

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

Vegetation Management / Fire Focus Group

**Minutes
January 10, 2007**

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
Chuck Pritchard	California Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts
Jeff Stephens	CDF / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

Tacy Curry	California Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts
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Items 1, & 2, Call to Order, Introductions:

J.R. McCollister called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and asked for introductions of all attending. He then used this portion of the agenda and asked Tacy Curry to make any remarks she wished regarding an update of recent events with the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD). Ms. Curry stated that they are working on the California Rangeland Resolution (CRR) and revamping the publication "Grazing for Change" for use in promoting the CRR. The CARCD is also working on education and outreach regarding grazing allotment issues in the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control District.

Item 3, Review of the California Fire Plan

J.R. McCollister attended the Resource Protection Committee (RPC) yesterday. He stated that the RPC has not reactivated the advisory committee and it not clear if the advisory committee will be functioning in the future. If the committee is reappointed/activated it would not be reviewing the Fire Plan but will be implementing the recommendations that RPC makes to the Board. He stated that there is no immediate need to write a letter from RMAC expressing a need to be appointed to the advisory committee. Currently the RPC is going through the advisory Committee report (1996 Fire Plan Assessment; Compilation of RPC Reviews 2005 to February 2007) piece by piece and coming back with specific questions of staff.

J.R. McCollister stated that there will be a time through RPC meetings where RMAC and others may have input. He emphasized that representation at the RPC should be coordinated so not to a waste their time. Ken Zimmerman asked if RMAC should review the Fire Plan and make comment. J.R. McCollister responded in the affirmative and indicated he could initiate the review. He suggested injecting comment in the PreFire elements of the plan.

Neil McDougald asked if the earlier letter prepared by RMAC calling for various actions on the part of the Department in Vegetation Management ever comes up at RPC. J.R. McCollister responded yes and that the programs review currently underway is a direct result of that.

Item 5, Administrative Draft Vegetation Treatment Program PEIR Review

J.R. McCollister moved discussion to the PEIR review. He identified himself and Mike Connor as the reviewers named by Chairman Zimmerman. Members of RMAC expressed frustration at the method selected by the Board stating that understanding the context of the RMAC reviewer comments is difficult without the document being made available to the full RMAC. Clancy Dutra raised the possibility of obtaining as much information as possible from the present review methodology and then making a Full Committee review of the complete draft PEIR when it is circulated for public comment.

Chuck Pritchard encouraged the RMAC reviewers to present what comments that had at this point in time. The following was presented either in written form to Jeff Stephens or verbally to the RMAC from J.R. McCollister and Mike Connor:

Mike Connor – Page 1-1 Section 1-2 1st paragraph line 4. Insert the word “sustainable” prior to “economic.”

General comment – The maps are not clear due to the color scheme that is used.

J.R. McCollister – Objects to the statement that global warming is a “well documented fact.” There are others in the scientific community that do not believe this to be true.

J.R. McCollister – Page 1-4 last paragraph and page 1-6 last paragraph: Contain language in support of range management and may be used in support of rangelands treatments in the new EIR.

Ken Zimmerman – Page 1-4 third paragraph. Finds that the paragraph is poorly written and contradicts the previous sentence. Change line 6 “resources” to “purposes.” Also the last sentence is question as being possible “increasing the timber supply.”

Jeff Stephens – The RMAC restated the frustration of dealing with just two reviewers for this purpose.

Jeff Stephens advised that it is the function of the two RMAC members to identify significant issues for discussion by the RMAC and bring those forward now. Later the Draft EIR will be available to the entire RMAC for detailed review. He recommended that RMAC adopt this strategy of review in order to make it through the chapters provided thus far.

Mike Connor – In reference to the Section 1.7 there are multiple treatments described. All of them are on a small scale and do not represent large scale (landscape treatments). He

proposed and submitted text that includes a “Large scale Wildland Treatment Option” that may be as large as a watershed or even larger in scale.

Mike Connor – clarified that the use of the term CMP has been confused with VMP. Jeff Stephens confirmed this is correct and a correction in the text will have to be made.

Mike Connor – Section 2.3, Minimum Management Requirements, Item 9. Mike Connor questioned the language “cumulative decline in oak regeneration” in regards to that would make the decision of whether oak regeneration is declining. Jeff Stephens explained that that determination would be made by working through the Environmental Checklist at the project level. Section 9 reads as follows:

If treatments in oak woodlands could adversely affect wildlife habitat or species diversity, or lead to a cumulative decline in oak regeneration in the area, then the landowner/agency will take specific precautions, to insure adequate oak regeneration. This could entail measures such as protecting oak seedlings from livestock grazing while regeneration is occurring, or planting oaks if natural regeneration fails within a specific period of time.

Ken Zimmerman and J.R. McCollister questioned the use of bioregions in the document. Jeff Stephens explained that in order to assess the different impacts by area in the state there needed to be a segregation of areas. Bioregions had been used previously for other purposes, are well established, and there is significant environmental data available to describe the program setting. This is why bioregions were selected. Ken Zimmerman countered that there exists tremendous variability within each bioregion questioning their value.

Mike Connor – Page 2-19, 3rd full paragraph. Mr. Connor questioned the rates per acre shown for grazing (\$12 - \$15 per acre). He believes it is closer to \$15 to \$109 per acre.

Mike Connor – Page 2-22, Section 2.5.G, Treatment Maintenance. Mr. Connor questioned the intervals after the previous treatment. Recommended the following:

Grassland 5 years
7 to 15 years for brushland

Neil McDougald – Page 2-23, Section 2.5.I. Mr. McDougald stated that he does not believe the figure of 59% of all proposed treatments to be prescribed fire a realistic figure based on historical practices.

J.R. McCollister – Page 2-23, Section 2.5.H. He objects to basing the size of projected treatments (260 acres) on past treatments. It is too restrictive.

Mike Connor – Asked why there is no herbivory found within Table 3-6 and many of the other tables. Jeff Stephens did not have a response other than it may be an error. He will investigate the reason for the omission.

J.R. McCollister – Table 2-1. Pasture should not be excluded unless the intent was to state irrigated pasture. Pastures should be included for treatment. Wet Meadows should not be excluded either.

J.R. McCollister – Page 2-13, last paragraph. Suggested that the wording be changed to allow ball and chain on slopes that exceed 50%.

Neil McDougald – Page 2-14, middle paragraph. Add as the last sentence: “Drilling is also done without tilling using a no-till drill.”

J.R. McCollister – Page 3-17, footnote under Table 3-10. He believes that the 20% figure for projects that used herbicides is too large considering that VMP does not and did not historically fund the use of herbicides. Jeff Stephens commented that the 20% figure represents the cooperators using herbicides as a pre or post treatment independent of CAL FIRE. Mr. McCollister still believes the figure is too high.

J.R. McCollister – asked in general how the numbers were calculated in the various tables for acres treated by treatment type. Jeff Stephens explained that the acres of expected operation by treatment were generated by an allocation model developed by FRAP. The model uses some basic constraints such as air quality, listed species, and slope to predict areas of opportunity to work. Some very broad assumptions had to be made to deal with an area the size of California. This is the extent of Mr. Stephens’ knowledge of the process. He will seek further more detailed explanation of how the numbers were generated.

J.R. McCollister – Page 4.3-9, Section 4.3.5, 2nd paragraph. Delete reference to overgrazing. The term “overgrazing” has a specific connotation which requires damage to the health of the system. Use of the term over use is OK.

J.R. McCollister, Page 4.3-14, Table 4.3.8. There appears to be missing cow/calf data for Shasta, Tehama, and Siskiyou counties. Therefore the accuracy of the whole table is in question.

Neil McDougald stated that this may be due to the Ag Commissioners’ report data. Some counties would not be in the top ten commodities. Other counties in question are Kern for sheep and San Luis Obispo for cattle.

J.R. McCollister – Page 4.3.23 Chapter 4.3.9 ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS
Paragraph 3

Declining timber supply is due in large part by environmental activism and increased regulations. In paragraph 4: Reliance on wood product employment has not become less important. Local economies have had to diversify and residents have had to accept lower paying jobs and rely on Social Security and Welfare because of the declining availability of lumber products.

J.R. McCollister – Page 4.4-1 Paragraph 2. Mr. McCollister recommended a more balanced approach to the discussion of climate change as previously noted when referring to global warming.

J.R. McCollister – Page 4.4-3 last paragraph. Mr. McCollister posed the question, is the word “all” accurate or are there models existing that support the other viewpoints in this controversial subject of climate change and global warming?

J.R. McCollister – Page 4.5.2-3 Paragraph 6. Mr. McCollister posed the question, “What is the supporting documentation that competition with livestock is a factor in the decline of deer populations? The main diet of deer is young trees, brush and acorns, not grass.

J.R. McCollister – Page 4.6-7 and 4.6-8. Mr. McCollister asked, why isn't wild fire shown in figures 4.6.2, 4.6.3 and 4.6.4? It is shown in Table 4.6.5. According to that table Wild Fire accounts for 15.27% of CO2 emissions, 10.28% if PM 10 and 19.93% if PM 2.5. If these were shown in the pre charts they would occupy significant portions.

J.R. McCollister – Page 4.7.3 Table 4.7.1. Mr. McCollister asked, Shouldn't the Mad and Van Duzen be shown in the North Coast Watershed column and the Sacramento in the Sacramento River Basin?

J.R. McCollister – Page 4.16.2 paragraph 1. In an environmental document such as this, a helitorch shouldn't be described as a "giant drip torch." It would be more appropriate to describe it according to its size by gallons.

Item 4, CDF Vegetation treatment Program Policy Review

J.R. McCollister described the results of the RPC meeting that occurred the previous day. He described the function of the Working Group whose job it is to collect data for review by the RPC, which will then be making recommendations to the full Board. The work has been going slow. The Ad Hoc RPC Committee welcomes input from the public and RMAC on the type of information they are asking the Working Group to collect. The subject will be on the agenda for the next RPC meeting. J.R. McCollister asked that RMAC return comment to Jeff Stephens by January 31.

Neil McDougald recommending adding a data field that estimates the time from project initiation to approval for each program.

Item 6, New and Unfinished Business

None

Item 6, Public Comment:

None

Adjourn