



BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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## **RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, March 25, 2021

Teleconference

### **RMAC Members Present**

Chair Marc Horney  
Vice Chair Rich Ross  
Bart Cremers  
Andréé Soares  
Lance Criley  
Billie Roney  
Don Watson  
Sheryl Landrum  
Katie Delbar, *ex officio* member

### **RMAC Members Absent**

John Van Duyn  
Kristen Murphy  
Taylor Hagata

### **RMAC Staff**

Edith Hannigan, Land Use Planning Program Manager  
Deniele Cade, Licensing Analyst  
Kristina Wolf, Environmental Scientist

### **Department Staff**

The Board's mission is to lead California in developing policies and programs that serve the public interest in environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable management of forest and rangelands, and a fire protection system that protects and serves the people of the state.

Items appear in the order they were presented on the agenda.

**1) Staff/Chairman's Report**

**a) Membership Updates**

The only term that is expiring is Marc Horney as Chair, and we will be putting in any nominations and votes for Chair and co-chair to the Board at the April meeting. Next year we will have four positions expiring in Jan 2022, so we will want to address this at the end of this year.

**b) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

Chair Horney indicated his willingness step aside if anyone was interested in running for chair, but is also willing to continue. Vice Chair Ross nominated Marc Horney to continue as chair. Member Roney seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote for Nomination of Chair:**

Ross	Aye
Criley	Aye
Cremers	Aye
Murphy	Absent
Roney	Aye
Landrum	Aye
Soares	Absent
Hagata	Absent
Watson	Aye
Van Duyn	Absent
Horney	Abstain

The motion carried with 6 ayes, 4 absences, and 1 abstention.

Member Landrum nominated Vice Chair Ross as vice-chair and Member Watson seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote for Nomination of Vice-Chair:**

Ross	Abstain
Criley	Aye
Cremers	Aye
Murphy	Absent
Roney	Aye
Landrum	Aye
Soares	Absent
Hagata	Absent
Watson	Aye
Van Duyn	Absent
Horney	Aye

The motion carried with 6 ayes, 4 absences, and 1 abstention.

## 2) Approve Feb 2021 Meeting Minutes

Minor edits were made to the February meeting minutes in regards to ram sales. Member Cremers moved to accept the fantastic meeting minutes as revised. Member Riley seconded the motion.

### Roll Call Vote for Approval of February 2021 Meeting Minutes:

Ross	Aye
Criley	Aye
Cremers	Aye
Murphy	Absent
Roney	Aye
Landrum	Abstain
Soares	Absent
Hagata	Absent
Watson	Abstain
Van Duyn	Absent
Horney	Aye

The motion carries with a simple majority: 5 ayes, 4 absences, and 2 abstentions. The meetings are approved as revised, and will be posted to the RMAC webpage.

**\* The RMAC skipped to Item 4 to wait for the agenda item scheduled for 1:15 PM**

## 7) Legislation Updates

Dr. Wolf discussed AB 642 (Friedman) and shared the bill text and bill analysis, along with the changes the bill proposes. This bill is currently pending votes in the legislature. Chair Horney related this to the challenge of significant fires in the North Bay and Napa Valley, with lots of slash left on the ground and dead fire fuels along firebreaks. Member Watson asked if the fuel burn would be addressed by a bill like this, and if it would facilitate the burning of these fuels in prescribed burns. ***Dr. Wolf will look into this, and bring information on the implications to a future RMAC meeting.***

The RMAC also discussed the process for submitting comments on such bills, and it was clarified that organizations can submit comments, but individuals cannot, and neither can RMAC directly. The Board is often asked to comment on pending legislation that impacts Board purview, so this bill would be one that the Board analyzes. We can incorporate RMAC member feedback into that analysis. But the committee itself could not write a letter or have their own analysis. It was suggested that landowners and stakeholders need to be included in development of such legislation, but it may be that such comments would generally be best coming to RMAC at a public meeting, and then the Board could review RMAC's suggestion and determine if it would be. To clarify, RMAC cannot submit comments directly on pending legislation.

Chair Horney added that the text about type conversion caught his eye: and asked how type conversion was being measured. He noted that one fire may not cause a "type" conversion, even if it looks like it occurred in the short-term. Therefore, Chair Horney would like to know what the timeframe is that the legislation is using, and if not clearly defined, RMAC can recommend that the Board bring that up in the analysis.

Vice Chair Ross also noted that a coastal development permit is also required along the coast.

### **3) 2021 Workshop Planning – Stacey Frederick**

Stacey Frederick from the California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) discussed the potential for developing a webinar series for RMAC again this summer. This past fall (2020) RMAC hosted a series of three workshops on fire and range management with the assistance of Ms. Frederick and the CFSC. Ms. Frederick joined RMAC again to guide a discussion about planning for a 2021 Workshop Series. Ms. Frederick and Chair Horney led a discussion on the topics we might want to cover. Additional commentary included:

Member Criley – highlight case studies or model programs where people are incorporating livestock grazing into fuels management, audience focus is everyone (land planners, land managers, FSCs, etc).

Member Landrum – loves the FSC idea, hearing more about case studies, demonstrating FSC benefits, and also having back and forth learning with the FSC.

Member Roney – after the big fire one of the things Dave Daley was talking about was the rapidity of the regrowth and post-fire (grazing) management.

Member Criley – inquiries into ceanothus regrowth, livestock grazing on burned landscapes. Can reach out to the Sierra Nevada National Forest.

Member Horney – session for land managers that might want to use a grazing service for managing fuels; what resources do they need to have available, how do you go about the process, how do you know what you need, etc.

Dr. Wolf – how to do manage grazing services across a patchwork of private landowners. Member Watson indicated that he works with municipalities to coordinate with homeowner's associations, etc., and can work with those organizations to show them how easy it could be to do fuels projects across a bunch of parcels. Reaching out to the people that need to know (i.e., those folks who don't know that they don't know!). Ms. Fredericks mentioned how to use that collective energy to move on these issues.

Dr. Wolf brought up Contract Grazing and the hurdles to becoming a prescribed grazer. Member Roney discussed how cattle considerations are very different than goat or sheep grazing. Liability is always a big concern as well with cattle, and cattle are much more difficult to move around. But Chair Horney indicated that using sheep and goats for fuels management would require five times as many animals as for cattle, so there is a clear trade-off. Management-intensive for the goats and sheep too, at least more short-term. So different tools for different areas, times, purposes, etc.

Chair Horney mentioned the potential ecological impacts of fuels treatments and grazing in particular at the watershed level.

Ms. Frederick discussed type conversion, interactions with climate change, and livestock management and evacuations during a fire (e.g., Ag Pass).

Vice Chair Ross mentioned that there are programs that help facilitate evacuations, but that often it is infeasible. He also discussed planning areas where you can place livestock that are likely to not burn (e.g., green irrigated pasture).

Member Roney indicated that her experience with moving 350 pair of cattle in the middle of the night. Many producers save feed for the fall and that creates a perfect storm with that banked feed. Can use a sacrifice area for the cattle to go.

Vice Chair Ross – exclusion of grazing in riparian areas – ***could Dr. Wolf talk about where the science stands on this? And also maybe include or talk about policy related to it to? Case studies, on-the-ground considerations? Yes, Kristina can consider doing this.***

Member Watson – maybe areas that are grazed well below RDM recommendations levels can be used as fire breaks. However, he noted that riparian areas—especially when used as exclusion areas—can act as wicks at carrying the fires through an area. Areas around water and salt can be refuge areas that save livestock – and there is a lot of scrutiny about these areas getting hammered though. So need to reconcile the policy and guidance with the on-the-ground results and outcomes.

Vice Chair Ross indicated that Member Roney brings up a salient point: having safe areas is more likely to be feasible than evacuations.

The date of the webinar was discussed, and no glaring reasons not having this in July were noted, so we can start putting some dates on the calendar. Dr. Wolf will work with Ms. Frederick on the dates, and folks can email either of them with more topic ideas.

Member Horney noted that July will come up FAST, so we will need to move on this pretty quickly. Please try to send topic ideas to Dr. Wolf and Ms. Fredericks asap, within 24-48 hours of this meeting, so they can put together the list of topics and some proposed formats, to make some tentative decisions for shaping this list of ideas into a general theme for a workshop or two or three. This will need to happen very fast.

**\* In recess from 1:55–2:03, resumed 2:03 PM.**

**\* The RMAC skipped to Item 8 to wait for the agenda item scheduled for 2:00 PM**

## **8) Updates from Partner Organizations & Public Forum**

Legislative Topics from Vice Chair Ross – California Cattlemen's Association (CCA); CCA is sponsoring three bills:

- i. SB 332 (Dodd) – Raises the bar on certified burn process; Vice Chair Ross raised some concerns about liability for a burn not being taken by the burn boss.
- ii. AB 434 (Rivas) – Assembly ag committee chair; adding some language to push more livestock grazing on state-owned lands, increasing length of leases, encouraging young ranchers
- iii. Ab 1103 (Daly) – creates an Ag Pass program for emergency access during flood and fire.

**\* The RMAC skipped to Item 6a to wait for the agenda item scheduled for 2:00 PM**

## 6) Water Board Updates

### a) State Water Board CalVTP General Order – Edith Hannigan

Notice of Preparation (NOP) for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Scoping Meeting was posted on the RMAC webpage – grazing is NOT included as an activity on federal lands, and there should be no impacts. However, off-road vehicles are not allowed. And you can't manage cattle without vehicles, so effectively this DOES have an impact. Comment period ends Apr 22, 2021. There is an online scoping meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>, when the Board meeting also occurs so the Board can't attend. **Member Ross asked if there is an RMAC member that could work with him to write a comment letter. Dr. Wolf was asked to do it and work with others (Marc) to remain in compliance with Bagley-Keene, to get input on the letter. The letter must be submitted by April 22.**

### b) Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) Federal NPS Permit Development – Edith Hannigan

State Water RWQCB water discharge requirements for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for Cal Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) projects; if projects qualify they can tier off the PEIR for their own needs. Utilizing ungulates for fire reduction is an allowable activity under the CalVTP. At this stage, public comment is still being accepted on this, and there is a public workshop on this on March 30<sup>th</sup>. Written comments are due April 5, 2020. Chairman Horney would be willing to draft a letter. Kristina can attend the meeting if necessary.

## 4) Governor's budget re: wildfire prevention – Mark Fenstermaker, Pacific Policy Group

Mr. Fenstermaker is a partner and cofounder of lobbying firm in Sacramento representing a range of clients focused on land conservation, climate change, and wildfire. Mr. Fenstermaker is a lobbyist and is deeply engaged on the budget.

The Senate and Assembly each have a subcommittee for climate and environmental issues, and the budget is with those committees right now. This year things are different because of Covid, and the capitol is largely closed to the public and legislative staff, and most hearings are happening virtually.

Two designations for funds:

- a. early action 2020/21 to supplement the budget passed last year and currently under implementation (once they governor signs the bill this money will be available for use; this is the immediate need for wildfire, so this is a way to try to get ahead of the fire season earlier than usual)
- b. the budget year 2021/22 is the normal process and becomes available July 1 at start of new fiscal year. However, this year, the early action items have been delayed due to covid issues, main issue being funding sources etc. GGRF (aka Cap n Trade money) and General Fund are the main funding sources; delay because the Senate counter-proposal was that all funds come from the General Fund

As it applies to rangeland, projects that could take place include the following: Forest Health Program and Forest Legacy (and Reforestation Nursery) Program, and also perhaps the Project Implementation in High-Risk Regions, and Fire Prevention Grants under the Wildfire Fuel Breaks Investment Category (problem is that the landowner can't be the project applicant). Another one that might have potential down the road (although maybe not in the immediate future) would be the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, which is intended to bring stakeholders to the table across the region and identify and create projects that contribute to wildfire resilience, can take place at landscape level or at community-level. The remainder of the items include funding for research, economic stimulus, etc., but probably don't lend themselves to the types of projects that RMAC would be interested in pursuing.

Governor proposed \$326 million while Senate asked for \$500+ million, with increased funds for forest health, and increased funding going through several state conservancies. Senate proposed a reduction in some funding too though. Some forest health funds (\$17 million) left out of governor's proposal so Senate added that. Assembly has not released any details about dollar amounts like the Senate has. Because of the delays we have lost time for the early actions to be meaningful.

What's next? Some are proposing that the early and regular actions be done at the same time, but in that case we have really lost a lot of time if we wait until the 21/22 fiscal year.

Q: Member Landrum – Where does the \$39 million go for conservancies?

A: Mr. Fenstermaker – This goes back to the early action vs. budget year: The Senate proposed they would receive \$39 million now (early action proposal), and the remaining \$46 million would come in June (regular). This is an unknown, in that the Senate proposed a larger amount than the Governor's office, with a portion of it coming out early, and also the Senate's proposal that it all come out from the General Fund, so this still remains to be fleshed out.

Q: Member Landrum – was approached by CAL FIRE to submit a complimentary fuels reduction grant to the grant they are proposing out of the budget; but if it doesn't go through, does that mean that all the time and effort put into a grant proposal was a waste; i.e., did CAL FIRE release the RFP prematurely?

A: Mr. Fenstermaker: you can likely count on the funding coming through, although things can change; every year a set amount of GGRF funds in the amount of \$200 million goes to CAL FIRE for Forest Health Program and some of the prescribed burn programs. The pandemic significantly affected how that revenue is collected by the state, so rather than \$2-3 billion collected, there was only like \$1 million-ish in revenue collected, so that budget was substantially impacted. This year, the funds have returned to pre-pandemic levels so we should be able to utilize funds. So the question is not likely if the funds will come through, but when.

Mr. Fenstermaker's materials will be posted on the RMAC webpage.

## **5) State Forests Update – Kevin Conway, CAL FIRE State Demonstration Forest Manager**

\* RMAC will circulate for feedback from RMAC members on his grazing lease example.

Mr. Conway manages the State Demonstration Forest Program, which has 72,000 acres in nine different properties spread across the state, the largest being the Jackson State Demonstration Forest. The program has a three-prong mission: sustainable timber harvesting, provides (almost exclusively non-motorized) recreation, and research and demonstration projects.

Demonstration State Forests were established in 1946 to demonstrate economics of growing second growth timber, but now are demonstrating a variety of silvicultural systems for healthy resilient forests in a changing climate. In the process of acquiring 10,000 acres from the 2004 PGE bankruptcy from three counties. Cow Creek property just outside of Whitmore will be coming as well and will have two grazing leases. Mr. Conway shared an example grazing lease to us for comment; this is the first lease that CAL FIRE will have for cattle, so any feedback would be really helpful; will be about 1,000 acres in total of unirrigated pastureland; 200 acres is grass and the rest is timbered. Probably looking at end 2021 or early 2022 to acquire the lands and hopefully then will have grazing officially on the state forests, which is something Mr. Conway has been working on for many years now.

Leases must honor existing years, so these first leases are going to be ten years, but after that the State will have to renew only for five years. For now, under State law, they are only authorized for five-year leases, so unless that changes, they can't go up. Current grazers have been there for a long time, though, so maybe once you get in place if you are a successful applicant that might be able to stay on longer just by virtue of winning the bid repeatedly.

Member Criley stated that the five-year leases have been a barrier to some applicants and has been an issue on USFS lands. Chair Horney indicated that some legislation has been submitted to address this.

The shorter leases can be a problem for smaller-diameter timber material but same issue is the five-year period there as well. That is, this five-year limit on leases affects a lot of programs.

Q: Member Cremers – does this go out to bid every five years?

A: Mr. Conway – Yes, it will go out to competitive bid every five years. Can make the managing with long-term stewardship in mind very difficult to promote.

Q: Chair Horney – how about fuels management projects with grazing on demonstration forest land happening?

A: Mr. Conway – No, has not yet been able to get the state CRMs to do this, but maybe there will be some opportunity for this in the future, and with Dr. Wolf on the Board and if new budgetary resources are made available, then maybe we can do something. If not, then maybe Chair Horney could help by donating some students for the summer to do some monitoring.

The State embarked on the Healthy Soils Initiative, a multi-agency effort and CAL FIRE is participating with a goal of increasing prescribed grazing on state responsibility lands and make it easier to contract for prescribed grazing. If RMAC has any ideas for how to make it easier for graziers to interact with state agencies, they would love to hear them; right now, they have very little idea of what is needed. Questions and comments can be submitted to Dr. Wolf so feedback on the grazing leases can be shared with Mr. Conway, and potentially accounted for in the development of these leases.



**8) Item 8 continued from previously: Partners and Updates**

Member Criley made a comment regarding the Baher burned area emergency rehab program; she stated that for a brief moment there was going to be a trial program for working on range infrastructure damaged by fire, but that is on hold due to change in admin. So if you were looking at funding coming from the Baher program that may be delayed.

Next meeting: April 20<sup>th</sup> is tentative date, and we will confirm via email.

**Meeting Adjourned at 3:17 PM.**