

## BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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### RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

#### MEETING MINUTES

Meeting held by teleconference on Wednesday, September 15, 2010  
Resources Building, 1416 9<sup>th</sup> Street, 15<sup>th</sup> floor, Room 1506-12  
Sacramento, California

#### Attending:

##### **RMAC:**

Ken Zimmerman, Chair  
Mel Thompson  
Marc Horney  
Edwin Anchordoguy  
Charles Pritchard  
Leonard Hale  
Bart Cremers

Eric Huff (staff)  
George Gentry

##### **Members of the Public:**

Anne Yost  
Dr. Kenneth Tate  
John Gamper  
Doug Wickizer

##### **Representing:**

California Cattlemen's Association  
California Wool Growers Association  
General Public  
California Wool Growers Association  
California Association Resource Conservation Districts  
Watershed Council of Southern California  
California Farm Bureau Federation

California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection  
California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

##### **Representing:**

United States Forest Service  
University of California Cooperative Extension  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

*~ Items appear in the order in which they were discussed by the Committee ~*

#### Items 1 & 2: Call to Order and Introductions

Chairman Zimmerman called the meeting to order and began with introductions.

#### Item 3: Review and Approval of May 2010 Focus Group and Full RMAC Meeting Minutes.

**09-10-01** Member Pritchard moved to approve the May 2010 Rangelands Focus Group meeting minutes and Member Hale seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**09-10-02** Member Pritchard moved to approve the May 2010 RMAC meeting minutes with minor corrections and Member Anchordoguy seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Item 4: Staff Report on State Budget Impacts to Board of Forestry & Fire Protection programs.**

Board staff, Eric Huff reported that the Board would continue to suffer the effects of an absent state budget. Travel and reimbursement restrictions will continue to be imposed. The Board's Advisory and various other committees may have to rely upon teleconferencing for meetings through November. Depending upon the duration of the impasse, the Board may consider abbreviating its meetings to one day.

**Item 5: Report on Williamson Act Workshop Outcomes.**

Rangelands Focus Group Chairman, Bart Cremers reported on his attendance of a workshop on the Williamson Act held at the University of California at Davis on September 14, 2010. The workshop was sponsored by the UC Davis Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship's "Responding to Rapid Environmental Change" program (REACH IGERT). REACH IGERT Trainees presented their findings on the beneficial effects of the Williamson Act program, the impact of the loss of subvention funds to local governments, and demographics of Williamson Act participants. The workshop also featured participation by John Gamper of the California Farm Bureau Federation, Jaymee Marty of The Nature Conservancy, Dr. Kenneth Tate of the University of California Cooperative Extension, and Brian Leahy of the California Department of Conservation among others.

Among other observations, Mr. Cremers related that a research effort known as the "Ventura Study" was discussed at the workshop. This study found that agriculture ownerships contribute the most to local economies while consuming the least in services provided by local governments. Mr. Cremers also noted that John Gamper of the California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF) reported on a CFBF sponsored legislative proposal on the Governor's desk that is intended to partially restore Williamson Act subvention funds to local governments. The bill is identified as AB 2530 (Nielsen).

**Item 8: Comment submitted by Agency and Association Reports.**

Ms. Anne Yost, Regional Rangeland Program Manager with the United States Forest Service and Dr. Kenneth Tate of the University of California Cooperative Extension reported on the initiation of a new study on the effects of livestock grazing in the Sierra-Nevada range. The study is referred to as the "microbial water quality study" and is intended to investigate the extent and sources of microbial pollution on National Forest lands. This effort was partly prompted by an article in the Sacramento Bee newspaper in which allegations of microbial pollution from livestock grazing in the Sierra-Nevada range were raised.

Ms. Yost indicated that at least two years' worth of funding for this research initiative has been made available from unused Yosemite Toad research funding. Additional assistance from academic institutions and other interested parties would be highly desirable. Member Horney advised that he may be able to offer some student assistance for the project and will coordinate with Ms. Yost and Dr. Tate.

In response to questions from RMAC Members about the extent of the research, Dr. Tate responded that this effort is intended to comprehensively examine livestock grazing conditions rather than to focus solely on one issue of interest to the general public.

The research has just commenced this month, but is expected to continue for some time and will look at differences in range conditions, grazing practices, the effects of conifer ingrowth in mountain meadows, and other important factors affecting the health and viability of California's range and rangelands.

Ms. Yost also reported on the status of the State Water Resources Control Board's efforts toward a statewide agricultural waiver from waste discharge reporting requirements under the state Clean Water Act. She advised that RMAC ought to consider participating in the stakeholder group that has been formed by the State Water Board. Staff was accordingly directed to follow up with the State Water Board on RMAC's participation with this group. Ms. Yost and Dr. Tate then concluded their participation in the teleconference.

Mr. John Gamper of the California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF) joined the teleconference and reported on a CFBF sponsored bill that would seek to partially restore state funding of Williamson Act subvention payments to counties that participate in the program. AB 2530 is on the Governor's desk and provides that in any year when the state does not provide at least 50% of a county's actual forgone property tax revenue they can implement new 9-year Williamson Act contracts (or 18 year contracts in those counties that offer 20 year contracts). This would automatically trigger a 10% reduction in the property tax benefits provided to Williamson Act landowners. The formula for the annual property tax obligation to counties from Williamson Act landowners would then be:

**Proposition 13 tax amount minus the Williamson Act tax amount multiplied by 10%.**

Chairman Zimmerman and a number of the Members expressed their support for this legislative effort, noting that it appeared to be a sensible and well conceived solution. Mr. Gamper responded that though this proposal would help restore county revenues, it was nevertheless not supported by a number of agricultural producers in various counties as well as the Regional Council of Rural Counties and California State Association of Counties. In fact, the only county in which support was registered was Yolo County.

The Governor has until the end of September to sign or veto the bill and Mr. Gamper noted that there were no opposition votes in the Senate or Assembly. He expressed confidence that the Governor will sign the bill. Mr. Gamper then concluded his participation in the teleconference.

Mr. Doug Wickizer of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection reported on his new status as a retired annuitant with responsibility for completion of the Vegetation Treatment Program Environmental Impact Report Update (VTP EIR). The VTP EIR would provide authorization for statewide fuel hazard reduction treatments on state and private lands. This effort has been on hiatus due to staffing and budget issues, but was recently restarted with the express support of Department Director, Del Walters. Mr. Wickizer presented a new "work plan" for completion of the VTP EIR and identified the funding source as money previously designated by Proposition 40.

Mr. Wickizer informed the Members that the contractor previously employed in the drafting of the EIR update, BBW & Associates, would be retained once again and funded through a grant rather than contract.

He also noted that an RMAC representative would be requested to participate in the VTP EIR Work Group alongside agency and contractor staff. This group will bear responsibility for ongoing technical review of the draft documents.

Mr. Wickizer reviewed the various elements of the Work Plan and noted that the deadline for circulation of a public draft by the Board has been set for May 2011. The deadline for final Board certification of the EIR would then be December 2011. He went on to explain that the status of the State Budget would certainly have an impact on the timing of the completion of each phase of the Work Plan. He then concluded his participation in the teleconference.

**Item 6: Report on the Conference Call Regarding the Certified Rangeland Manager Program.**

Board Staff, Eric Huff reported on the outcomes of a May 28, 2010 conference call with representatives of the CRM Certification Panel of the California-Pacific Section of the Society for Range Management. The call included discussion of the need for Board adoption of the CRM Program Guidelines identified in the Professional Foresters Regulations. The Guidelines referenced in the current regulations has been superseded by a later version. Participants also discussed the need for timely completion of CRM exam grading and possible funding of paid graders; notification of applicant exam appeal rights; the need for Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act compliance by the CRM Certification Panel and Panel transparency issues.

Member Horney, who is also a member of the CRM Certification Panel, offered his observation that the call was productive and has prompted continuing discussion of the points raised among his fellow Panel members. He noted that he is currently writing the draft CRM Exam for the fall offering. One of the issues that he wants to see resolved is the provision of a consistent set of commonly available study reference materials for prospective CRM applicants. Applicants have historically gone without such information to support their efforts to pass the exam. Mr. Huff noted that the RPF Exam applicants have the opportunity to participate in an exam preparation seminar and that the CRM Panel might want to consider doing likewise.

Mr. Huff concluded with an explanation of the next steps in the process for Board regulatory adoption of the revised Program Guidelines.

**Item 7: Focus Group Reports.**

**Rangeland Focus Group:**

Chairman Zimmerman reported for the benefit of staff that Member Cremers had been appointed Chairman of the Rangeland Focus Group. Staff was directed to make note of this and to correct the previously adopted minutes accordingly.

Focus Group Chairman, Bart Cremers reviewed the Group's goals including support for the restoration of Williamson Act Funding; promoting an effective Certified Rangeland Manager Program; and supporting the expansion of university range science programs. Member Pritchard reported on his efforts to seek funding from agricultural associations like the California Cattlemen's Association (CCA) for university student field trips and internships.

He and Member Horney will continue to work on that item in coordination with Chairman Cremers.

Chairman Cremers went on to report that work on identifying and circulating weed management solutions for landowners is stalled in light of the absent state budget. Similarly, work on creation of management protocols for state-owned lands in coordination with Ms. Tracy Schohr of CCA has also slowed.

RMAC Chairman Zimmerman observed that there is a new Invasive Species Council/California in addition to the California Invasive Species Advisory Committee. The Chairman suggested that it might be a good idea to post letters of introduction to these two groups to remind them of RMAC's presence and to offer assistance. Focus Group Chairman Cremers agreed to draft these letters.

Member Pritchard reported that the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition is meeting October 20 and suggested this might be a good group to approach on the development of management protocols for state-owned lands. He further noted that there would be UC Extension/Resource Conservation District workshop on the issue of drought held on October 28 at the Culinary Arts Center in Paso Robles.

#### **Vegetation Management Focus Group:**

Chairman Zimmerman reported on behalf of Focus Group Chairman, Scott Carnegie noting that the Group would continue to focus on state fire plan implementation and the VTP EIR among other items.

#### **Ad Hoc Focus Group:**

Focus Group Chairman, Mel Thompson reported on his plan for development of a written report to the Board on the RMAC Constituent Survey results. RMAC Chairman Zimmerman suggested that once the written report has been presented to the Board in a useful form, the Ad Hoc Group can be placed on hiatus until such time as a new task has been identified for their completion. Focus Group Chairman Thompson will draft a report for review at the November 3-4 RMAC Meeting.

Rangeland Focus Group Chairman Cremers inquired as to whether or not the Committee and Focus Groups would be drafting a written report for its annual presentation to the Board around the first of the year. RMAC Chairman Zimmerman noted that the status of the state budget would impact whether or not the report could be delivered in person. But, a written report will be developed in coordination with Board staff. Development of this report will require action by each of the Focus Groups and staff was directed to include this on the Task List circulated to the Members at the conclusion of this meeting.

#### **Item 9: New and Unfinished Business**

Board Staff Huff provided additional clarity on the use of email by Members relative to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act. Members are certainly permitted to communicate by email and phone on items that do not require RMAC voting action. Board Executive Officer, George Gentry noted that the remedy for any non-public communication amongst RMAC Members is disclosure of what was discussed by whom at a subsequent public meeting of RMAC.

Member Pritchard reported that there was interesting article in the Society for Range Management newsletter and that he would forward the article to staff for distribution to the Members.

Board staff reviewed the action items resulting from this meeting. Chairman Zimmerman directed staff to send copies of the adopted State Fire Plan to the Members as well as contact information for VTP EIR Coordinator, Doug Wickizer.

**Item 10: Public Comment.**

No comment was offered and meeting was adjourned by direction of Chairman Zimmerman.

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