted to where we are now and collect feedback.

Due to the complexity and various regulatory bodies involved (Federal, State, Local), the approach proposes the use of a Triple Environmental Document (NEPA, CEQA, TRPA) at the project level, with some programmatic elements. The coupling together of a Project-level Joint Document with a Program-level Joint Document is envisioned to provide a balance of allowing for LTW to get certain priority projects on the ground quickly (ex. thinning), while allowing time to get enough information for other elements that could be programmatic (ex. aquatics, stream, etc.). Down the line, as more information becomes available, project elements could be added to tier off the programmatic document. Currently, many planning efforts already exist at the project level, particularly for the WUI (CSP MND, West Shore WUI, PTIER), and most of the projects planned through LTW will involve work in the general forest.

The actual document that will be used (EA, EIR, EIS) has not been decided - it will depend on project design (proposed action) and the elements that may be incorporated.

Questions/comments:

- Q: How large was the Redwood Mill Creek Approach?
    - A 36,000 –acre overall project area was divided into two programmatic documents. It also allowed for "tiering off" of projects to streamline the work that followed.
- Q: Why not have two separate documents for project and programmatic level elements?
    - It would be confusing to have two separate documents.
    - There may not be enough detail for a full separate programmatic document.
    - The Executive Team is requesting an approach that pushes the envelope, and allows for increased pace and scale (not business as usual).
- Q: Is this approach Programmatic, or more of a large-scale NEPA?
    - Programmatic. The USFS has used programmatic approaches in the past, such as a Programmatic Biological Opinion, which allows for a checklist applicable for different species for specialists, when designing projects. Similarly, this programmatic approach could assist in project design for LTW (ex. roads). This would provide efficiency by streamlining specialist involvement when designing projects.
    - This approach would allow for incorporation of certain elements when implementing forest health projects. It would also be a way to utilize LTW momentum to best implement watershed pieces so that they don't fall behind.
    - Suggestion: Identify the benefits of a programmatic document for moving forward project elements – it will help make the argument for programmatic approach.
- Programmatic elements are for the pieces that we do not know location
- Suggestion: For agreement at the highest level, an EIR/EIS would likely have to be the approach. It may take longer but it could be more efficient in the long run.
    - Also a balance between what the USFS could push forward in a CE.
        - LTW has more built into it.
- Q: Are there examples that could be used from other collaboratives?
    - LTW is in the process of speaking with other collaboratives to consult with them on their approach.

- The current approach is trying to take advantage of political climate - streamlining while avoiding the use of Forest Health CE's to move projects forward.
- The Environmental Review Team will review the approach and revise the Memo for discussion during the April 2nd Stakeholder meeting (need Executive team input first). The Executive Team will make a final decision on April 16th. [Note: this timeline is delayed and there will not be an April 2nd stakeholder meeting.]
- We intend to start working on the Proposed Action in early fall 2019.

Closing Remarks

There were no closing remarks or interested party comments.

Action Items & Agreements

1. **DONE - ACTION ITEM**: **Chris Anthony** will send names of communications contacts to Sarah.

Meeting Attendees

Organizing and Participating Agencies
CTC – California Tahoe Conservancy
FWS – Friends of the West Shore
LSLT - League to Save Lake Tahoe
NFF – National Forest Foundation
SFL - Sierra Forest Legacy
CSP – California State Parks
TFFT – Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team
TRPA – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
USFS LTBMU – U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
USFS PSW – U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Research Station

Stakeholder Science and Community
Committee Members
1. Jennifer Quashnick
2. Sue Britting
3. Roland Shaw
4. Jeff Brown
5. Zach Bradford
6. Matt Freitas
7. Amy Berry, The Tahoe Fund
8. Maria Mircheva

Public or Other
9. Nanette Hansel, Ascent
10. Allison Wolff, Common-wise

Staff

11. Chris Anthony, CAL FIRE
12. Svetlana Yegorova, CSP
13. Jen Greenberg, CTC
14. Christine Aralia, CTC
15. Whitney Brennan, CTC
16. Sarah Di Vittorio, NFF
17. Evan Ritzinger, NFF
18. Nadia Tase, TFFT
19. Forest Schafer, TFFT
20. Mason Bindl, TRPA
21. Shannon Freidman, TRPA
22. Brian Garrett, USFS LTBMU
23. Michael Brumbaugh, USFS LTMBU
24. Keith Reynolds, USFS PSW
25. Pat Manley, USFS PSW
26. Eric Abelson, USFS PSW
27. Charles Maxwell, North Carolina State University
28. Silver Hartman, CSP
29. Shana Gross, USFS LTBMU