

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

**Minutes  
May 17, 2006**

**Attending:**

**RMAC:**

**Representing**

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association
Mike Connor	Public Member
Clancy Dutra	California Farm Bureau Federation
J.R. McCollister	Public Member
Neil McDougald	California Cattlemen's Association
Scott Carnegie	California Forestry Association
Mel Thompson	California Wool Growers Association
Jeff Stephens	CDF / RMAC Executive Secretary

**Members of the Public:**

Tracy Schohr	Cattlemen's Association
Michele Diaz	California Forestry Association
Ceci Dale-Cesmat	NRCS
Crispin Holland	USDA Forest Service
Steve Schoenig	CDFA
Jim Rains	CDFA
Doug Wickizer	CDF
Michele Dias	California Forestry Association

**Items 1 & 2 Call to Order and Introductions:**

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M. Introductions of all present were made. He indicated that the agenda would not be taken in order.

**Item 3, Review and approval of the March 2006 minutes:**

Ken Zimmerman asked Jeff Stephens to review the status of contacting Alex Dunn for a presentation before RMAC or the Board in July. Mr. Stephens stated that he had been in contact with Leonard Hale and George Gentry on the matter. Contact has been initiated with Mr. Dunn; however, a date has not been confirmed. Jeff will keep RMAC informed as to Mr. Dunn's availability to speak at the July Board meeting.

Motion: Clancy Dutra moved that the minutes are accepted with one minor correction. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

**Item 7, Department's Vegetation Management Program:**

Deferred to a future meeting.

**Item 9, Agency and Association Reports:**

California Department of Food and Agriculture, – Steve Schoenig and Jim Rains Reporting:

Steve Schoenig opened discussion with a review of the recent court decisions that have undermined the Department of Pesticide Regulations (DPR) labeling process as being sufficient for CEQA compliance on CDFA projects. He called for closer cooperation between the two agencies (CDF & CDFA) in dealing with pesticides since issues are similar for both agencies.

Jim Rains was asked to discuss the CEQA implications of the court decisions (Ebbits Pass vs. CDF). Mr. Rains made the point that the CEQA equivalency process as previously operating under the DPR regulations is collapsing as a result of these rulings. The potential impact is site specific analysis of each project involving pesticides. A change in law may be the only solution. They intend to use the "emergency" option which exempts them from CEQA for dealing with insect infestations. Steve Schoenig indicated that the "emergency" route would not be a viable option for the control of noxious weeds. He also expressed concern for the AB 2479 process and whether individual analysis will be required for each project funded under this legislation.

Jeff Stephens asked how an emergency is declared for dealing with pests. Jim Rains responded by stating the Secretary has the authority within the Food & Ag Code to declare whether a pest is an "A" or "B" rated pest in terms of threat to agriculture. The A or B rating is sufficient emergency status.

Doug Wickizer was asked by Jeff Stephens as to whether use of an emergency has any potential for vegetation management projects. He stated that CDF would have to rely on the definition of an emergency in CEQA. He further recommended that CDF examine their current guidelines established by the Department under CEQA. Mr. Wickizer also expressed concern that the recent court decisions are a potential threat to the programmatic approach to dealing with state projects.

Steve Schoenig recommended that CDF contact Dave Bakke and Craig Snyder with the USFS. Both have experience in dealing with risk assessment and pesticides.

## **Item 8, Biomass Potential in California and the Implications for California Rangelands:**

Doug Wickizer presented information on the work CDF has been doing with biomass and carbon credits. He handed out the Executive Summary for the Governor's Climate Action Team.

The California Climate Action Registry was created that provides for an accounting methodology for green house gas production. It is available on the Energy Commission's website.

Joint Agency Climate Team – Developed by the Governor with the primary target being the transportation industry and reductions in CO2.

Green House reduction goals have been established in several areas including vegetation management and fuels management. This creates a direct link between the Governor's goals and development of the State Fire Plan, and that of biomass and fire protection programs.

Mike Connor asked if the effects of carbon sequestration on emissions have been considered in the Governor's plan. Doug Wickizer stated yes through the planting of forest vegetation carbon sequestration has been taken into account. The big question is the permanence of this vegetation. Harvest must be balanced with retention of vegetation. The Governor has indicated that forestry is an important tool that will be pursued in future years.

Ken Zimmerman asked if the increase in future population has been accounted for in the Governor's report. Doug Wickizer responded stating yes.

Mr. Wickizer included an explanation of carbon credits that may be registered on the Chicago Carbon Exchange and sold as a commodity. Owners of forested landscapes can participate in this exchange. Mike Connor verified that selling carbon credits would mean agreeing to maintain the vegetation. Doug Wickizer responded that it depends on the terms but yes it can be a restriction placed on the land to maintain vegetation. In California it takes the form of a conservation easement that prevents removal of material. U.S. values currently are \$2-4 per ton.

Mel Thompson noted that rangeland is not included in the Climate Registry. Doug Wickizer stated that rangeland is not included unless it has 10% canopy cover. He further stated that Agriculture is now beginning to develop their own protocol for carbon sequestration and trading. He suggested that RMAC contact Steve Schaffer with CDFA to include rangelands with less than 10% canopy, and that keeping it a separate process from forest ecotypes is an advantage since different management objectives occur on rangelands.

Ceci Dale-Cesmat asked who purchases the easements. Doug Wickizer stated that conservancies are among the most active.

Biomass Update – Doug Wickizer handed out an update that provided current events in California biomass including the Governor's Executive Order. This included discussion on the Biomass Collaborative at UC Davis. Its purpose is to do background work and gather information on bio-energy. The Energy Commission has been promoting renewable energy as part of the Governor's Executive Order.

Doug Wickizer distributed an Action Plan that as of this date has not been funded. The plan defines what agencies must accomplish in the area of climate change.

Ken Zimmerman asked what RMAC can do regarding bio-energy and carbon sequestration. Mr. Wickizer recommended that RMAC examine the institutional issues that inhibit rangeland from participating in carbon credits.

#### **Item 6, Update on AB 2479, Noxious and Invasive Weeds Funding:**

Andrea Fox from the Farm Bureau briefed RMAC. The bill is presently in the Assembly Appropriation Committee. The Budget Subcommittee # 3 has funding for \$2.5 million for WMAs on their agenda. It will also be on Budget Subcommittee #2's agenda for funding consideration. It passed through its previous committee without any dissent from committee members.

Ken Zimmerman asked what impact the court rulings on pesticide applications discussed by Jim Rains will have on AB 2479 funding. Steve Schoenig stated that one option is to create a programmatic CEQA document to cover the projects funded by 2479. However, CDFA would probably strive to avoid risk analysis for each project, leaving that to the project applicant.

#### **Item 10, Focus Group Reports:**

##### **Water Focus Group:**

Ken Zimmerman began discussion by asking Mike Connor to review the major issues on behalf of Chairman Giacomini. Mike Connor summarized the recommendations from the Water Focus Group that included sending a letter to the RPC with the information generated by the RMAC member groups. The letter would identify issues of concern with the SWRCB response to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Clancy Dutra commented that the Focus Group also recommended that Board Council review the letter prepared by RMAC to make sure that RMAC's interpretations are correct.

Motion: Clancy Dutra moved that a conference call be scheduled to finalize the content of the draft letter under preparation by RMAC to the RPC. Meeting will occur June 2, 2006 at 1:00 PM. Motion seconded by Mel Thompson and passed unanimously.

Motion: Clancy Dutra moved that the draft letter prepared by Henry Giacomini will be circulated to RMAC members prior to the June 2, 2006 conference call for review. The letter with edits will be subject to acceptance by RMAC on the conference call. If accepted the letter will be sent to the RPC with the supporting paper written by the RMAC member groups prior to the June Board meeting. Mike Connor seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Ken Zimmerman asked that Gaylon Lee clarify what monitoring requirements may be considered by the SWRCB in light of the language contained in SB923. Mr. Lee stated that this question is best left to the Technical Advisory Committee on NPS for grazing lands. Ken Zimmerman formally requested that RMAC be part of the Technical Advisory Committee. Gaylon Lee affirmed that RMAC will be invited to participate. He also provided a summary of the Technical Advisory Committee representatives: producers, technical assistance agencies, Regional Water Boards, environmental community, and scientific experts.

Ken Zimmerman emphasized that RMAC needs clear direction from the RMAC member groups endorsing RMAC's action. He asked that the member group representatives consult with their organization and provide feedback to RMAC.

Gaylon Lee stated that he hopes to have, in addition to the Technical Advisory Committee, a workshop that brings all available scientific information to light.

**Item 9, Agency and Association Reports (continued from previous discussion):**

California Cattlemen's Association, Tracy Schohr reporting:

Tracy Schohr reported that RMAC will be on the agenda at the next mid year meeting of the California Cattlemen's Association. Date is June 29, 2006.

USDA Forest Service, Crispin Holland reporting:

Crispin Holland reported that budgets for range next year are expected to be down. Changes in the range program include retirement of Steve Bishop and his replacement will be Deborah Whitman. Permittee training for range monitoring is being conducted on the Lassen, Plumas, and Stanislaus National Forests.

There were 13 environmental assessments for grazing allotments completed this year. They are working on updating the Region 5 BMPs for water quality monitoring.

#### **Item 4, Status of the California State Fire Plan:**

Wayne Mitchell and Chris Zimny with CDF provided a briefing. Chris Zimny stated that a work group has been assembled with the task of determining the content of the Fire Plan. They have completed the review of the 96 plan but it has not been released to date. This will not occur until a determination of whether goals and objectives of the 96 plan have been achieved.

#### Findings:

1. It is uncertain at this point if all Units implemented the 96 Plan framework completely. This is still under review.
2. The trend lines for determining cost losses show that these factors are increasing.
3. Costs for suppression have increased due to bargaining unit contracts that relate to cost of personnel and the increased cost of fire fighting, methods, etc.
4. Future content of the Fire Plan - CDF commissioned a multi stake holder Review Team. A rough draft has been received and is under review by CDF.
5. The proposed strategy for updating the Fire Plan is to establish goals and objectives that are accomplished with strategies specific to each.

The RPC is the Board committee responsible for the Plan update.

Ken Zimmerman and Mike Connor noted that in previous meetings with CDF management it was agreed that RMAC would be provided with an opportunity to have input into the Plan update. Chris Zimny identified two specific products being worked on by CDF. One is a review of the 96 Fire Plan, and the second is a broad template of the the proposed 2006 Plan. Wayne Mitchell stated that the RPC was very clear that the products presently being worked on by the Department were to be received back to the RPC prior to further work being done. They will then determine the tasks and where they (RPC) wish to go with it. Once it comes back out of RPC it will be appropriate to have RMAC input.

Wayne Mitchell pointed out that the 96 framework continues to operate in the Units at the local level. CDF is updating a reporting system (CARIS) that is linked to a new dispatching system. Another system that is in need of updating is the financial side of fire fighting. The plan is to link newer accounting data bases with the dispatching of resources.

Wayne Mitchell described a website housed with USGS in Colorado. It contains planning and mapping tools that show assets at risk among many other data. It allows viewing of fuels, assets at risk etc., while the incident is occurring. Wayne Mitchell offered to provide a demo of this system to RMAC. Mike Connor asked

how fuel loads are determined. Wayne Mitchell explained that satellite imagery is used for assigning fuel models.

Wayne Mitchell stated that there are three major types of information being captured presently.

1. The fires themselves.
2. Land manager activities such as timber harvesting.
3. Fuel reduction projects. Range improvement, fuel breaks, etc. This includes statewide mapping of vegetation that occurs in cooperation with the USFS about every 5 years.

Ken Zimmerman thanked Wayne Mitchell and Chris Zimny for attending and reaffirmed that RMAC would like to be part of the Fire Plan process.

**Item 9, Agency and Association Reports (continued from previous discussion):**

NRCS, Ceci Dale-Cesmat reporting:

California Rangeland Resolution Coalition – NRCS is working on making this resolution operational.

Farm and Ranchland Easements. Easements are available under the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and WRP.

**Item 10, Focus Group Reports (continued from previous discussion):**

Rangeland Focus Group, Mike Connor reporting:

Eric Huff was asked to comment on the letter written by RMAC to PFEC for clarification on the definition of rangeland. PFEC has advised the SRM that this should be an agenda item for their next meeting.

Eric Huff stated that CRMs are lawfully allowed to practice range management under the definition of a forested landscape and nowhere else. This would include the oak woodland. His conclusions are based on the Attorney General's (AG) opinion, current law under the PRC, and historical documents on the subject. Mr. Huff referenced an earlier letter written by Chris Rowney on the subject. He further stated that the situation could be remedied by a change in the definition for rangeland and change in the law that better defines the role of CRMs.

Neil McDougald noted that his reading of PRC 772 would indicate that the specialty (CRM) defines their area of expertise. The CRM Program adopted in 2004 has a broader definition of rangeland and asked if his interpretation was correct. Eric Huff

responded that his reading is probably correct; however, all regulation must ultimately tie back to the PRC, which is based on the forested landscape definition for practicing professionals.

Neil McDougald stated that the practices CRMs are allowed to do on forested landscapes need to be defined and asked if the PFEC plans to assist with this effort. Eric Huff stated that it is practical for the PFEC to assist the SRM in determining what practices a CRM should be performing on rangelands that have a forest canopy, however, he cautioned that given the way the law is written some practices that are logically the role of a CRM would not be legally defensible if challenged.

Ken Zimmerman asked if the Board could establish a policy that requires a CRM for any range management practices. Eric Huff stated that the Board could establish such a policy but it would not be enforceable.

Eric Huff noted that CEQA does require that the appropriate resource professional be used to prepare environmental documents. Therefore, enforcement action could be taken based on CEQA.

Scott Carnegie commented stating that the CRM program should be left as is for now and allow Eric Huff to work through the issues presently before the PFEC. In concluding remarks RMAC agreed as a body to wait for the response from the PFEC to the RMAC letter before taking further action.

**Item 9, Agency and Association Reports (continued from previous discussion):**

Department of Forestry & Fire Protection, Jeff Stephens reporting:

Jeff Stephens reported on the Prop 40 Program under CDF administration, and the recent AG opinion that eliminates the ability to use prop 40 funding for CDF in-house programs such as CFIP. The decision from the AG has not been finalized; however, in the event the AG decision stands CDF is making plans to utilize the Community Assistance Grant Program to fund projects that normally would be funded using the CFIP program.

**Item 5, Discussion of the concept paper, “Integrating Natural Resource Management in California with Resource Conservation Investments.”**

Ken Zimmerman asked the RMAC if they wish to begin work on the paper in light of the fact that no clear indication from the Board or CDF has occurred indicating that completion of the paper will occur with CDF (FRAP) assistance. Ken Zimmerman stated that the paper needs a rewrite in a form acceptable by RMAC (eliminate the 1<sup>st</sup> person format) and a form that FRAP could work from for further development.

**Item 11, New and Unfinished Business:**

None

**Item 12, Public Comment:**

None

Meeting Adjourned 3:15 p.m.