

BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 18, 2021
Teleconference

RMAC Members Present

Chair Marc Horney
Taylor Hagata
Rich Ross
Bart Cremers
André Soares
Lance Criley
Kristen Murphy
Billie Roney

RMAC Members Absent

John Van Duyn
Don Watson
Sheryl Landrum
Katie Delbar, ex officio member

RMAC Staff

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

Department Staff

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

1) Report of Chair Marc Horney and RMAC Staff

Chairman Horney did not have a report at this time.

a) Introduction of new staff

Ms. Hannigan introduced new Board of Forestry Environmental Scientist, Dr. Kristina Wolf, who will be transitioning to take over the RMAC staff member duties for Ms. Hannigan.

b) 2020 Virtual Workshops Recap

Chairman Horney led a discussion on the virtual workshops. Ms. Hannigan reported that attendance dropped off a bit over time; we started with 145 attendees on the first webinar (Bart Cremers provided that corrected number), and perhaps 60-70 by the third. The Chair felt the webinar went well and the responses to the Chair were very positive. The Chair suggested we have a similar webinar this year, and that the event focus on a grazing services provider on the needs for putting together a proper fuels management project if the Committee agreed; two members agreed with this suggestion. Andree suggested the response was very good this year, although less than the previous year, and that we consider making the workshops an annual event for RMAC; Member Ross agreed, as did Member Criley. ***Ms. Hannigan will talk to Stacey Fredericks with the California Fire Science Consortium to see about continuing our partnership with them in organizing a meeting for this year.***

The Chair would like the RMAC webpage and the California Fire Science Consortium website be updated with links to webinar recordings, information on grazing for fuel management, and other relevant content. Ms. Hannigan and Dr. Wolf will coordinate on this task.

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

Mark Fenstermaker was unable to speak at this meeting and will present at the next RMAC meeting.

3) Grazing for fuel management – Noelle Cremers, Wine Institute

Ms. Cremers requested to speak regarding concerns around grazing for fuels management, and to make a request from RMAC. Members of the wine institute have been severely impacted by wildfire. Given a 13% decline in grapes harvest in 2019 due to smoke exposure, and there has been little discussion about reducing fire risk in lower elevation spaces and oak woodlands and other rangelands. In a conifer landscape, often the land is managed by one landowner, and it is a more straightforward conversation because in lower elevation there are hundreds or thousands of private landowners, and they have very little experience with grazing for fuels management. Ms. Cremers has suggested that the workshops or other outreach could be conducted to connect landowners and vineyard owners to targeted grazers; providing more information and educational opportunities to landowners for the possible tools for fuels reduction is critical, and the information is not getting out to them as efficiently or effectively as it could be. The Wine Institute could assist in connecting landowners to this information as well, and RMAC could also coordinate with UCCE, county farm bureaus, CA FSCs and other appropriate organizations to

engage private landowners. Challenges include difficulty in managing fuels on so many residential, rural landowners who are not connected to voices promoting fuels management in these lower elevation landscapes. Member Ross iterated the importance of this endeavor, particularly in scrub oak woodlands. Member Hagata agreed with the need for this kind of educational outreach, and Member Murphy stated that the information and work that Dr. Stephanie Larsen has presented on matching grazing with fuels management needs is helpful in this matter and getting that information to non-livestock owners so they are aware of these options for fuels management. Mr. Bart Cremers also iterated that many landowners do not know about grazing for wildfire risk reduction, or what that would even entail. Member Criley stated that many lands managed by agencies like The Nature Conservancy are tied to species specific mitigations and requirements and education regarding grazing for fuels management on these lands will be critical to increasing interest in fuels projects on these lands. Chair Horney suggested RMAC reach out to The Nature Conservancy or the Department of Fish and Wildlife to talk about what might happen in the future with fuels projects, particularly in areas where there are habitat protection and mitigation requirements. Member Soares talked about the impact of AB 1066 (Agricultural workers: wages, hours, and working conditions) on sheep and goatherder wages (increasing by 50%), and will be impacting the majority of producers, and many livestock grazers will not stay in business. An administrative solution is being sought with the help of Member Landrum. Member Cremers stated that money is available to landowners for assistance for fuels management; **Chair Horney suggested that an NRCS or RCD representative speak at an RMAC meeting to discuss use of EQIP funds for fuels management projects.** Tristan Brenner, a member of the public, asked how they can help press representatives on the issue of AB 1066, and **Chair Horney and Ms. Hannigan suggested Tristan and Member Soares connect to discuss this.** Member Ross commented that at local farm bureau meetings, the topic of putting out a proposal for grazing a parcel has come up repeatedly, and there are many disconnects between the restrictions and guidance in these Requests for Proposals on how and where grazing can and will occur, and the restrictions frequently make grazing infeasible and unrealistic (e.g., the kinds of fencing mandated vs. the kinds of fencing needed for practical and safe livestock management; disconnects regarding restrictions on where livestock can graze, carcass removal requirements, etc.); that is, there seems to be naivete about the on-the-ground realities of grazing livestock. **Chairman Horney suggested we have a discussion with organizations like NRCS and the RCDs about this issue.** Member Criley stated that we should keep a list of where these projects are occurring, lessons learned, etc., to record the kinds of work that are being done and outcomes. Ms. Hannigan stated that leveraging the skills, knowledge, and networks of these organizations to share guiding materials, best practices, and information with landowners could be an efficient approach.

4) Approval of 2020 minutes: May, July, October, and November

May and July meeting minutes were approved at the November 2020 meeting. Member Soares moved to approve the October and November 2020 RMAC minutes. Member Ross seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Ross	Aye
Criley	Aye
Cremers	Aye

Murphy	Absent
Roney	Aye
Landrum	Absent
Soares	Aye
Hagata	Aye
Watson	Absent
Van Duyn	Absent
Horney	Aye

The motion carried with 4 absences.

5) Review of Priorities/2021 work plan

The 2020 Strategic Plan and 2020 Objectives (i.e., priorities) were posted on the RMAC webpage. Objectives would be decided every three years with the possibility for amendments to them at the beginning of each year. Ms. Hannigan reviewed the objectives and opportunities for RMAC to engage on some of the action items under each objective.

It was discussed that it might be necessary to make amendments to the code section for the noxious weeds program. **Chair Horney recommended we invite someone from the California Department of Food and Agriculture who has experience with the noxious weeds program to participate in a future discussion on this.**

It was requested that we have a presentation about a grazing project in Ojai, and we will agendaize that soon.

We should also get more involved in federal regulatory policy-making as it relates to grazing and fire management in rangelands.

Member Ross moved to approve the 2020 Objectives and let them stand as our objectives for 2021. Member Criley seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

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

The motion carried with 4 absences.

6) 2021 Schedule

Ms. Hannigan suggested we change the meeting schedule to every 6 weeks (~8 meetings/year), rather than every 2 months (~6 meetings/year). Generally RMAC meets in odd months starting in January, with some flexibility in that schedule (e.g., this year the first meeting was in February). Member Ross agreed a six-week schedule would be good; Members Soares and Roney also agreed with no objectives. **Ms.**

Hannigan would put together a proposed schedule of the meetings. The Chair suggested we meet in March next and starting the six-week interval in between meetings thereafter.

7) Updates from Partner Organizations & Public Forum

Member Ross did not have anything to report on behalf of the CA Cattleman's Association, and that virtual meetings have been fairly inefficient and ineffective.

Member Soares stated that The Wool Growers Associated has been focusing on the wage issues. The most recent ram sales were virtual year, but they hope to be in person again soon.

Member Murphy reported that the CA Association of RCDs virtual November conference had over 500 registrants (over twice as many as usual). They are moving forward with the Sierra Valley Conservation Partnership Project (RCPP) for fuels reduction projects. She has also been coordinating with the Rancher 2 Rancher and Soil 4 Climate organizations and is hoping to begin rebuilding these communities that were disrupted due to covid and restrictions on in-person meetings.

Member Cremers did not have anything to report.

Chairman Horney reported on the Society for Range Management, stating that the annual conference occurred where they discussed the targeted grazing certification process, and there will be further meetings to discuss limitations and barriers.

Member Hagata inquired about RMAC's stance on dealing with predators. The committee explores these issues and collaborates with experts to provide information on policies and related information as appropriate. Chair Horney indicated that RMAC does not take a particular stance on this issue, but will coordinate discussions, outreach, and education on this topic as possible. ***Ms. Hannigan and Dr. Wolf will look into finding a USFS representative to come and discuss predator loads on USFS grazing allotments where grazing is not occurring (e.g., in Lassen County) due to depredation by wolves, and the management impacts of this issue.***

Meeting adjourned.