

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

Rangelands Focus Group

**Minutes
March 17, 2009**

Attending:

RMAC:

Ken Zimmerman
Ed Anchordoguy
Scott Carnegie
Chuck Pritchard
Mel Thompson
Jeff Stephens

Representing

California Cattlemen's Association (CCA)
California Wool Growers Association (CWG)
California Forestry Association (CFA)
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
California Wool Growers Association (CWG)
CAL FIRE / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

Cathy Bleier
Doug Wickizer
Tacy Currey
Justin Oldfield

Representing

CAL FIRE
CAL FIRE
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
California Cattlemen's Association

Items 1 & 2 Call to Order and Introductions:

Chuck Pritchard called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

**Items 3, Climate Change and Carbon Sequestration Issues Pertinent to Rangelands:
Developing a protocol for investigating climate change as it relates to California
rangelands.**

Chuck Pritchard asked for Cathy Bleier to report on the Berkeley Round Table on climate change/carbon sequestration on rangelands. One has been held and a second is planned this Friday. Whendee Silver with UC Berkeley is the lead person investigating rangelands. Dr. Silver, UC Davis, and possibly CCA are all involved in investigating rangelands for carbon sequestration and the impacts of climate change. Studies have been done that include ripping and manure spreading where increases in soil carbon have been detected. They also found more carbon on grazed areas vs. non-grazed rangelands. The next meeting is a presentation of work by John Battles and Barbara Alan-Diaz.

Comments from the round table included concerns about the cost of measuring sequestration on rangelands. Chuck Pritchard asked who the lead on this issue would be. Cathy Bleier did not know of a single person but mentioned the International Panel on Climate Change and Barbara Alan-Diaz as key people/entities pulling information together world wide. There is a Berkeley Institute for the Environment website bie.berkeley.edu/rangelands. Another site is the Climate Registry website, climateregistry.org. Derrick Markov is the lead contact for the Climate Registry website.

Ken Zimmerman asked if there is research underway that is looking at landscapes dominated by invasive species (such as yellow star thistle) vs. native perennials. Cathy Bleier stated she did not know, but did cite efforts in the Midwest where restored "degraded" rangelands have a higher opportunity to sequester carbon. Justin Oldfield stated that what they are actually looking at is perennial vs. annual species regarding sequestration. He further stated that rates for carbon credits are much lower in California as compared to the Midwest due to lower rainfall and the lack of research on California rangelands. Ken Zimmerman stated that the production of biofuels may produce increased problems with invasive species. Justin Oldfield stated that this problem will likely increase since corn ethanol is on its way out, and there will be a push to expand other species, switch grass being one.

Jeff Stephens asked Doug Wickizer if the Board has been examining climate change and sequestration on rangelands to any degree. Mr. Wickizer stated that the Board did step forward on AB 32 and set targets for sequestration in forested environments. But they are still addressing basic issues such as forest inventories. They are six months to a year out before they provide any substantial input to the ARB on forested landscapes. He stated that it is not too early to begin thinking about a range protocol and to get issues like invasive species on the table to avoid future errors. Cathy Bleier stated that the Resources Agency has begun pulling information together on the types of actions needed to mitigate future changes in climate, making ecosystems more resilient. Models are predicting huge increases in wildfire and species shifts to more drought tolerant species.

Jeff Stephens stated that George Gentry with the Board has indicated RMAC could provide useful information in the form of scenarios of how the range and livestock industry may adopt to a changing environment. Justin Oldfield stated that CCA has been looking into the issue and expressed concern that hypothetical actions taken by the industry as a result of climate change could be turned into regulation by lawmakers. He further stated that CCA is looking at various issues that have the potential to impact carbon emissions/sequestration such as managed grazing and locally grown food rather than exported, feed additives to reduce methane production, and using livestock for vegetation management to reduce emissions from wildfires.

Doug Wickizer stated that eventually there will be two types of markets for carbon. Right now we are dealing with a voluntary market. Eventually there will be a compliance market in 2011 that will have different pricing structures. Presently the price is \$2.00 per ton in the voluntary market. But as we look at different areas the price is going to vary. Carbon on forested landscapes in California is \$10.00 per ton. New York has imposed a cap of \$7.00 per ton and CCX (Chicago Carbon Exchange) is about \$2.00 - \$5.00. Presently forces are at work to verify the California market.

Justin Oldfield noted that the aggregated cost for participating on a carbon program is what greatly inhibits participation, such as the cost for monitoring. Very large tracts are required to make it pay presently. Mel Thompson noted that soil structure and rainfall play a part and many California rangeland soils are low in productivity. Justin Oldfield stated that two causes for low carbon prices in California are rainfall levels and fire occurrence, which act to discount the value.

Justin Oldfield stated that the state has declared climate change to be real and is taking steps to counter it. As an industry CCA is making sure that ranchers can take advantage of whatever benefits are possible from these actions, but also to counter any negative actions towards the industry as a result of the State's actions to deal with climate change.

Ken Zimmerman stated that what has been left out of the discussion so far is the impact of unmanaged fuel and the wildfires on carbon emissions. Cathy Bleier stated that actually the projections for emissions in 2020 for forests per AB 32 do take into account the impact of increased levels of wildfire due to changing climate. However, it is extremely difficult to model something that will occur in the future at unknown occurrence levels like wildfire. But fire is part of the discussion. Doug Wickizer also stated that another impediment to analyzing fire is that the science for analyzing emissions from fire is not very good. Results tend to be highly variable. Ken Zimmerman's point is that nothing is being done to modify fire behavior in areas where history tells us fire will reoccur, and that addressing the fire problem through better fuels management helps to limit emissions from wildfire.

Justin Oldfield stated that we know that opening up areas to grazing does reduce fuel loads, and offered to work with RMAC to promote this practice with agencies and the Board. Recently CCA on its own has been in contact with the Resources Agency on this issue. Chuck Pritchard promoted grazing as having its greatest value in maintenance of vegetation types that are more resistant to fire rather than the primary/initial vegetative treatment. Doug Wickizer, in reference to remarks made by Jeff Stephens and what RMAC can do for the Board, recommended one of the first steps RMAC can do is to capture these ideas and initial thoughts on paper for review by the Board. RMAC is very early in the discussion and just starting to identify concerns and strategies for rangelands that can contribute to solving problems such as high fuel accumulation that contribute to huge emissions. Justin Oldfield stated that he is working on a white paper that explores the multiple benefits resulting from management practices related to climate change. The idea is to consider not just the single benefit of lower atmospheric carbon, but other benefits that result as well.

Justin Oldfield stated that the greatest need right now is research on rangelands and their potential to store carbon.

Jeff Stephens made the recommendation/observation to RMAC stating that in his opinion RMAC has a tremendous opportunity to engage the Board and others such as the Resources Agency on issues pertaining to climate change and rangelands. He stated that it should be done in cooperation and support of RMAC's clientele, such as CCA, to strengthen the presentation. The presentation could be written as an issue paper and shared with agencies RMAC advises such as the Natural Resources Agency.

Doug Wickizer advised RMAC that when claims are made that grazing can impact fuels management people will ask how that can be accomplished, where is the supporting evidence, and what are the other environmental consequences of grazing. RMAC should be prepared and get ahead of these questions.

Justin Oldfield informed the committee of other items that CCA is working on related to climate change. One is land conservation where working ranches and farms are kept intact and the associated benefits to other resources. This message is being used in support of the Williamson Act and the subvention funds. He also mentioned the concept of "secondary land use change" and that his industry is very much opposed to its use for establishing the value of carbon in the market place. An example of this concept would be that high demand for corn ethanol entices farmers in areas such as the Amazon to switch from growing soybeans for food to corn for ethanol, and this change in production results in other farmers removing additional rainforest to grow soybeans to make up the deficit. Justin Oldfield stated that it is highly controversial in that it is being used to measure the carbon footprint of land use activities such as corn ethanol production.

Jeff Stephens presented a list of individuals supplied by Ken Tate that could potentially serve as a technical advisor to RMAC on climate change and carbon sequestration. Ken Zimmerman indicated that he knows some of the individuals. He recommended Joel Brown from the list. Chuck Pritchard stated the committee should contact Justin Oldfield who knows most of these individuals and ask for a recommendation.

Item 4, Williamson Act: Letter of support from the Upper Salinas / Las Tablas RCD

Chuck Pritchard indicated that the letter is addressed to the Governor and is being prepared in cooperation with the local Cattlemen's Association, RCD and Cooperative Extension. It lists reasons why the Act is important and subvention funds are important. Chuck Pritchard will send the letter to Jeff Stephens for distribution.

Item 5, Carrizo Plains National Monument Management Plan and Provisions for Grazing – Under BLM Management

Ken Zimmerman asked if Mr. Pritchard is requesting RMAC to provide comment on the document. Chuck Pritchard stated that would be desirable, and referred the committee to the letter of comment provided by Bill Whitecamp. Mr. Whitecamp's letter identified two objectives of the preferred alternative stated in the management plan that are problematic: one is there appears to be a predetermined goal to refrain from using livestock as a management tool in the future; and there appears to be a lack of understanding of the past history and contribution of the surrounding ranching industry to the Carrizo Plains Monument and surrounding lands.

Chuck Pritchard also departed from the discussion on the monument and gave a status of the Chimineas Ranch, a similar property to the Monument in the same area. The ranch conditions have essentially deteriorated under DFG management in regards to livestock production, water supplies, fencing and in general ranch infrastructure, and there appears to be no plan for restoration of these attributes.

Monument Alternative Management Strategies: Chuck Pritchard outlined the following taken from the Management Plan:

- No Action Alternative – Retain current management activities and strategies.
- Alternative 1 – Hands off to resource management, allow natural processes to take their course, no grazing allowed, minimal public access.
- **Alternative 2 preferred** – incorporates elements of the other alternatives with moderate public access, biological restoration, wilderness character management, rustic restoration and recreation use focused along the Soda Lake Corridor, grazing allowed for vegetation management only.
- Alternative 3 – Broader access and use by public, only one wilderness area designation, higher levels of restoration of historic sites, emphasis on education programs, managed grazing allowed for forage production.

The primary issue cited by the current management when supporting their position is protecting endangered species.

Chuck Pritchard was asked by RMAC what he expects the Committee to provide regarding the apparent problems that now exist with the Chimineas Ranch. He stated that RMAC should provide comment on the management plan and alternatives. He believes that management objectives should be reviewed, and determine whether it is likely that these

objectives will be accomplished. Mel Thompson asked what Mr. Pritchard's goals are regarding the Monument. Chuck Pritchard explained his issue is with the larger problem of agencies that continue to waste time and money on unsolved problems.

Ken Zimmerman indicated that the County may have the best opportunity to impact the outcome. Leonard Hale stated that the County must have the will to become involved. Jeff Stephens advised that RMAC may wish to demand, via public comment, that the plan proponent explains how they intend to mitigate the negative impacts of removing grazing from a grazed ecosystem, such as species type conversions from native perennials to annual grassland. Tacy Currey stated that she has used this tactic in cases where grazing allotments are being removed from federal lands that have historically been grazed (i.e. an active practice is being removed), and that a NEPA analysis is warranted to evaluate the impact of eliminating grazing prior to its elimination. Chuck Pritchard stated that he will pursue this tactic. Ken Zimmerman recommended contacting the Nature Conservancy which has used grazing in the management of their properties.

Item 6, New and Unfinished Business

Ed Anchordoguy asked who will be chairing the Rangelands Focus Group. Ken Zimmerman stated that Neil McDougald has resigned from RMAC and Bart Cremers will be the new Chairman for Rangelands.

Jeff Stephens announced that he plans to retire in July 2009 and that a new Secretary for RMAC will be appointed by CAL FIRE to continue support for the Committee.

Item 7, Public Comment

None
Adjourn

Tasks

1. Contact Justin Oldfield for a recommended RMAC technical advisor on climate change.
2. Chuck Pritchard will provide a copy of the letter in support of the Williamson Act to Jeff Stephens for distribution.