

BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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**RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, July 17, 2015

Sacramento, CA

RMAC Members Present	RMAC Members Absent
Co-chair, Marc Horney John Van Duyn Cole Bush Mary Rickert Bill Burrows Via Conference: Sheryl Landrum	Chris Marengo Aaron Lazanoff Bart Cremers Co-chair, Lesa Osterholm Ed Anchordoguy Chuck Pritchard
RMAC Staff	Department Staff
Kevin Conway Edith Hannigan	

Items appear in the order they were presented on the agenda.

Approve May Minutes

Lacking a quorum, RMAC decided to put over approval of the May minutes until the September meeting.

Administrative**a. Membership****i. CCA Representative**

No updates from the California Cattlemen's Association. Members Bush and Rickert discussed taking action with their contacts to find a member.

Focus Group Updates**a. Rangeland Water Quality****i. Rangeland Service Organizations**

RMAC staff presented members with an updated version of the Rangeland Service Organizations list. This list is meant to communicate to regulators and the public information about organizations, research centers, and other groups around the state assisting ranchers with balancing resource improvements and economic viability. This document will be transmitted to the State Water Resource Control Board, among other agencies, to assist with their understanding of ranch resource quality and management.

Members requested a copy, via email, that was in Word format rather than PDF so they may directly make edits to submit back to staff. They had recommendations pertaining to the aesthetics of the list and potential

reorganizations of the information to make it more readable. RMAC members also suggested the following organizations be added to the list: Central Coast Grazing, Society for Range Management, California Rangeland Coalition, California Certified Organic Farmers, California Cattlemen's Association, California Wool Grower's Association, California Farm Bureau, and some language directing the reader to local watershed groups. RMAC members also requested staff contact Karen Sweet at the California Rangeland Coalition, CeCi Dale-Cesmat at NRCS, and Dr. Ken Tate at UC Extension for their input.

Members also requested staff request a formal update regarding the Grazing Regulatory Action Program (GRAP) from the State Water Board for presentation at the next meeting.

b. Land Management Tools

i. Organized field tours of active targeted grazing for fire hazard reduction projects

Mr. Conway presented to RMAC information about hazardous fuels reduction demonstration projects occurring throughout California. The USDA Forest Service, in conjunction with Southern California Edison and other partners, is sponsoring a series of these demonstrations throughout the state to monitor the effectiveness, efficiency, cost, and resource impacts of different fuel management practices. Tours are occurring in Shaver Lake (October 9), Big Bear Lake (October 16), and Mountain Center (November 20).

Members discussed organizing a field tour in the northern region to complement those in the south sponsored by USFS. East Bay Regional Parks is well equipped to do such a tour, and Member Burrows has contacts that may be willing to sponsor one as well. Chair Horney may be able to arrange something in the central coast area. Member Van Duyn discussed his recent work moving animals into the Moonlight Fire footprint to graze and will communicate any opportunities for a tour there.

ii. Potential prescribed herbivory pilot project

Chief Helge Eng discussed two potential pilot project sites on state forests. The pilot project would likely consist of goats and sheep on 20 acres in Boggs State Demonstration Forest in spring 2016. The Department would set the goals and parameters of the grazing project so contract grazers were clear on the target of the project.

Members discussed opportunities to bring students in for observation and data collection. Chair Horney mentioned the possibility of using matching funds from the Agriculture Research Initiative (ARI) to sponsor students and faculty from Chico State and Cal Poly. By the next meeting Member Bush will have the beginnings of a project idea; Chair Horney must submit ARI concept proposal by August 30 and a full application by late October.

c. Rangeland Conversion/Forest & Resource Management

Members Van Duyn and Landrum have no action items or ongoing projects, but did discuss the mortality issues in the Central/Southern Sierra, GSOB and firewood movement, and drought and pine beetle kill in the north part of the state.

The Farm Bill reinstated eleven million dollars to Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) funding to subsidize biomass hauling. AB 590 (Dahle) sets aside Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds to biomass as well; staff has been requested to add this bill to RMAC's Bills of Interest in the future.

d. Public Land Grazing

Chair Horney received an email regarding an Army Corps of Engineers project in San Diego that requires no grazing be allowed in permitted resource management projects. Members had also heard of similar restrictions in 2011 with an Army Corps project in the Bay Area. Chair Horney will investigate whether this is an Army Corps policy or an individual management decision and discuss what RMAC may do to encourage grazing as a permitted activity.

i. Board of Forestry Policy Update – Dave Loveless, State Forests Program Manager

Chief Eng spoke on behalf of Mr. Loveless, who was unavailable, on the implementation of grazing on the state forests. LaTour and Mountain Home forests are in open range counties, and as such allow grazing but do not have formalized permits.

There are 70,000 acres in the state forest system with a mandate to provide research and demonstration. While there is minimal grazing-appropriate land in the system, adding opportunities for grazing gives the potential for more research opportunities.

Chief Eng gave a short overview of each of the forests and their potential for grazing activities and provided some language suggestions and overall changes to the Board's 5052 "Grazing, Mining, Water, Etc" policy.

RMAC members discussed making two changes: a) editing 5052 to reflect that grazing will be permitted "to the extent [it] can be used to further the goals of the state forests..." and b) creating a new grazing policy that goes into greater detail about the uses of grazing on state forest land.

Although he was not in attendance, Member Cremers had discussed this project with staff prior to this meeting and will be bringing new language for these policies to the September meeting. RMAC will make revisions and bring the new policy to the Resource Protection Committee and Board of Forestry and Fire Protection for adoption.

e. VTP Program EIR

The VTP team is making slight revisions based on feedback from the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, particularly Member Husari, before bringing it to the full Board at a public meeting. The team is anticipating bringing it forward at the August or September Board meeting. Staff confirmed there will be opportunities for public comment on the pending draft. Member Landrum will review the draft when available, particularly the Southern California Chaparral section, and advise RMAC on comments.

f. Drought

Members discussed meteorologists' predictions for an El Niño year next year. Members discussed the falling hay prices they've seen due to recent rains.

Member Burrows explained some of the innovative projects he's explored on his land, including vertical wells to collect water via gravity on the ranch and changing no till farming patterns throughout the seasons. A stewardship workshop brought together 18 people from Nevada and California who work with cover crops for nutrient and water efficiency to explore new options for land managers.

Member Horney discussed some research he's seen from climatologists and meteorologists that indicate this year's El Niño looks similar to the one in 1997, but more rain isn't necessarily better – a warmer ocean means more warm moisture in the atmosphere, which brings summer rains instead of the fall/winter rains that create snowpack. Concerns remain about water storage and erosion.

Member Burrows mentioned a new paradigm he's noticed at NRCS, helping land managers maximizing adaptations to drought.

Members discussed the use of "livestock drought tolerant selection" – the livestock will adapt to what the ecology is providing. "Livestock drought tolerant selection" is a combination of selecting healthy animals by managers and the animals naturally adapting to the ecology. Managers are making the logical decision for the environment, but those animals may underperform in a well-stocked pasture, and managers should make sure to maintain genetic diversity in their herds.

Legislative Update

Ms. Hannigan provided RMAC with list of relevant bills and their status in the Legislature. Members requested staff provide some further information on SB 27.

Updates from Partner Organizations

There was no attendance at this meeting from partner organization representatives and no updates to forward to members.

New and Unfinished Business

Staff presented RMAC with copies of the June 2015 Director's Report to the Board, which contains the SRA Fee Report, and the Oak Mortality Task Force report presented at the June meeting.

Members asked staff for an update on the formula to calculate the distribution of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds and the ongoing discussions with the Water Boards to calculate emissions. RMAC asked staff for an update at the next meeting from Chief Eng. They also brought up the Marin Carbon Project's Comet Farm Tool that calculates whole farm/ranch carbon emissions.

Member Burrows brought up the issue of grant programs often requiring programs to be self-sustaining and not funding the maintenance of existing fuel breaks. A potential future discussion item for RMAC is how they can promote changes to grant guidelines so they better balance fuel management and maintenance. Mr. Conway explained some of the limitations to funding maintenance projects and Member Landrum added some information from her experience applying for and implementing grant funded projects. Members suggested having conversations with NRCS about their Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and other partnerships for maintenance work. Members requested staff investigate how much SRA fee money is going to maintenance work. They discussed the possibility of drafting a white paper in fall/winter 2015-16 on the importance of this work and requested this issue become an agenda item.

Ms. Hannigan distributed copies of the final draft of the public comment letter submitted to California Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding the State Wildlife Action Plan 2015 Update. A final draft of the document will be available in October 2015 and the companion plans in progress this fall as well.

Member Updates

Member Van Duyn attended a workshop demonstrating grazing of different intensities which was helpful in providing context to "heavily grazed" land – Member Van Duyn indicated that many attendees' perceptions of "heavy grazing" were changed as a result of being able to directly compare different intensities of grazing.

Chair Horney updated RMAC on the 2015 Range Camp, which went very well with 80 students from 12 counties and 3 tribal organizations in attendance. Member Landrum and the Chair will discuss coordinating sponsorship opportunities for students from San Diego.

Member Rickert mentioned the marijuana grow in Modoc County on the XL Ranch and Alturas Indian Rancheria, both on tribal owned lands. The federal government seized 12,000 plants.

Meeting Adjourned.