

Upper Feather River IRWM Regional Water Management Group

FINAL SUMMARY MINUTES

October 23, 2015

Meeting materials and video recording link are available on the website at:

http://featherriver.org/rwmg_meetings/

Call to Order and Roll Call

Sherrie Thrall called the meeting to order on October 23, 2015 at 1 pm at the Plumas County Planning Conference Room, 555 Main Street, Quincy, California.

Members Present:

Sherrie Thrall, Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

Jim Roberti, Sierra Groundwater Management District

Terry Swofford, Plumas County

Trina Cunningham, Maidu Summit Consortium

Roger Diefendorf, Plumas County Community Development Commission

Jeffrey Greening, Public Member

Joe Hoffman, Plumas National Forest (Advisory)

Members Absent:

Paul Roen, Sierra County

Bill Nunes, Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District

Russell Reid, Feather River Resource Conservation District

Quentin Youngblood, Tahoe National Forest (Advisory)

Carol Thornton, Lassen National Forest (Advisory)

Staff Present:

Randy Wilson, Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

Uma Hinman, Uma Hinman Consulting

Paul Lackovic, Deer Creek Resources, Inc.

Leah Wills, Uplands and Forest Management Workgroup Coordinator

Terri Rust, Floodplains, Meadows, and Waterbodies Management Workgroup Coordinator

Additions or Deletions from the Agenda

None noted

Announcements / Reports

None noted

CONSENT AGENDA

(Video 1, 00:3:15)

a. RWMG Approval of Meeting Minutes for September 23, 2015

Upon motion by Roger Diefendorf and second by Trina Cunningham, the RWMG Meeting Minutes for September 23, 2015 were unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Project Status Updates

(Video 1, 00:3:45)

Uma Hinman presented an overview of task progress and an update on schedule and budget. We are in month 17 of the 2-year project, have completed approximately 52 percent of project tasks, and expended approximately 42 percent of the overall budget. The project remains on target to finish by June 2016. Sherrie Thrall noted we have a tight schedule for the remainder of the project.

2. Stakeholder Outreach Updates

(Video 1, 00:4:45)

Trina Cunningham provided an update of Tribal outreach efforts and meeting attendance. Trina attended a Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) meeting with topics including rural capacity building and groundwater storage (Proposition 1 water storage funding). There was some discussion about bringing in the municipal connections to address limited resources in the rural regions, for example, to tie together operations and maintenance fees for recognized storage areas (groundwater storage) within the region. Another topic discussed was rural advocacy needs such as polling and regulations to overcome voting disparity. Trina also attended a Mountain Counties Water Resources Agencies (MCWRA) meeting.

Trina also recommended Daniel Wildcat's book on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as a resource for learning more about the topic. The Tribal Advisory Committee will be meeting in the next couple of weeks.

Randy Wilson shared that Elizabeth Bettencourt contacted him about being involved in OPR's Water and Land Use Planning efforts. (00:09:30).

Uma Hinman provided an update on workgroup efforts, which include development of resource management strategy (RMS) recommendations and further development of project submittals. The Workgroup Coordinators continue to support project proponents to ensure the applications address the required review factors and include completed climate change assessments. Sherrie Thrall commended the Coordinators on their significant efforts and professionalism.

3. Resource Management Strategies – Floodplains, Meadows, Waterbodies Workgroup

(Video 1, 00:12:20)

The Floodplains, Meadows, Waterbodies Workgroup drafted resource management strategy recommendations for each assigned RMS:

- RMS-3: Flood Management
- RMS-8: Conjunctive Management
- RMS-9: Precipitation Enhancement
- RMS-13: Surface Storage – Regional/Local
- RMS-17: Pollution Prevention
- RMS-21: Ecosystem Restoration
- RMS-23: Land Use Planning and Management
- RMS-24: Recharge Area Protection
- RMS-26: Watershed Management
- RMS-30: Water-Dependent Recreation
- RMS-31: Other Strategies

Carl Felts, Chair of the Floodplains, Meadows, and Waterbodies Workgroup, directed the RWMG to the draft RMS contained in the agenda packet for Item No. 3 and asked if there were any questions. The workgroup's approach was similar to other workgroups; the Coordinator, Terri Rust, put together a list of draft recommendations for the workgroup to review and use. Terri, Carl Felts, and Cindy Noble (Alternate) then met to review and further refine the recommendations, which were then shared with the workgroup for consideration and finalizing.

Carl noted that the Lake Almanor Watershed Group (LAWG), an advisory committee to the Plumas County Board of Supervisors, addressed many of these strategies and will continue to do so. There are a lot of other strategies in the document that LAWG and Mountain Meadows Conservancy have addressed and will be reviewing.

Sherrie Thrall noted that the strategies are lofty goals and it will be interesting to see how the implementation process unfolds.

Uma noted the schedule for the next workgroup presentations:

Uplands/Forest & Tribal Advisory Committee – December 2015

Agricultural Lands Stewardship – December 2015

4. Sierra Nevada Conservancy Watershed Improvement Program and Grant Opportunities (Video 1, 00:16:50)

Lynn Campbell, Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) North-Central Subregion Representative, presented an introduction to the SNC and various current and upcoming funding opportunities through the SNC.

Lynn provided an update on the Proposition 1 funding. SNC is focused on forest management and how it relates to water – upper watershed issues. SNC has \$25 million in funding to promote a collaboration of public and private landowners to affect landscape-scale forest health, such as fuel reduction, replanting burned areas, reducing meadow encroachment, etc. There is a December 1, 2015 deadline and a March 1, 2016 deadline for funding. There are two funding opportunities: category 1 (implementation) and category 2 (planning and design).

Lynn introduced colleagues Andy Fristensky, Mount Lassen Area Manager, and Christy Hoffman, North Subregion Representative. Lynn announced that SNC will be setting up an office in Quincy to better serve the region.

Sherrie Thrall noted that a common hindrance to obtaining and implementing grants is capacity (planning, design, permitting, etc.). Lynn confirmed that there is SNC funding available to help with those costs.

Andy presented on the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP), started under an MOU between the Region 5 U.S. Forest Service and SNC. The WIP is focused on a landscape approach of watershed restoration and forest health. Goals of the WIP are to create and track watershed assessment, finding new funding, policy implementation, and enhancing communication. The SNC is looking for endorsements for the WIP.

Randy Wilson asked about what policies the WIP is looking to revise/implement and at what level – local, state, federal? Andy's response was on all levels.

Sherrie Thrall noted that anyone can endorse the WIP – the RWMG, counties, RCDs, individuals. Randy Wilson noted he would put the WIP on the Plumas County Board of Supervisor’s agenda for consideration. Sherrie requested that we also include the WIP endorsement on the next RWMG meeting agenda.

Sherrie asked about types of outreach to more urban areas that don’t know where their water is coming from. This is crucial--to raise awareness of the importance of investing in headwater regions. Terri noted that Rob Wade’s “Plumas to the Sea” educational program may serve as a template for such an outreach program. Lynn noted that they get requests for watershed information all the time.

Trina Cunningham noted that the WIP is landscape-scale based and asked how smaller projects will be integrated into that effort. That is the kind of collaboration the WIP is hoping to promote. Reforming groups at a community level can be an objective to bring folks together to address the landscape scale instead of piece-mealing projects and efforts. Trina noted that there are so many committees and groups that it makes it difficult to be involved in all these efforts.

Leah Wills noted that groundwater storage, and the role of the landscape-scale approach in that storage, is critical. The current drought is the opportunity to look at this potential connection.

5. Climate Change Technical Study and Chapter

(Video 2, 00:01:30)

Chris Read, PMC/Michael Baker International, and Michael Prezler, ECORP Consulting, presented the Climate Change Technical Study and draft chapter. The objectives of the presentation were to provide context, background, and overview of climate change and related items, and to discuss how climate change will be incorporated into the IRWM Plan. Chris described how stakeholder input provided during the August 21, 2015 climate change workshop was incorporated into the assessment and chapter and provided an overview of the content of the chapter itself. Michael presented climate change vulnerabilities in the region, both observed and projected. In most cases, historical data was culled from Gary Freeman’s work.

Jim Roberti asked if the historic data took into consideration that over the last 100 years, more uses in agriculture are taking water that would have otherwise gone to Lake Oroville. Michael confirmed yes, all upstream impairments have been included. (Video 2, 00:14:55)

Leah Wills brought up the Middle Fork Project noting that there is water input coming from the Diamond Mountains, which appears to be a large groundwater aquifer. There is also water input coming from the volcanic region in the North Fork, which has a 10 year cycle. The project is looking at how much water can be used to recharge the Sierra Valley Basin during big water years. The Middle Fork project won’t be completed in time to incorporate into the IRWM Plan, but it is a large comprehensive effort that will have far-reaching planning implications.

Jeffery Green cautioned about getting locked into vulnerabilities and trends in light of extreme events such as the potential of an El Nino year.

Four data gaps were identified in the analysis: climate effects on catastrophic wildfires, 200-year floodplain mapping, increased understanding of snowpack, and local greenhouse gas emissions. (Video 2, 00:35:40)

Leah Wills noted that the Middle Fork Project will map the 200-year floodplain in the Sierra Valley for the purposes of measuring infiltration into the groundwater basin. Randy noted that the 200-year floodplain was considered in the Plumas County General Plan Update. However, establishment of the 200-year floodplain standard would impact most development in Plumas County. Once the 200-year floodplain is identified, insurance will be required for all development within the 200-year standard. Chris assured that it is not the intent of their work to identify the 200-year floodplain for the purposes of flood insurance mapping. The intent is to identify critical infrastructure hazards. Sherrie stated that it is important not to saddle the entire region with adaptation/issues/mitigation recommendations that apply to only one area, such as the Middle Fork Project.

Chris stated that it would be good to have a comprehensive assessment of greenhouse gas emissions to use as a common denominator/baseline to aid future assessments and funding opportunities. Sherrie noted that catastrophic wildfires will have a huge effect on GHGs.

Leah stressed the importance of shading the snowpack to cement the snowpack so that it can hold the spring rains coming out of the Middle Fork Project.

Chris went over the climate change project assessment tools including the climate change assessment and GHG calculator. The tools have been shared with the workgroups. Training has been offered, if needed. Also, the Climate Change chapter is out for stakeholder review and comment.

Carl Felts asked if PMC/ECORP had created the GHG worksheet. Chris responded that they took existing tools and modified them to meet the needs of the project. Carl commended them on the tool.

Jeffrey Green asked if, in the prior awarding of grants, was the input on climate change a greater factor on the successful grants. Lynn Campbell noted that it needs to be addressed in project development and review. Chris confirmed that all state grants require a climate change assessment/component.

The climate change tools are to assess impacts/benefits to the projects. The RMS chapter will include suggestions to address climate vulnerabilities as well.

Sherrie noted that PG&E is doing a lot of work on climate and weather modeling in the Middle Fork drainage. Randy mentioned Dr. Kavass's study that incorporates findings of four climate change models and goes to a scale of three miles.

11. Next Meeting

(Video 2, 1:06:00)

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 4, 2015 at 1 pm.

Adjournment

(Video 2, 1:08:00)

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.