

CENTRAL COAST FIRE LEARNING NETWORK
MEETING SEPTEMBER 3, 2008
SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS
PREPARED BY JODI MCGRAW
OCTOBER 1, 2008

Draft

PARTICIPANTS: Vince Cheap, Angel Guerzon, Val Haley, Brett Hall, Grey Hayes, Cammy Chabre, Angela Berheisel, Joel Rider, Charles Hester, Jodi Frediani, Vince Cheap, and Jodi McGraw.

Grey restated the goal of the Central Coast Fire Learning Network: Bring together diverse voices with some common goals, and asking science for answers to achieve the goals.

The group developed the following agenda at the outset of the meeting:

1. Review of Resource Conservation District's Guidance of Post-Fire Planting and Vegetation Management
2. Update on Assemblyman John Laird's meetings convened to address Martin Fire
3. Post-Fire Monitoring Activities: Status and Next Steps
4. Office of Emergency Services State Emergency Assessment Team (SEAT) Report
5. Future Meetings: Structure and Locations
6. General Communications
7. Status of the Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve
8. State California Native Plant Society Fire Policy

1. Status of Review of Resource Conservation District's Guidance of Post-Fire Planting and Vegetation Management

- Santa Cruz Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have distributed to landowners guidelines for planting following the Summit Fire and Martin Fire, which includes a plant species list.
- Suzanne Schettler, Brett, and Steve McCabe and others have reviewed the list, which included both native plants for fire resistant landscaping, and non-native ornamental plants
- Angel reported that Suzanne was primarily trying to address the structure of plantings, rather than species, in her comments
- Angel sent Suzanne an extensive list of fire-resistant plants obtained from the Diablo Fire Safe Council website
- Val recommended site specific design with an emphasis on restoration
- Jodi M. and Brett noted that there are really two issues being addressed simultaneously, and that keeping them separate is important:
 - What landowners should do *after* a fire, to recover or perhaps even restore their land
 - What landowners can do to make their property more fire safe, in terms of both altering existing native vegetation, and also plantings

- Cammy wondered how our group and others can work with the RCDs on the central coast
 - She talked with Paul Robbins about what landowners should *not* plant, in the wake of the Basin Complex Fire in Big Sur, where the fire affected many different habitat types, so that recommending a species list is unrealistic.
 - She recommended instead keeping it simple and providing guidelines that will prevent people from planting invasive plants, or perhaps even non-native plants that will deter native plant recover (e.g. seeding with non-native annuals).
 - She recommended referring people to the documents the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) has developed toward this end.
- The group agreed we need to get ahead of this for future fires, as people really want to know what to plan in the aftermath of fires
- Angela B. noted that Cal Fire has plant species lists that they want to improve upon. The current list has been reviewed by the San Mateo Fire Safe Council. She is working with Rich Casale to develop a list for the new document “Living with Fire”
- The group agreed that we need to get our comments on the list, or *a list*, to Rich Casale and others *as soon as possible*.
- Grey offered to contact Suzanne to see if she would circulate her recommendations to the larger group for review.
- Val said we should try to develop a list of experts on (post fire restoration/revegetation and fire safe planting?) that the agencies could recommend people contact for more information
- Jodi Frediani noted that people around the Summit Fire are blading (bull dozing) vegetation in large areas, presumably to reduce the risk of future fire. This could obviously be detrimental for not only habitat, for other natural resource protection, due to the steep slopes and landslide potential in many areas
- The group agreed that it would be great to have the local press run an article or perhaps series of articles about what landowners can do to:
 - Recover their fire-affected properties
 - Make their (unburned) land more fire safe going forward
- Jodi M. said that Kurtis Alexander at the Sentinel often covers environmental issues and has solicited ideas for articles previously, so might be interested in this topic
- The group agreed we should contact him once we have the website up, so that it can be listed in the article as a resource.

2. Update on Assemblyman John Laird’s meetings convened to address Martin Fire

- Jodi M. and others provided an update on the status of Laird’s office’s meetings focused on the Martin Fire.
 - About 25 people from a variety of agencies and organizations met at the County office on August 12th
 - People went around the room and introduced themselves and identified what they would like to see happen going forward
 - Good notes were compiled by Laird’s staff, who facilitated the meeting
 - Many fire learning network participants attended the meeting including Jodi M. , Jodi F., Angela, Val, Vince, Steve McCabe, Brett.

- Concerns expressed fell into five main categories, which were used to establish subcommittees for follow up:
 - Fire Suppression, Fire Recovery, Fuel Modification, and Plans (including the Land Management Plan)
 - Research and Monitoring
 - Fencing
 - Trespassing
 - Funding
- DFG reps were in the process of scheduling meetings of the subcommittees, which were designed to convene once or more and then report back to the group at the next full meeting on September 22, 2008

3. Post-Fire Monitoring Activities: Status and Next Steps

- Grey reported that he and Jodi M. are working to develop a symposium or workshop for research in the wake of the fires that burned maritime chaparral on the Central Coast. Presently, he is conducting outreach to individuals in the various fields who might be interested in attending, to learn more about what they would like such a workshop to accomplish
- Brett reported that he is beginning work with a variety of people in burned areas to monitor vegetation change and recovery following the fires, including folks at Big Creek and Arroyo Seco Ranch (Big Sur Land Trust), where the Basin Complex Fire Burned, and also Val at the BDER.
 - He would like to see if it might be possible to coordinate monitoring so that we can learn more than by conducting individual monitoring studies
 - He asked the group what types of monitoring methods would be most effective, including perhaps the CNPS Rapid Assessment or relevés, transects etc.
- Grey pointed out that it is always best to formulate questions and design monitoring based on the questions you'd like to ask. Though you can keep it general (e.g. "How is the vegetation recovering after the fire?"), in his experience, such datasets don't always get analyzed because people don't see their utility
- Jodi M. and Val noted that the Research and Monitoring subcommittee for the BDER will be addressing research priorities in their upcoming meeting, and it would be great to coordinate efforts among the groups

4. Office of Emergency Services State Emergency Assessment Team (SEAT) Report

- Jodi F. noted that the OES SEAT is current working to evaluate the Summit and Martin Fire, but that it was difficult to get information about *what* exactly they are evaluating
- Angela said that the SEAT consists of a multidisciplinary group of agency representatives, including a DFG biologist, and that their task is primarily to assess impacts of the fires on human safety and property, though watersheds are also a concern
 - They primarily assess risk due to landslide, flood, and other disasters that can occur after a fire.
 - Their report will be provided to the County of Santa Cruz, which requested it.
- Jodi F. reported on another SEAT in the Los Gatos Mountains and how it involved a public process that doesn't appear to be occurring on this SEAT.

- The group agreed it would be great to review the report and provide comments, ideally before it is finalized; however, it doesn't appear that a review step is included in the process.

5. Future Meetings: Structure and Locations

- Grey asked whether the group thinks it would be good in all or some future meetings of the Central Coast Learning Network, to have a speaker present on a topic of interest during the first 15 minutes or so of the meeting
- The group discussed the option, and noted that they thought it might be preferable to have multiple speakers present at a single, larger symposium style meeting that might be advertised to the public
- Val raised the issue of the overlap with the Central Coast Fire Learning Network and Laird's Office's group to discuss the BDER. She asked whether there wasn't some way to consolidate meetings or groups even.
- Jodi M. noted that the Central Coast Fire Learning Network addresses a broader geographic area than Laird's group, and so it is unclear how to 'mesh' the groups
- The group noted that Bruce Delgado and Cammy Chabre have come from Monterey County to attend the Central Coast Fire Learning Network meetings, which are far away
 - Does it make sense to have meetings in a more central location, or would that just be inconvenient for everyone and reduce participation?
 - Or could Santa Cruz and Monterey folks have separate, monthly meetings, and then get together perhaps twice a year to share ideas, perhaps as part of the symposium?
 - Cammy suggested to it would be helpful if we could share meeting notes, as a way of sharing information in the event folks can't attend from far away.
- The group decided (I think) on the following:
 - Continue to meet on the First Wed of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the arboretum
 - Decide what to do about meshing with the Laird group once we have a better idea of what their long term plans are
 - Circulate meeting notes to all interested parties, and post them on the web once it is up.

6. General Communications

- Grey said he would create a website for the Central Coast Fire Learning Network, which could be repository for the information we are developing and synthesizing.
- Brett noted that he would continue to circulate e-mails to the group in the intervening time, but that rather than scheduling each meeting, the group agreed to just plan to meet every first Wed of the month at the Arboretum from 7-9 p.m.

7. Status of the Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve

- Val reported that things seem to have calmed a little
- She has been meeting with Brett to conduct photomonitoring
- She is still waiting for the general permit from DFG to allow docents and volunteers to legally access the reserve

- There will be a meeting of the RBDA at 7:30 p.m. on Sept 10 at the Bonny Doon School to talk about fire safety and post fire do's and don't's

9. State California Native Plant Society Fire Policy

- Brett noted that the CNPS State Chapter (office) is developing a revised fire management policy for
 - Fire prevention
 - Post-fire rehabilitation and restoration
- As with all CNPS policies, it will be a position paper and not a recipe of what to do
- The group should plan to review it and comment on it (?)