

Informational Meeting and Public Dialogue Aimed at Improved Transparency & Coordination

Sierra Nevada Meadow Enhancements Efforts, Water Rights & Understanding of Stakeholder Concerns



February 3, 2011—10am-3pm - Plumas-Sierra Fairgrounds, Quincy, CA

Sponsors: UC Cooperative Extension, Environmental Defense Fund, Sierra County FireSafe and Watershed Council

10am WELCOME

Objectives for the Day and Summary of December Stakeholder Meeting, Holly George, UC Cooperative Extension

10:20 **Overview of Meadow Function in the Sierra Nevada,**

Dr. Kenneth Tate, Rangeland Watershed Specialist, University of California Cooperative Extension

10:35 **Overview of Meadow Issues and Restoration Techniques, Specifically Pond and Plug**

Jim Wilcox, Feather River Coordinated Resource Management

10:50 **Efforts to Assess Hydrologic Function on Public Lands in the Sierra Nevada**

Barry Hill, Region 5 Hydrologist, US Forest Service

11:10 **Sierra-Wide Solutions: Working Meadows on Private Lands in the Sierra ,**

A National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Funded Partnership , Ashley Rood-Environmental Defense Fund, Luke Hunt-American Rivers, Sherri Brennan-Tuolumne County RCD, Katie Burdick, Consumnes, American, Bear, Yuba

11:30 **Mountain Meadows & Native Trout: Maximizing Restoration Through Collaboration & Analysis,**

Dr. Rene Henery, Postdoctoral Researcher, Aquatic Ecosystems Analysis Laboratory, University of Nevada, Reno

11:50 **General Comments plus Question and Answer Session with Morning Speakers**

12:10 **LUNCH** (pizza & salad)

1:00 **Water Rights and Water Supply Panel,** moderator, Brian Morris-Plumas County Flood Control

Laura Lavalley, Water Rights Division of State Water Resources Control Board

Rich Teixeira, US Forest Service, Region 5 Water Rights Division

Chris Reilly, Watermaster, California Department of Water Resources

Michael Jackson, Attorney in Plumas County

Question & Answer Session

2:00 **Proposed Local Meadow Enhancement Projects & Funding Opportunities:**

FR-CRM-Jim Wilcox, PNF-Joe Hoffman, TNF-Randy Westmoreland, NRCS-Dan Martynn,

2:40 **Additional Comments/Questions/Next Steps**

3:00 **ADJOURN**

Visit the Displays
Talk with People
Listen—Learn
Participate

Use Post-Its throughout the day to Share Comments on the Watershed Newsprint up on the wall

Some Resources & Comments on Back

The impetus for this meeting was the recently released National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) funded Business Plan for Sierra Nevada Meadow Restoration on private and public lands coupled with some local issues and concerns related to some local meadow restoration projects. UC Cooperative Extension offered to assist with a public meeting fostering dialogue aimed at improved transparency & coordination.

The *private-land partnership* working on aspects of the Business Plan held a December focus meeting in Quincy to talk with a group of local landowners about their concerns as a precursor to this public meeting

Meadow restoration across the Sierra Nevada is identified as a potential means of increasing water storage in the State Water Plan. The Forest Service has coordinated activities on public lands for years. The Feather River Coordinated Resource Management Group (FR-CRM) has implemented many successful watershed restoration activities across the Upper Feather River Watershed for over twenty-five years.

A hope is today's discussions will lead to future meadow and pasture enhancement projects that more fully engage stakeholders, address water rights concerns & identify possible mitigation measures before construction begins. **Your respectful participation is needed and encouraged.**

Resources

Sierra Nevada Meadow Restoration, Business Plan, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, March 2010,

http://www.nfwf.org/Content/ContentFolders/NationalFishandWildlifeFoundation/GrantPrograms/Keystones/WildlifeandHabitat/Sierra_Meadow_Restoration_business_plan.pdf

California Water Plan, 2009 <http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/CWPU2009>

Feather River Coordinated Resource Management Group <http://www.feather-river-crm.org/>

Region 5 USFS, Tahoe, Plumas, Lassen <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/>

Natural Resource Conservation Service <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>

State Water Resource Control Board-Water Rights Division <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights>

Department of Water Resources <http://www.water.ca.gov/>

Upper Feather River Watershed Group <http://www.ufrwg.org/>

Sierra County Fire Safe & Watershed Council <http://www.scfswc.com/>

California Cattlemen's Association <http://www.calcattlemen.org/>

California Farm Bureau Federation <http://www.cfbf.com/>

California Association of Resource Conservation Districts <http://www.carcd.org/>

Upper Feather River Watershed IRWM <http://featherriverwater.com/>

Consumnes American Bear Yuba IRWM <http://www.cabyregion.org/>

Environmental Defense Fund <http://www.edf.org/home.cfm>

American Rivers <http://www.americanrivers.org/>

Sierra Nevada Conservancy <http://www.sierranevadaconservancy.ca.gov/>

University of California Cooperative Extension <http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/>

Below are summary comments from some local discussions and the December meeting:

- 1 How come no one from the agriculture community was involved in creation of the NFWF Business Plan?
- 2 Concern with definition of meadow...is irrigated pasture included? Plan includes 900 ac in Sierra Valley?
- 3 The term restoration is unclear...restore back to what? Enhancement is a better word.
- 4 Focus should be improved watershed function and enhancement vs. just meadow restoration, ie: include timber management, noxious weed encroachment, roads/bridges/culverts, ag use efficiency of water, etc.
- 5 There are an array of watershed enhancement tools in the toolbox, concern that pond and plug appears to be the only one being used... each site should be reviewed to determine the appropriate enhancement tool.
- 6 Do we have the science to determine how long it will take to recharge different types and sizes of meadows; how do we know if late season flows will really increase vs. possibly decrease in different locations?
- 7 Unclear about who analyzes or needs to be involved in analyzing potential impacts prior to restoration project construction and want to know if the process is different on private land vs public land?
- 8 Concern with potential negative impacts, at least in the short-term, to downstream water rights users.
- 9 There doesn't appear to be an identified Plan B to mitigate potential reductions in flow to downstream users. Should not have to wait until 'harm occurs' before alternatives are identified.
- 10 Concern with restoration efforts leading to changes in land use designations, ie: wetlands delineation and the associated use restrictions this carries with it , at least on private lands.
- 11 If public dollars are used for restoration, do Valley/Bay Area interests have increased rights to our water?
- 12 We learned from Irrigated Lands monitoring that functioning meadows help improve water quality. Is there a way for landowners in the upper watershed to be compensated for good stewardship/ecosystem services?
- 13 Concern that pond and plug design may be detrimental to fish/aquatic habitat, gravels for spawning, temps., etc.
- 14 The permitting process isn't clear...is the process the same for private land and public land projects?
- 15 Is a diversion permit from SWRCB required for pond and plug projects...is it the same on private/public land?
- 16 The US Forest Service has Federal Reserved Water Rights...what does that mean? Are permits exempt?
- 17 In doing the economic analysis of meadow restoration it is important to include consideration of valley and foothill ranches and how seasonal meadow/pasture grazing is an integral part of the entire operation.
- 18 How are infrastructure problems (roads, bridges, culverts, etc.) which impact fish passage, meadow function, etc. dealt with in the restoration process?
- 19 How is local knowledge (ie: ranchers, fishermen, etc.) incorporated in the project development process on public/private land projects funded with public dollars?
- 20 **We want to see future watershed enhancement projects on private and public lands; but want to ensure stakeholders are involved at the onset, impacts to downstream water rights are considered and potential mitigation measures identified and appropriate monitoring is implemented to assess impacts and that the failures as well as success stories are shared so we make future decisions based upon what we've all learned. Thank You!!**