

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

**Minutes
November 28, 2007**

Attending:

RMAC:

Representing

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association
Mike Connor	Public Member
J.R McCollister	Public Member
Henry Giacomini	California Farm Bureau Federation
Chuck Pritchard	California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
Scott Carnegie	California Forestry Association
Leonard Hale	Watershed Fire Council of Southern California
Jeff Stephens	CAL FIRE / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

Tracy Schohr	California Cattlemen's Association
Tacy Currey	California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
Eric Huff	Board of Forestry & Fire Protection
Anne Yost	USFS Range Management
Doug Ferrier	Consultant
Richard Harris	UC Cooperative Extension
Noelle Cremers	California Farm Bureau Federation
Jon Gustafson	Natural Resources Conservation Service

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.

Item 3, Review of the September 2007 Minutes:

Revisions to the minutes were noted by Jeff Stephens. J.R. McCollister made the motion to approve the minutes with revisions. Motion was seconded and carried unanimously. J.R. McCollister also moved that minutes from the Vegetation Management/Fire Focus Group also be accepted as written. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Item 4, Developing a Management Plan or Guide for Oak Woodland Preserves in Placer County; University of California Cooperative Extension:

Ken Zimmerman asked Richard Harris to open discussion. A PowerPoint presentation was distributed by Mr. Harris for reference. He stated that SB 1334 mandated counties to "raise the bar" on their impacts to oak woodlands. Lately he has become involved with Calaveras and El Dorado Counties for the development of oak practices that lessen impacts. Part of

his work has been to examine the various county ordinances/guidelines statewide for managing oak woodlands and then ground truthing the results to determine if guidelines are being implemented. Richard Harris cited his acquaintance with Loren Clarke, Assistant Planning Director Placer County, who has been dealing with oak woodland issues for a considerable period of time. The Placer County example currently requires a developer to count, measure, and categorize by condition every oak tree on the site. Richard Harris proposes more of a landscape approach. This approach requires that when a project is submitted the oak woodlands are mapped, the development footprint is overlaid, and the acres of oak woodland impacted must be compensated for offsite through easements, direct acquisition and set asides, or an in lieu fee. The process so far seems to be working well and the developers favor this approach.

The connection with RMAC's interests lies with the preserved parcels and their management.

Ken Zimmerman asked Richard Harris to summarize his survey of county policy in El Dorado, Placer and Madera counties. Mr. Harris explained that they examined policies first, and then went to the field to examine how they are being implemented by looking at development case studies and the associated the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). They did find disconnects between mitigations and actual practices. This was followed by looking at just the policies in all counties.

J.R. McCollister asked for a definition of an impact. Richard Harris explained that the definition will vary by county. Examples are:

- Site clearance
- Percent of canopy removed
- Individual tree removal
- Some cases impact is not defined

There is also a need to define oak woodland. It is not in the Public Resources Code (PRC). Each county is left to define in terms of density and size. Placer County uses 2 acres with at least 10% canopy.

Richard Harris made reference to the inconsistencies that exist among counties for the in lieu fees. These fees are intended to provide for the acquisition of off site acres and vary widely. Jeff Stephens confirmed that in some cases the value of land is being grossly underestimated.

Leonard Hale noted that the cost of development may reach the point where management and acquisition may become impossible.

Mike Connor asked if the funds actually go to the intended purpose. Richard Harris stated that if the counties do not manage these funds appropriately the State under SB 1334 could take these funds for oak woodland management; an incentive for counties to manage these funds appropriately.

Richard Harris produced a map for Placer County that identified all of the parcels being held in reserves/preserves as part of the oak woodland offset program. He stated that a map like this could be produced for all counties in the State. In some cases there is an

identified entity responsible for management of these parcels. For example in Sonoma County there is the Sonoma County Land Trust and the Sonoma County Agricultural Open Space District. However, there is no identified guiding policy that provides for uniform management objectives. The districts were created by legislation.

Richard Harris produced another map that shows the area designated in a Safe Harbor Agreement with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). These lands are being offered for preservation by some method (direct acquisition, easements, or maintenance as working landscapes) in exchange for the lands proposed for development. Noelle Cremers asked if there has been enough ownership change in the preserved area to know how land value has been impacted. Mr. Harris responded stating that there are plenty of willing sellers but could not offer hard data on whether there has been a land value shift.

Richard Harris brought the discussion back to the primary issues for RMAC's consideration:

- Fees vary from county to county
- Funding for acquisition and management of parcels may not be adequate
- Expertise for management may not be present
- Limited information on how parcels should be managed
- What is the adequate treatment for fire protection while maintaining functional habitat?
- What uses are compatible with preservation of oak woodlands (grazing, fuel wood?)

Richard Harris specifically asked RMAC to comment on the Guidelines for Placer County. He stated that he sees the guidelines as on the ground (“nuts & Bolts”) for use by counties.

Doug Ferrier indicated that the Placer County Guidelines as explained by Richard Harris also serve as the document for identification of lands protected under safe harbor with the wildlife agencies. He also raised the question of how does removing these lands from the tax rolls impact county revenue. Easements impact value. Placer County already has a large amount of land in public ownership. Richard Harris agreed that it is a concern especially in counties with shortfalls in revenue due to declining housing values. Ken Zimmerman asked Richard Harris when he would like comment from RMAC. Richard Harris welcomed any input on the documents distributed today. The time frame for comment is over the next 3-4 months. Mr. Harris will be working with the tree ordinance portion. Then he will be working with others on the management guidelines, including CAL FIRE and Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program (IHRMP) for defensible space and tree planting prescriptions respectively. IHRMP is working on statewide oak woodland guidelines; however, Mr. Harris stated that he must forge ahead for Placer County and that guidelines will eventually need to be specific for each county.

Leonard Hale noted that all conservation easements should have a sunset imposed as part of the agreement due to the fact that it is impossible for anyone to know what will be needed 20-30 years from the effective date of the easement.

Chuck Pritchard noted that the arguments often center on what is good management. There is a tendency to manage for individual species without consideration for the system as a whole. He further stated that he sees this concept as a problem with what is being proposed for oaks.

Ken Zimmerman raised the point made earlier that the effort with Placer County and the Oak Guidelines are tied to the RMAC draft paper on resource investments. Richard Harris confirmed that in his opinion the efforts are related and that the RMAC paper addressed the issue of management on a statewide level. He further questioned whether state wide agencies can handle the management of these lands. He argued that local agencies are better equipped to handle the problem. Ken Zimmerman countered that money will not be appropriated to address the problem without a statewide strategic plan. He envisions the strategic plan as a facilitator for local government planners with the management of these properties. He seeks to facilitate the local process.

Richard Harris ended the discussion by saying he is looking for ways to be mutually supportive of one another's efforts. Mike Connor noted that the issues surfaced by RMAC regarding the lack of funding for management is common to the work underway by Richard Harris.

Richard Harris pointed out that Placer County is charging \$24,000 per acre in fees and this includes management. But the amount is not consistent for all counties and certainly deficient for purchasing and management of oak woodlands.

Item 5. Status/Review of the Paper: *Integrating Natural Resource Management in California with Resource Conservation Investments*:

Ken Zimmerman opened discussion by referring to the contacts list and the comments received to date on the draft paper. He outlined what has been learned to date via direct contact with many of the organizations that received the draft paper for comment:

- Some have been reluctant to comment due to a feeling that the problem is quite complex and too large for any one agency to handle
- Some cited the political ramifications of getting involved
- Some did not give the paper much attention until prompted through direct contact
- Some cited excessive workloads
- Some have not responded to direct phone contact or email

Ken Zimmerman cited contact with an individual involved with city government in Carson City, Nevada. The city has recently acquired 4,900 acres for fire safety around Carson City. That contact indicated the City is using the draft RMAC paper to develop a policy for managing the acquired land in order to meet the intended purpose for acquiring the land.

Ken Zimmerman asked that each RMAC member review the contacts list and if they are acquainted with individuals on the list to make contact and encourage a response. He made this request in the spirit of providing sufficient information to make a proper response to the Board's Policy Committee regarding the draft RMAC paper.

Ken Zimmerman provided an outline of what he believes the Policy Committee has asked of RMAC:

- A more detailed analysis on the status and needs of State owned lands. (Acres, Jurisdictions, Source may be California Performance Review)

- The second paragraph, first page, the following statement requires supporting documentation, “It is generally accepted by public and private land managers that the costs associated with planning, environmental compliance, and permit conditions are the most common obstacles preventing sustainable resource management and stewardship.”
- Financial information on where and how the bond funds have been spent.

Ken Zimmerman stated that RMAC also needs to define better what the strategic plan would include and/or how it is structured.

Ken Zimmerman provided a summary of what he felt were some of the more important comments received on the draft RMAC paper.

- Summarize our recommendations and highlight the important points so that they stand out for the reader.
- There needs to be a more detailed discussion of the obstacles/regulatory/cultural barriers preventing proper management of State owned lands. Why are some operations successful?
- Without identifying what the strategic plan will look like the draft paper is not likely to receive much attention (sit on the shelf).
- Need to find a champion for the project that has the political connections to make it happen.
- The strategic plan needs to emphasize local control for providing proper management.

Richard Harris made the comment that finding an inventory of lands held in easements or owned outright by the State is difficult. He found in his work that it was necessary to go to each grant program and pull the information. He stated that this task alone is enough to bring the entire effort to a complete halt. He further recommended that RMAC pick a county that has good, accessible information and use it as an example rather than attempt to collect 100% of it statewide.

Richard Harris cited a detailed cost analysis done for El Dorado County that evaluates the cost of monitoring and managing publicly acquired land. He can provide a copy to Jeff Stephens if RMAC desires. Mr. Harris recommended contacting David Lewis (sp) at Sonoma County, UC Cooperative Extension. The two main interests in Sonoma County are the Sonoma County Land Trust and the Sonoma County Open Space Agricultural District. Both are advocates for working landscapes.

Tacy Currey stated that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy intends to do a complete inventory of all lands in counties where the Conservancy is located. This would include 22 counties.

Jon Gustafson mentioned feedback that he received from the Steering Committee of the California Rangeland Coalition (CRC). One, the document has to be read several times. It needs restructuring. There is insufficient data on how many private landowners are being impacted by publicly acquired ownerships. Since NRCS depends on private ownership in order to provide services it is difficult to determine how relevant the RMAC paper is to Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) operations. He stated that if a strategic plan were pursued NRCS would be interested in becoming involved. The limited feedback

from the CRC is that they would like to see a paper that is developed with more detail and has clearer direction before becoming actively involved.

Ken Zimmerman stated that he will review the draft RMAC paper and try to identify answers to some of the questions from the Policy Committee. He intends to review the Strategic Plan for Noxious Weeds to see if that structure will assist in structuring a strategic plan for land acquisition. Jon Gustafson recommended contacting Tony Nelson with the Sonoma County Land Trust.

Mike Connor asked Ken Zimmerman to email the list of individuals that he has already spoken to in order to avoid duplication. Scott Carnegie confirmed that the Policy Committee instructed Board staff to inquire about providing Forest Range Assessment Program (FRAP) support to RMAC in gathering some of the information that is being asked for by the Board's Policy Committee. Ken Zimmerman stated that follow-up contact with Board staff is needed to obtain FRAP assistance.

Ken Zimmerman agreed to contact the Sonoma Land Trust. Mike Connor asked that those already contacted by Ken Zimmerman be identified. They are Tacy Currey, Madelyn Glickfeld, Jon Gustafson, Jay Chamberlin, Marilyn Cundiff, Barbara Allen-Diaz, Glenda Humiston, Jon Hoffman, Michele Dias, Allen West, Dan Macon, Joe Rawitzer, Frank Stewart, and John McClain.

Chuck Pritchard volunteered to contact Rob Rutherford, Royce Larsen, California Native Plant Society, and Ed Hastings.

Jon Gustafson noted that it is difficult to find RMAC information on the internet. Jeff Stephens volunteered to look into a more distinct link to RMAC.

Item 6 Agency and Association Reports:

California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), Tacy Currey Reporting:

Tacy Currey stated that the CARCD held its annual conference. There were several discussions on active management and return of grazing to property held in public ownership. Some agencies and other conservation groups are reporting a desire to reintroduce grazing as a means of maintaining rangeland health.

Tacy Currey reported that the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board has produced guidelines for pathogens related to grazing and that other Regional Boards have made indications of possibly using the Lahontan language as a template to develop their own. She is following the issue with several Regional Boards.

The 2009 National Grazing Land Coalition Initiative (GLCI) meeting will be held in Sparks, Nevada. CARCD is co-hosting. Field tours are planned as part of the meeting to illustrate good management.

California Cattlemen's Association (CCA) Tracy Schohr Reporting:

Tracy Schohr has been working with DFG and the Nature Conservancy on using grazing on state lands or acquired lands. The Dixon RCD model is being looked at as a possible

scenario for other properties. CCA is discovering a substantial amount of collaboration between private and public previously unknown to CCA, and is working with local and State officials to further this form of management.

CCA and the California Rangeland Coalition have been interfacing with the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition. Issues have focused on water quality concerns related to E. coli. on the Coast.

The Beef Quality Assurance Program and their rangeland monitoring workshop were recently held.

The CRC summit is scheduled for January 22, 2009. A ranch panel that discusses the day to day activities on a ranch in combination with information from the environmental community is planned to promote the exchange of information. Other Coalitions with similar programs are invited.

A second CRC staff member has been hired by Defenders of Wildlife to work cooperatively with Tracy Schohr. Hopefully this will result in greater CRC accomplishments with the added staff.

California Farm Bureau Federation, Noelle Cremers Reporting:

Noelle Cremers stated there are two items of note: They are involved in the development of Safe Harbor agreements in Tehama, Glenn, Shasta and Butte counties in areas of similar habitat for mainly vernal pool species, a few amphibians, and some raptors and plants. Under the proposed agreement a rancher may propose a conservation project. A baseline of habitat is measured (not necessarily by an agency person). The enhancement project is designed to improve habitat for certain species, and if the desire is to remove the project in the future the rancher is allowed to bring the property back to the baseline. The plan is to start in the northern CRC areas and then work south depending on the success. A meeting with local ranchers is planned for December. Tracy Schohr stated that they will meet with the ranchers and secure their comments on the draft agreement in order to involve them early on and garner support. The advantage to landowners under the Safe Harbor is that incidental take protection is provided for the species covered as part of normal ranch operations. Agreement time frames are from 10-50 years.

Another item the Farm Bureau is involved with is the Stewardship Council formed as a result of the Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) bankruptcy and the disposal of their nonessential watershed lands. These lands will be put under some sort of conservation easement. Noelle Cremers will be attending a meeting of the Stewardship Council to discuss the disposal of these lands. Farm Bureau is interested in maintaining the Agricultural values of these lands. All transactions must be tax neutral to protect county revenues. Management plans will be developed as part of disposition. Four pilot projects are planned to begin in January.

Chuck Pritchard made note of the fact that Tracy Schohr, Tacy Currey, and Noelle Cremers have done a superior job in maintaining contact with RMAC and keeping the Committee informed of important issues, and thanked them for their continued involvement with RMAC.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Jon Gustafson Reporting:

The Farm Bill was mentioned as an item for NRCS activity. Funding is currently tight but should improve with passage of the new Bill.

Presently NRCS is closing out a contract with CDFA that funds California Conservation Corps (CCC) crews for the eradication of small local populations of invasive weeds. Jon Gustafson reported success with this agreement.

NRCS has experienced resistance from local groups that are against NRCS making species recommendations for soil stabilization in southern California. The agency has elected to not make recommendations in light of these objections.

A white paper has been developed by the NRCS Range Conservationists that expresses concern over the lack of schools that offer range degrees. Jon Gustafson will provide a copy of the paper when final. He cited the problem as being a national concern. Ann Yost volunteered to obtain her agency requirements for a Range Conservationist. Jon Gustafson volunteered to get the requirements for accreditation within the major for a degree in range management. Chuck Pritchard will examine Cal Poly's degree requirements and report back to RMAC.

California Farm Bureau Federation, Noelle Cremers Reporting:

Henry Giacomini asked that Noelle Cremers report on issues pertaining to water quality and the Central Coast Regional Board's focus on livestock as a result of E. coli outbreaks last summer. Ms Cremers has met with Kay Mercer with the San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Watershed Coalition. She stated that the Regional Board is focused on a Region wide approach versus total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) as in the past. Agricultural interests are being represented and meetings are occurring to determine what the Board is looking for regarding potential actions and a workable outcome.

Ken Zimmerman noted that his primary reason for contacting Henry Giacomini is the statement by Kay Mercer that Tier 1 is no longer available. Noelle Cremers responded stating that she has provided Ms Mercer with the background information, which supports the notion that Tier 1 was incorrectly stricken from the revised nonpoint source pollution plan.

USFS Range Management, Anne Yost Reporting:

Anne Yost stated that she is filling the Region 5 Range Management Program Manager position on an interim basis. She is from the Klamath National Forest as the Rangeland Manager and Noxious Weed Program Manager, and intends to return there after fulfilling her interim assignment in headquarters.

USFS has hired a full time Range Ecologist for Region 5, Dave Wexelman (SP).

Anne Yost has been working on Federal grazing allotments for Region 5; dealing with the issue that the time frame for completing environmental assessments will expire in 2008 and many are yet to be completed. Permits without National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are vulnerable. Currently 81 allotments have NEPA completed, but about half still remain. Most of the qualified range specialists have been directed to work on the NEPA permits.

Anne Yost mentioned the monitoring effort underway in Region 5 and the new Range Ecologist direct involvement in that process. The five year data shows that the majority of plots (60%) are in an upward trend. Some are stable and some are on decline. The United States Forest Service (USFS) wishes to tie monitoring data with management prescriptions, a long-term goal of the program.

Anne Yost noted that at one time grazing permits were granted under a categorical exclusion. That has recently been challenged in court and it remains to be seen if it will continue as an option with the next appropriation.

Henry Giacomini noted that the USFS has been a good cooperater over the past 10 years. He recommended that past committees involving producers and the USFS should be revived and folks brought to the table, especially if there are new threats to the grazing industry with challenges to the permitting process. Following the lead of the CRC is recommended. Anne Yost volunteered to contact Steve Bishop and possibly Jim Shackelford to obtain the original contacts of these older range groups that included federal, environmental, and industry representatives.

J.R. McCollister asked if the USFS has any State Certified Rangeland Managers working on federal ground. Anne Yost responded yes. She believes that there are four vacant positions that she is aware of; however, they are having a difficult time filling these positions and is concerned about maintaining the skill level within the range program.

Item 8 Focus Group Reports:

Vegetation Management/Fire Focus Group J.R. McCollister Reporting:

J.R. McCollister recommended that the committee be briefed on the Vegetation Treatment Program EIR and deferred any other subject matter to the January meeting. Jeff Stephens provided a brief summary as follows:

Comment from the Internal Review Panel on the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was due October 19th. So far not all panel members have responded. A meeting needs to be scheduled with the Board and CAL FIRE management to determine if a new schedule for internal comment is in order or bypass those committee members that have elected to not respond as of this date. No further comment is warranted at this time.

Water Focus Group, Henry Giacomini Reporting:

Henry Giacomini began with reference to the comments made by Noelle Cremers under her Farm Bureau report. He posed the question of what fits for RMAC in the water quality arena, given that the issues are regional, and questioned whether RMAC is capable of getting involved in all Water Quality Regions where the issues of grazing regulations and nonpoint source pollution are at issue. He further stated that the current direction/notion that Tier 1 is no longer available is an interpretation of existing law that is not correct, and that this interpretation of the law may be forced upon the industry through persistence of regulators. If RMAC has a role to play it is to revitalize the Water Quality Management Plan and bring it to the forefront.

Tracy Schohr stated that there is a substantial amount of research out there that has been compiled and still more that needs to be reported that supports updating the best management practices (BMPs) of the Water Quality Plan and revitalizing it as a tool for compliance. Jon Gustafson suggested that RMAC may provide a valuable contribution through encouraging vegetation management since sediment mobilization is highly correlated to E. coli mobilization.

Ken Zimmerman urged that RMAC engage and offer to assist in the development of rangeland standards, rather than leave it to other Regions to follow the Lahontan example. Henry Giacomini stated that in his opinion RMAC would be more effective statewide by going back to the Water Quality Management Plan and getting it into the hands of the other Regional Boards so that they at least have an alternative to look at.

Henry Giacomini announced his intent to resign from RMAC; Noelle Cremers is actively looking for a replacement from the Farm Bureau. He recommended that another RMAC member step into the position of Water Focus Group Chairman until another person is nominated by the Farm Bureau.

Rangeland Focus Group, Mike Connor Reporting:

Mike Connor reviewed discussion from the day prior. On the subject of the spread of noxious weeds by agency equipment, the Focus Group concluded that it would be appropriate for RMAC to write a letter to California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Steve Schoenig asking that CDFA approach the Weed Management Areas (WMAs), asking that the WMAs encourage good practices and determine what policies currently exist. Two draft letters were presented for consideration. The RMAC elected to combine the letters into a single letter and review a single draft in January. J.R. McCollister suggested that RMAC should settle on the tone of the letter and what specifically is being asked of CDFA. RMAC agreed to circulate both versions of the letter to RMAC members for revisions. Henry Giacomini confirmed that the letter should urge action by the CDFA rather than simply asking what policies are in place.

Mike Connor summarized actions taken in regards to Draft Board Policy 12. The Certification Panel did review the Policy but did not have much in the way of comment. The Panel will meet by conference call on December 10th and it is hoped that further action by the Panel will occur at that time.

Mike Connor reviewed the issues related to the RMAC July 2007 letter to the Certification Panel asking for input in the Certification process. The result of this discussion was a draft letter prepared by Mike Connor asking Larry Ford, Chairman of the Society of Range Management (SRM) Certification Panel, to attend the next RMAC meeting and join the discussion regarding Policy 12 and the certification process. RMAC agreed to include attachments providing background to the issues that have been before RMAC regarding certification and Draft Policy 12.

Chuck Pritchard made a motion to accept the letter as written by Mike Connor and send to Mr. Ford. J.R. McCollister seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Item 9, New and Unfinished Business:

RMAC set meeting dates for 2008 as follows:

January 15-16
March 18-19
May 28-29
July 22-23
September 23-24
November 18-19

Item 10, Public Comment:

NONE

Adjourn

Tasks:

1. Circulate both proposed draft CDFA letters to RMAC and combine into a single letter for the January RMAC meeting.
2. Send the draft letter composed by Mike Connor to Larry Ford.
3. RMAC comment on Placer County Guidelines for Oak Woodland Management.
4. Ken Zimmerman shall contact the Sonoma Land Trust as a potential pilot county that illustrates the type of acquisitions, funding, and data bases showing acres.
5. Chuck Pritchard volunteered to contact Rob Rutherford, Royce Larsen, California Native Plant Society, and Ed Hastings regarding the RMAC Draft Paper on Resource Investments
6. Jeff Stephens will investigate establishing a superior web site for RMAC.
7. Academic and agency requirements in Range Management: Ann Yost volunteered to obtain her agency requirements for a Range Conservationist. Jon Gustafson volunteered to get the requirements for accreditation within the major for a degree in range management. Chuck Pritchard will exam Cal Poly's degree requirements and report back to RMAC.