

SUMMARY | STAKEHOLDER SCIENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

LAKE TAHOE WEST RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Tuesday, June 6, 2017, 1:00 to 5:00 pm

Tahoe Mountain Lab, 3079 Harrison Ave., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

All meeting materials are publicly available on the Lake Tahoe West website <http://nationalforests.org/laketahoewest>. For questions please contact the program manager/facilitator Dorian Fougères at dfougeres@nationalforests.org or (530) 902-8281.

Meeting Synopsis

The Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership (Lake Tahoe West) Stakeholder Science Committee (SSC) met on June 6, 2017, at the Tahoe Mountain Lab in South Lake Tahoe. Stakeholders reviewed revisions to the Essential Management Questions work product. Discussion focused on how to clarify the relationship between the three categories of landscape value: ecosystems, public health & safety, and recreation. Stakeholders also reviewed the recent Landscape Resilience Assessment on indicators. Discussion included how the categories of landscape value would overlay the indicators; how best to integrate human disturbances like accidental fire ignitions, erosion, and air pollution; and the near-term work plan for completing the assessment. Subsequently the group reviewed the field visit agenda and design principles. The facilitator also provided a series of updates on the boundary, coordination with the Tahoe and Eldorado National Forests, and secured and requested funding, among other things. Final discussion focused on the Planning Scenarios, and the need to clarify that the narratives are the product of a thinking exercise, and the assumptions and hypotheses embedded therein will be modeled and explored during Phase 2 modeling, as well as eventual monitoring. The facilitator noted his own pending departure for family reasons, and highlighted what he felt was most distinctive and promising about LTW. Following a field visit on June 7, the next Stakeholder Community Committee and Stakeholder Science Committee meetings will be on Thursday, July 6, from 9 am to 12 pm, and 1 pm to 5 pm, respectively. The location will be the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, in South Lake Tahoe.

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This meeting summary paraphrases individual comments and suggestions. Statements do not indicate consensus of the group unless they are preceded by the word "AGREEMENT". Statements are not attributed unless spoken by one of the organizing or participating agencies, or by a presenter.

Action Items

1. **Organizing Agencies** to talk with Washoe Tribe about how to integrate cultural resources, and then update EMQ Purpose & Explanation accordingly.
2. **Maureen** to send Randy final citations for the National Climate Assessment and CMIP5.
3. **Randy** to organize a call between Ms. McCarthy, Mr. Dettinger, Pat Manley, Rob Scheller, and possibly other members of the Science Team to discuss supplemental climate model information that could aid LTW.
4. **Randy and Dorian** to brief the American Ranger District, Tahoe National Forest.
5. **Mike and Dan** to update language around "unmanaged lands" in the Planning Scenarios.
6. **IADT** to research whether Yosemite has developed indicators for human use as a disturbance.
7. **Dorian** to add reference to LTW organizing principle (restoration) to the EMQ Purpose and Explanation.
8. **Dorian** to share the newly public Lake Tahoe West geospatial map showing vegetation treatments that are currently being planned or being implemented on the west shore, and to follow-up with Mason about watershed treatments.
9. **Dorian** to update project description to focus on the planning area.
10. **Dorian** to update the Explanation of Boundaries to make it easier to see how much analysis area is within the basin.
11. **Dorian** to finalize May 2 webinar summary and post it on the website.
12. **Dorian** to check about NFF social media support.
13. **Dorian** to make requested Planning Scenarios edits to layout, figures, and duplicate citations.
14. **Dorian** to draft language for **Sue** to review that clarifies the intended use of the scenarios and what stakeholders were asked to recommend.

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Mr. David Orr, Co-Founder of the Tahoe Mountain Lab, welcomed people to the meeting, noting that the lab is South Lake Tahoe's first co-working space and hosts over 50 different businesses and organizations, from foundations through engineering firms to technology companies.
- Mr. Mike Vollmer, Lead for the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership's (LTW) Interagency Design Team (IADT), also welcomed people to the Stakeholder Science Committee (SSC) meeting, noting the several IADT members in attendance.
- Mr. Dorian Fougères, LTW Facilitator, reviewed the agenda and meeting ground rules.

Interested party comment period #1:

- There were no interested party comments at this time.

2. Essential Management Questions (EMQs)

Mr. Fougères reviewed highlights from the Summary of Significant Changes, with discussion interspersed.

- The removal of the “watershed” category and its replacement with other columns makes the EMQs clearer. Now there are three categories of value: ecosystems, public health & safety, and recreation, recognizing that ecosystems include upland, aquatic, and riparian and meadow ecosystems.

Regarding cultural resources

- At their meeting with the Washoe Tribe, the Organizing Agencies should explain the categories of landscape value, and discuss whether the tribe feels this should be elevated to a new category, or is sufficiently addressed through ecosystems.
- The agencies should also further discuss how the tribe would like to be involved, whether as a Participating Agency, member of one of the stakeholder committees, ongoing formal consultation, or other means.
- Based on the outcomes of discussion, this topic should be updated in the purpose and explanation for the EMQs.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Organizing Agencies to talk with Washoe Tribe about how to integrate cultural resources, and then update EMQ Purpose & Explanation accordingly.

Regarding public health & safety and recreation

- It is not clear whether all the EMQs are equal, and whether we’ll devote as much attention to addressing recreation as we will ecosystems.
 - Mr. Fougères: Per the Organizing Principles diagram from November 30, 2016, LTW’s organizing principle is restoration. Recreation and public health and safety are other important values on the landscape, but LTW is not charged with planning for them in and of themselves. If restoration treatments are expected to negatively impact those values, or there are opportunities to enhance them through recreation, then LTW needs to address them.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Dorian to add reference to LTW organizing principle (restoration) to the EMQ Purpose and Explanation.
- This same question applies to how we think about the range of desired conditions for the indicators in the Landscape Resilience Assessment (LRA):
 - Will these be based purely on ecosystems?
 - Or primarily on ecosystems, and secondarily in light of public health & safety and recreation?
 - Or will they be based on treating ecosystems, public health and safety, and recreation as equally important?
 - If purely on ecosystems, it’s easy to imagine that what we might want for restoring ecological fire or floodplains could conflict with people.

- Another framing is that the primary value is based on where you are in the landscape. For example, in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), this would be the primary concern. In the general forest, ecosystems could be the primary concern.
 - The IADT has discussed that one helpful division in the LRA will be the WUI. It still will require careful thought, however, because there might be opportunities for restoration within the WUI threat zone or even possibly defense zone, so long as they're compatible with fire safety objectives.
 - Further, California State Parks land is almost entirely within the WUI. State Parks makes further zones within this.
- Mr. Fougères: Exactly how restoration as our organizing principle manifests may depend partly where we are in our phases.
 - During Phase 1, in our assessment, we could think about ecological "ideals," if you will.
 - During Phase 2, as we start developing the Landscape Restoration Strategy, we'll unavoidably have to pay more attention to constraints, because we'll be talking about where different restoration treatments could occur and how to package them into distinct management approaches.
 - When we get to Phase 3 and start planning a restoration project, we'll then have to grapple with all the fine-grained constraints, like Forest Service Standards and Guidelines and eventual permitting. At that point, all values will be effectively equal, we won't have the luxury of thinking purely about ecology.
- Some desired conditions for public health & safety, and recreation, are likely already embedded in our ecosystem indicators.
- *What might make the most sense for the moment would be set aside the EMQs and focus on how this comes up in the LRA, and then look back on the approach and how to best characterize it.*
- The group did not have further suggestions on any of the EMQs themselves.

3. Landscape Resilience Assessment

Mr. Fougères reviewed highlights from the Purpose and Explanation, and the Summary of Significant Changes, with discussion interspersed.

Regarding desired conditions

- Desired conditions for public health and safety are relatively well defined, particularly for fire behavior within the WUI.
 - There is also a large published literature for ecosystems.
 - It is harder to speak about desired conditions for recreation. The topic has not been well developed in the Basin, notwithstanding notable efforts by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.
 - Mr. Fougères: One could note the Purpose and Explanation that the desired conditions for ecosystems and public health & safety have a more firm foundation, while those for recreation are less well developed and vetted.
- Many times initiatives will leave the topic aside because it is so difficult to grasp.

- There are several recreation representatives on the Stakeholder Community Committee, and there is a new Sustainable Recreation Working Group in the Basin.
- Mr. Fougères: Based on suggestions and discussion, what seems to make the most sense is for the Interagency Design Team (IADT) to start developing some ranges of desired resilient conditions, and exploring different ways to incorporate the three categories of landscape value in practice. Then, as with the EMQs, the IADT can look back at what approach has been most effective, and explain this in the next version and the Purpose and Explanation.

Regarding human use as a disturbance

- How are we thinking about human use as a disturbance?
 - Mr. Fougères: The IADT felt that fire ignitions, erosion, and air pollution were the main components, but not trash.
 - Noise should also be considered.
 - The primary driver of landscape change is the regional economy. People come for the visual appeal of the forests, for the clarity of the lake, for skiing. The landscape is heavily used, no matter where you are. This includes noise heard miles away and people seen in the backwoods on wildlife cameras. People are the primary driver of landscape change.
 - It was notable that all the planning scenario conversations back in February assumed that visitor use would only increase in the Basin, given climate change.
- *It would be helpful going forward to indicate when the desired conditions for an indicator are driven by-and-large just by ecosystems, and when they are tempered by human concerns.*
- “Human use” is too broad and could put people off. If the focus is on fire ignitions, erosion, and air pollution, these should be called out directly.
 - Mr. Fougères: We did talk about fire and felt that the resilience of the landscape to fire would have the same indicator regardless of whether it was caused by lightning or by people.
- For erosion, one could look at something like the number of people with access to particular areas, while for air pollution one could look at something like number of vehicle trips.
- Yosemite National Park might have thought a lot about these kinds of indicators given how they have addressed park access.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** IADT to research whether Yosemite has developed indicators for human use as a disturbance.
- Mr. Fougères: Figuring out how to integrate the “social” part of our “social-ecological landscape” in our assessment is hard work.
 - The IADT will further consider how to incorporate human use, perhaps we will be able to create a “Version 1.0,” recognizing that this will need to be refined in a future. Either way, we will specify what the disturbance is, rather than “human use” generally.
 - We will look to the SSC to help us decide when to continue pursuing something or when to let it go.

Mr. Fougères reviewed the Near-Term Work Plan for completing the LRA, noting the desire to complete the work product before his permanent departure in mid-September.

Interested party comment period #2

- When thinking about human use, one should consider not only erosion but soil compaction.
- There is a sociological component to LTW because the work is trying to help people understand why it is important to care about the forest and their actions.

4. Field Visit Preparation

Mr. Fougères reviewed that this trip would be primarily educational, showing areas that are hard to treat and not in resilient condition. The second field visit in October would focus more on possible treatments. Discussion followed.

- *It will be helpful if the IADT members can explain, when we're in the field, the relativity of severity of what we see, and also how representative they are of the west shore.*

Mr. Vollmer noted that there would be handheld electronic tablet that will let us pinpoint where we are on the landscape, and look at the associated EcObject layers.

Mr. Fougères noted the group that the LTW geospatial map previewed on May 2 is, as of today, publicly accessible, following beta-testing. It focuses on vegetation treatments, and does not yet include watershed restoration treatments. It will eventually also have the EcObject layers integrated.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Dorian to share the newly public Lake Tahoe West geospatial map showing vegetation treatments that are currently being planned or being implemented on the west shore, and to follow-up with Mason about watershed treatments.

5. General Updates

Regarding the Lake Tahoe West boundary

Mr. Fougères reminded the group that they had recommended the boundary during the May webinar, with the proviso that the eastern boundary first be revised to show a porous boundary with the Lake. This was now complete.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Dorian to update project description to focus on the planning area.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Dorian to update the Explanation of Boundaries to make it easier to see how much analysis area is within the basin.

Regarding the May 2 SSC webinar summary, there were no comments or revisions.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Dorian to finalize May 2 webinar summary and post it on the website.

Regarding coordination with the Tahoe and Eldorado National Forests

Mr. Fougères noted that the IADT had briefed the Truckee Ranger District (Tahoe) and Pacific Ranger District (Eldorado). LTW was well received, and the Districts are ready to help with data requests. Discussion followed.

- The American Ranger District on the Tahoe is also interested in the use of unplanned ignitions/managed wildfire. They are also conducting fire planning and assessment using EcObject for a Forest Plan Amendment allowing the use of unplanned ignitions. They should also be briefed .
- **ACTION ITEM:** Randy and Dorian to brief the American Ranger District, Tahoe National Forest.

Regarding Charter signatures

Mr. Fougères provided the following updates:

- In addition to the list at the end of the agenda, Sue Britting (Sierra Forest Legacy), Carl Hasty (Tahoe Transportation District), and Steve Teshara (South Shore Chamber of Commerce) had also signed.
- Mr. Dave Johnston, Eldorado County Air Quality Management District, chose not to sign the charter.
- Mr. Rob Weston, West Shore Association, also chose not to sign the charter, though he explained he continued to support the effort and that his choice was informed by other considerations in his life.

Discussion followed.

- Is Harold Singer still representing Sierra Club on the Stakeholder Science Committee?
 - Mr. Fougères: I was informed that he is no longer representing the group. Sierra Club can choose to either have someone else apply to join the SSC, or can join the Stakeholder Community Committee. Ms. Lily Hays from Sierra Club is attending today as an observer.

Regarding logo solicitation

Mr. Fougères reviewed the draft solicitation, and the intent to distribute it next week. There were no comments.

Regarding secured and requested funding

Mr. Fougères reviewed the information in the agenda, noting that some of the State Fire Assistance funding would go to specialized videography and visual arts communications, and that the Core Team had developed an estimated total project budget. Discussion followed.

- Regarding communication, it would be helpful to have someone who is a professional with social media to support the effort with tweets and blogs, and provide us with the relevant hashtags and posting.
 - Mr. Fougères: National Forest Foundation has staff that specialize in that and could likely support the effort in that way, particularly as we get into the Landscape Restoration Strategy and Restoration Project Planning.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Dorian to check about NFF social media support.
- What was the total estimated cost for the entire project, including all phases?
 - Mr. Fougères: Approximately \$64 million, with \$57 million of this for implementation.

6. Planning Scenarios

Mr. Fougères reviewed the recent work. Discussion followed.

- The layout of the scenarios should be revised so that the warmer scenario is at the top, and labels adjusted accordingly.
- Figures 1 and 2 should be attributed, “Courtesy M.D. Dettinger, US Geological Survey.”
- There are duplicate citations in the first two pieces of literature cited.
- **ACTION ITEM: Dorian** to make requested Planning Scenarios edits to layout, figures, and duplicate citations.
- **ACTION ITEM: Maureen** to send Randy final citations for the National Climate Assessment and CMIP5.
- Ms. McCarthy, Mr. Dettinger, and colleagues have developed highly specific climate models that could help LTW exploration of extreme events, including hydrologic effects. The timing is good to coordinate with the Science Team.
 - **ACTION ITEM: Randy** to organize a call between Ms. McCarthy, Mr. Dettinger, Pat Manley, Rob Scheller, and possibly other members of the Science Team to discuss supplemental climate model information that could aid LTW.
- Aside from the cited information on climate change assumptions, the rest of the narratives are a series of assumptions and hypotheses. These will help us identify questions to explore in subsequent modeling and eventually monitoring, which will help us determine what parts of this are accurate.
 - If the SSC is asked to recommend this, we should clarify that we are approving it because it satisfies the desired intent of being a thought exercise, and is clearly written, and that we have confidence in the climate assumptions. And conversely it should be clear that we are not saying we agree with the narratives – I for one would disagree with several things.
 - We could even review this document later, and see what modeling has or has not addressed.
- Mr. Fougères: If stakeholders already have areas where they disagree or have questions, this will help us more readily identify what we should explore further together.
 - **ACTION ITEM: Dorian** to draft language for **Sue** to review that clarifies the intended use of the scenarios and what stakeholders were asked to recommend.
- There is still reference to “unmanaged” lands, which needs to be revised because that term is inaccurate – the land is still being managed, albeit without intervening in the vegetation.
 - **ACTION ITEM: Mike and Dan** to update language around “unmanaged lands” in the Planning Scenarios.

7. Near-Term Transition

Mr. Fougères let the group know he would be leaving California in September for family reasons, and that the National Forest Foundation’s California Program Director Kim Carr was working with the LTW Executive Team to advertise the position and find a replacement. SSC and SCC members will receive the announcement when it is available.

Mr. Fougères is also working with the Core Team to develop near-term work plans for each of the LTW teams to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

Mr. Fougères noted what he felt made the project distinctive and exciting, and thanked everyone for participating.

8. Action Items, Next Steps, and Closing Remarks

Mr. Fougères adjourned the meeting.

9. Attendance

Organizing and Participating Agencies

CTC – California Tahoe Conservancy

NFF – National Forest Foundation

RWQCB Lahontan - Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

State Parks – California State Parks

TFFT – Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team

TRPA – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

USFS – U.S. Forest Service

Stakeholder Science Committee and Interagency Design Team Members

1. Sue Britting

2. Jeff Brown

3. Stephanie Coppeto, USFS

4. Dorian Fougères, NFF

5. Brian Garrett, USFS

6. Mollie Hurt

7. Amy Jirka, TFFT

8. Patricia Maloney

9. Maureen McCarthy

10. Forest Schafer, CTC and TFFT

11. Daniel Shaw, State Parks

12. Roland Shaw

13. Brett Storey

14. Randy Striplin, USFS

15. Mike Vollmer, TRPA

Interested Parties from the Public

16. Garry Bowen

17. Lily Hays, Sierra Club Tahoe Area

18. Norma Santiago, Catalyst Project