

NBWA Joint Technical Committee

Meeting Summary

Date: May 23, 2018

Attending:

Jack Gibson, MMWD, NBWA

Ryan Gregory, Supervisor, Napa Co.

Judy Kelly, NBWA

Chris Choo, Marin Co.

Sandra Guldman, Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed

Frances Knapczyk, Napa RCD

Caitlin Cornwall, Sonoma Ecology Center

Valerie Minton, Napa RCD

Jeff Schreiber, Sonoma RCD

Brian Bordona, Napa Co. Planning

Judy Schriebman, Las Gallinas (NBWA Liaison)

Introductions were made around the room and Judy explained that the focus of this meeting is to begin an initial discussion on ideas for post fire ecological recovery project that NBWA might decide to support. Ryan, Caitlin, and Valerie provided their perspectives the fire lessons and related needs that might match up with NBWA work.

Napa County Watershed Impact

Supervisor Ryan Gregory, Napa, noted that the local watersheds are fairly healthy and have rebounded since the fire. Native grasses came back and now the county is thinking about tree planting. Brian talked with many Napa officials in preparation for this meeting. He wanted to hear what the short term needs are – and has heard that things are actually looking pretty good. Culverts and signs have been replaced, dead trees taken out. Stream management crews are working. It may take time for unwanted substances to move into the water systems depending on rainfall, but field folks are not seeing any new substances now in the reservoirs.

There have been significant calls from landowners about what to do with debris. Field staff is evaluating trees, letting owners know that assistance is available. Napa County embarked on county re-oaking program, thinking now about how to link that with the RCD work and provide more assistance to land owners. Brian noted that NRCD shares office with RCD and that there is some grant funding from NRCS for replanting but there must first be a certified plan in place. Not many people have this certification. Napa folks would like funding to do the replanting plan and money to implement. They did find that 30K acres of oak woodland burned in county and know they lost a lot of oak trees. There was a big post-fire effort to collect acorns and there was a very interested public around this. A new effort would tie in with the already existing re-oaking program that works with kids and the County is well positioned to expand this; they are also open to helping people to plant conifers. The two RCDs have talked with each other and with Pt. Blue

and are thinking about a grander vision of re-oaking with a strategic plan and SFEI assistance.

Sonoma County Watershed Impact

Caitlin Cornwall stated that about 28% of Sonoma County burned. The take away messages include the fact that there were many things we were not prepared for: toxic burn sites leaking into streams for one and there was a lot of time protecting these sites – efforts targeted structures within 100 feet of streams. Got to 82% of that. Also were not prepared for sediment impacts of erosion from recovery efforts with heavy equipment. Need for pre-disaster planning.

Some places in Sonoma Co. oaks were lost; it would be good to know where they are. Jack asked why it was a surprise that toxics were a surprise. Caitlin answered that it was complicated, but emergency response people ultimately did know what to do. Debris removal usually happens quickly, but in Sonoma Valley work did not start till January so they had rain events and salmon stream impacts. Napa had fewer toxic sites than Sonoma. There has been a call for developing a playbook for next time. We learned a lot, so let's capture the information. Post fire erosion problem are most related to steeper slopes and small country roads and with undersized culverts.

Caitlin noted that decisions are being made now about how to rebuild. Been dealing for years with bad past planning decisions; the opportunity now is to help people plan to rebuild "fire smart, water wise, and wildlife friendly". There are materials out there now but also thinking about short brochures covering all these topics with high-level principles defined. Development of an outreach piece like this could be a good project. There is also a need for technical assistance to people who are trying to figure out what to do. Deliverables could be a calculated, such as number of AF water saved etc. Chris asked if this could be staged for those folks now ready to rebuild versus those who will need to wait, but recognizing that people are planning now. Caitlin responded that we have watersheds that don't capture water any longer. Problem is that permitting at County is oriented towards streamlined approvals. They are trying to add material related to better landscape treatment during rebuilding at the resiliency-permitting center.

There is a tension between "fire safety measures" and having green landscapes near homes. There is a new Sonoma County office of Recovery and Resiliency". A meeting is planned between this new office and the existing county offices that will implement any recommendations. They are planning outreach meeting this summer in each Supervisory district and the creation of an action plan.

Good example of this tension is related to the management of riparian vegetation. People are afraid to touch these areas due to misunderstandings about what is included in the Riparian Corridor Ordinance. Lots of Phase 1 erosion control work is being done in Sonoma; \$400k of SWRCB funding recently went out for erosion and they are anticipating another \$900k for longer term controls. Re vegetation, habitat improvements, been doing riparian vegetation, now are thinking should we be designed differently, or other perimeters? In Sonoma County have not had as structured commitment to oak replant, but now there is a level of excitement.

Valerie mentioned that the RCD is excited to report that in June a new registered forester working

for the RCD to assist landowners, helping people figure out next steps and will also be working on bringing in more funds to assist.

In terms of landscape impacts, they did see some soils that will not perc in the high temperatures burn areas, like the top of certain slopes and have some slopes with significant erosion. But major toxicity was not seen and all the burn material is thought to have already moved through the system. Had volunteer groups to waddle burned houses. Potential that the volunteer effort might continue, next phase could address proper use of erosion methods on wild lands. There is also the opportunity to get people off stream diversions.

Jeff mentioned that pre-fire, there was somewhat of a culture that every tree is sacred, when the reality is that active forest management is healthier for the forest and people. He reminded the group that no one practice is a silver bullet, but we need more active management of forest lands.

The group discussed the state of current fire related information materials and agreed that the fire graphics are scary, calling for 100 foot boundary around all structures and that new graphics with more nuanced information would be good. As an example, at the fire symposium this month, fire officials showed various graphics and talk about “zones of defense”; there may be an opportunity here for local organizations that have more rounded perspectives to change the dialog.

Resulting themes from the discussion and some concept ideas for project development: The group concluded that there is a need for

- Tree planting support: evaluation, assistance, replanting, master planning.
- Landscaping information and assistance after fire and collaboration between agencies
- Pre-planning for expected erosion issues and support for current work
- Concern with too-aggressive deforestation of the fire prone property perhaps addressed with better communications
- Assistance with forestry management plans
- Communication materials are also key. Customize the message with the technical help and local examples, graphics targeted to existing funds and programs that would help to direct people to the right resources. Perhaps include newspaper and social media advertising as part of outreach around a workshop.
- JTC members were tasked to develop the ideas discussed today into short write-up of possible projects – with basic timeline, deliverables and budget before the next JTC meeting where they will be discussed by the group.

Next Joint Technical Committee meeting will be **Tuesday August 7th**. Location to be announced.