

RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 12, 2022, 12:30 PM

Hybrid Teleconference and In-Person Meeting

ROLL CALL

RMAC Members Present

Chair Dr. Marc Horney
Vice Chair Rich Ross
Joel Kramer
Lance Criley
Dr. Paul Starrs

RMAC Members Absent

Stephanie Larson – present virtually, but only in capacity as a public participant
Billie Roney
Cole Bush
Bart Cremers
Taylor Hagata
Andrée Soares
Katie Delbar, ex officio member

RMAC Staff

Deniele Cade, Licensing Analyst
Dr. Kristina Wolf, Environmental Scientist

Department Staff

Curtis Yee, IT Manager, Technical Support

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 are numbered by their corresponding Item Number on the agenda and documented below in order of their introduction during the meeting.

1) Call to Order, Webinar Format, and Roll Call – Dr. Kristina Wolf, Board Staff

See results of roll call, above. Dr. Wolf reviewed the webinar format and functionality.

2) Chairman’s Report – Dr. Marc Horney, Chair

Dr. Horney provided an update about his discussion with the Cal-Pacific section of the Society for Range Management regarding the potential for RMAC to become more involved with that organization.

3) Approval of March 2022 meeting minutes – Dr. Wolf, Board Staff

Because there was not a quorum present, the meeting minutes were not approved. One correction was noted: Dr. Paul Starrs was present at the previous meeting, and Don Watson is no longer an acting member of the RMAC, was not present at the March meeting, and should be removed from the Roll Call.

4) Investments in Farmworker Safety & Well-being, Healthy Food Access, Climate Resilient Farms and Regional Food Economies, FY 22–23 – Brian Shobe, Associate Policy Director, California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN)

Brian Shobe gave a presentation on the activities of CalCAN, which is a coalition that has been advocating since 2009 for state investments in assisting farmers and ranchers in California become more climate resilient and in research. Core achievements have been over \$400 million investments in four programs: the Sustainable Ag Lands Conservation Program, the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program, the Alternative Manure Management Program, and the Healthy Soils Program.

Mr. Shobe provided an update on three recent advocacy efforts:

- a) Food and Farm Resilience Coalition (\$3.3 billion bond measure, AB 125, Rivas, 2021; Equitable Economic Recovery, Healthy Food Access, Climate Resilient Farms, and Worker Protection Bond Act); partnered widely with public health, climate resilience, food security, prescribed grazing infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, and health and safety organizations. AB 125 fails, and CalCAN pivoted to smaller, one-time budget requests rather than bonds. Requested \$8 million in prescribed grazing infrastructure instead, but this also failed.
- b) In 2022, the Food and Farm Resilience Coalition tried again with \$8 million budget request for 2022/23 Fiscal Year (FY) for prescribed grazing funding. 14 legislators signed on as well, and stakeholders also signed on to support the budget request. For 2022/23 FY, the Administration proposed an additional \$10 million in a budget change proposal (BCP) for prescribed grazing through the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Fire Prevention Grant Program
- c) SB 977 (Laird) 2021/22, Conservation Ranching Incentive Program to support grazing and habitat on private rangelands.

Public comment: Mike Garabedian stated that while he does not know a lot about SB 977, but he spent 4.5 years reviewing state-funded agricultural conservation easements, and the Wildlife Conservation Board easements were not necessarily agricultural easements, they were quite distinct.

Member Kramer asked how much the amount requested (\$8 million, or \$10 million) would help with the scale of the issue regarding prescribed grazing; that is, how far does \$8 million go, and is it “enough”? Mr. Shobe is not sure, although \$8 million is a start. In terms of on-going maintenance, education is likely needed in the legislature regarding vegetation management and the fact that ongoing maintenance will be needed in perpetuity at regular intervals. CalCAN is still trying to figure out the funding issues, but they do know that grazing operations are struggling with meeting the needs of their fuels projects with the infrastructure they have, and they need more funding, and this would help. Clearly research is needed into this.

Dr. Wolf stated that she has been looking into the potential for RMAC to obtain funding to support this kind of research, and this would be one of the questions that could potentially be answered with such funding.

Member Ross added that the Williamson Act should be considered as well. The lands he sees that are not being grazed are primarily smaller parcels, often that are not managed or utilized as agricultural lands despite the owners receiving tax breaks for managing those lands as agricultural lands. The Williamson Act is not being enforced to ensure lands are being managed appropriately. If it was enforced, perhaps more lands would be managed for fuels.

Public comment: Alan Bower, state rangeland management specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS), and that agency provides compensation for prescribed grazing, similar to what is being proposed in BCP; would that preclude the landowner, if they are already participating in an NRCS cost-share program, from participating in the program described in SB 977 or the Fire Prevention Grants Program, or would they be able to participate in both? Mr. Shobe stated that he is not sure the answer to that for the program for SB 977, but for CAL FIRE’s Fire Prevention Grants Program the two funding streams CAN complement each other.

Participant Dean Kelch, California Department of Food and Agriculture, stated that grazing is an important tool for management of fuels and noxious weeds.

Mr. Shobe addressed Member Ross regarding the Williamson Act; Mr. Shobe has heard in the legislature some musings regarding refunding some of those payments with the budget surplus.

Chair Horney suggested that CalCAN and RMAC assist in identifying folks that are advocating to/in the legislature for prescribed grazing and infrastructure support, and connect them to entities that are developing these bills on a regular basis so that input can be provided up front, prior to introduction of the bill in the legislature.

Member Criley indicated that within his agency (USFS), resistance to prescribed grazing often comes from the cost of the contract and operation, and often other methods of treating vegetation in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) is more affordable; thus, building an economy around this would be beneficial.

Chair Horney indicated that and in some counties NRCS has had difficulties with securing and installing infrastructure. It would be good to get conversations going with potential funding entities to determine what the best approach would be in regards to prescribed grazing in terms of obtaining the best “bang for the buck”.

Member Ross stated that often cattlemen PAY to graze, while goat graziers often are PAID to graze.

Member Kramer stated that in regards to SB 977, the necessity for a grazing management plan can be a barrier for the grants because it takes a lot of time and money to develop. Does SB 977 provide funding for habitat and grazing plans to participate in the grant program? Mr. Shobe stated that he is not entirely sure the answer to that, but Audubon might know the answer to that.

Mr. Shobe can be contacted at brian@calclimateag.org. Mr. Shobe’s presentation can be found RMAC webpage under Meeting Materials for May 2022.

5) California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Noxious Weeds Program updates and Integrated Pest Management – Dean Kelch, Environmental Program Manager, Integrated Pest Control, CDFA

Michelle Dennis, Branch Chief, was unable to make it due to illness, and Mr. Kelch stepped in to speak to the RMAC today. The Noxious Weed Program (‘program’) at CDFA has had a history of dormancy and re-engagement, and it is now in a period of increased activity due to increased funding in the General Fund and revival of the program. Mr. Kelch provided information on weed management areas in California, Food and Agriculture Code (FAC) sections related to the program; the program’s mandate to consult with the RMAC (FAC 7273a); new program funding from unclaimed gas taxes for grants to County Agricultural Commissioner offices to control plants listed as Section 4500 noxious weeds or A, B, or C rated pests (rated by likelihood of successful treatment); partnerships with the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC); how weeds are rated and new educational/outreach efforts; invasion curves, including introduction, detection, and window of treatment effectiveness; and weed control strategies.

In regards to incorporation of CDFA’s annual priorities into RMAC’s priorities, Mr. Kelch suggested that RMAC have an internal meeting with CDFA to discuss this going forward, as the CDFA and RMAC have a statutory nexus to address Noxious Weeds.

Mr. Kelch can be contacted at dean.kelch@cdfa.ca.gov, or he can be reached at 916-261-9252. Mr. Kelch’s presentation may be found on the RMAC webpage under Meeting Materials for May 2022.

6) Update on activities of the Subcommittee on State Lands Grazing Licenses and Land Management (SLGLLM) – SLGLLM Committee and Dr. Wolf, Board Staff

Dr. Wolf provided an updated on the activities of the SLGLLM subcommittee, which has met regularly on an approximately 3-week basis, with five meetings under belt thus far (Jan 5, Jan 25, Feb 22, Mar 15, Apr 5; last sched mtg Apr 26 canceled, next meeting will be May 18th, and the committee will be revising the timeline for delivery of products). Three action teams have been formed within the subcommittee: one for the Grazing License template, one for the attached Management Plan template that will

likely be referenced in the grazing, and one for a Guidance Booklet that will accompany these two items for directing users—which the SLGLLM anticipates will include state agencies (licensors) and the livestock manager (licensees). The committee has faced some constraints with getting feedback from the State Department of General Services (DGS), which has been a perennial challenge, but they are engaged via email, providing responses to questions to Dr. Wolf, who then shares those with the SLGLLM at the next meeting for their use in developing those documents further. DGS will review the draft templates that the subcommittee produces to provide feedback, as DGS will HAVE to sign off on these templates for them to be put into official use.

7) Educational Series Workshop Planning – Stacey Sargent Frederick, California Fire Science Consortium and Dr. Horney, Chair

Ms. Fredericks reviewed past virtual educational webinars on grazing and fuels management in California, which included three one-day sessions in November of 2020 (<https://www.cafiresci.org/events-webinars-source/category/rmac>), and a similar format webinar in summer of 2021 (<https://www.cafiresci.org/events-webinars-source/category/rmac2021>).

A discussion ensued about potential topics and speakers for the 2022 educational series, format, and dates. Ms. Fredericks noted that the target audience is important to establish as well (who is the RMAC trying to reach with these conversations? politicians, ranchers, landowners, land managers?):

- a. **Potential Topics & Speakers:** list of proposed topics (audience in parentheses, if noted)
 - How to: Developing a prescribed grazing management plan, related to SLGLLM templates (any entities interested in receiving funds, should they be made available, for developing infrastructure to conduct Rx grazing ops for fuels mgmt; mostly state, county, city orgs, fire safe councils; could also see having a webinar session for livestock managers to complement this).
 - Post-fire grazing management
 - Prescribed burns and fire ecology
 - Environmental impacts of targeted grazing; managing grazing for fuels control, within the context of considerations for wildlife habitat and other sensitive resources (e.g., weed control and management); targeted grazing and how property owners or managers can set up and put infrastructure (e.g., fencing, water) in place to lower the costs of having targeted grazing practitioners coming in for fuels management and other co-benefits (i.e., what can the property manager do to make targeted grazing easier to implement).
 - Topics related to CWGA's survey about targeted grazing, and public education on fire mitigation (also from a conservation perspective); include beef cattle in addition to sheep/goats.
 - How is the \$200 million pledged for fuels treatments filtering down to management on the ground? (Fire Safe Councils a source of the info; prescribed burn associations; UCCE fire advisors). Could be part of the first topic as well.
 - Case studies of targeted grazing with ecological enhancement focus (e.g., vernal pools, watershed enhancement), geared towards education for Resource

Conservation Districts, other natural resource managers, etc., specific to resource areas of concern.

- Prescribed grazing within the context of not just fires, but also the planning for drought within that framework, and the benefits of drought-planning throughout the year.
- grazing after fire, grazing in riparian areas
- native grass revegetation, plantings, restoration

Audience: Ms. Fredericks noted that the topics and potential audience at this stage seem to be gearing towards a wide mix of practitioners and managers who are seeking to integrate grazing as a management tool. In 2021 the webinars were conducted in summer, but it could be different this time due to the difference audience, so it might be a good idea to move this into winter. Member Ross noted that there may be time conflicts in winter due to timing of elections and timing of legislative sessions. Member Criley agreed that summer could be a difficult time to conduct this with the fire season, and winter would be more doable.

b. Past Dates and Format

- **Sept 2019:** Tools for Sustainable Management of California's Fire-Prone Landscapes: Grazing for Fuel Reduction – all day in-person with virtual option
- **Nov 2020:** Sustainable Management of California's Fire-Prone Landscapes: Using Grazing to Help Keep Communities Safe Webinar Series
- **July/Aug 2021:** Third Annual Sustainable Management of California's Fire-Prone Landscapes: Grazing for Community Resilience

c. 2022 Dates and Format

- Fall or winter, avoid summer due to fire season
- Also avoid when legislative sessions are on hiatus
- Hybrid Format: two or three virtual learning sessions, and one in-person field day (or two, one in north region, one in south) that is recorded and shared online for folks who could not make it.

Please send additional suggestions or comments on the 2022 educational series to Dr. Wolf at kristina.wolf@bof.ca.gov.

8) Establish RMAC Annual Priorities and Strategic Plan update – Dr. Horney, Chair

The RMAC is mandated to review the annual priorities on an annual basis and establish those at the first meeting of the year. In 2022, the committee has had more ongoing discussions about updating the annual priorities and the Strategic Plan, which includes those and longer-term priorities. RMAC's annual and longer-term priorities are tied back to RMAC's statutory mandates, which includes the annual review of current priorities, and incorporation of other advised agency priorities (e.g., CDFA, California Environmental Protection Agency [CalEPA], Board of Forestry and Fire Protection [Board], CNRA). The advised agencies were sent letters soliciting their annual priorities in fall 2021, and there was a varying degree of engagement and response from the different agencies. Dr. Wolf and Dr. Horney have met with the CalEPA (including Waterboards) and the CNRA to encourage engagement and identify areas of synergy and potential collaboration, along with identification of annual priorities that could fit under the purview of the RMAC. At this time, the CDFA and the Board of Forestry and

Fire Protection (Board) have not provided any input on potential priorities; Dr. Wolf will be reaching out to CDFA to meet, and they presented today as well. The Board has had several opportunities to provide input but has not had anything to add.

At the March meeting, a discussion and brain-storming session occurred, and Dr. Wolf presented a summary of those. Dr. Wolf clarified that the current discussion regarding priorities will revolve around at least the 2022 priorities going forward, as well as priorities for the coming year, as this will come up quickly. Longer-term priorities in the Strategic Plan will also be updated, but that will occur later, beginning at the end of 2023 for the official 2024 Strategic Plan update.

Additional discussion followed:

- **Increase collaboration and joint educational opportunities for RPFs and CRMS**

To address potential bias in forestry community toward Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) as being more suited to develop and implement burn plans than Certified Rangeland Managers (CRMs); there could be opportunities to rectify this, perhaps via combined training programs with both RPFs and CRMs to develop burn plans.

- **Increase the number of CRMs, and utilization of them, in California**

Regarding the CRM program (Objective 2(a)), currently Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) are developing burn plans and often not consulting with anyone that has range experience. Moreover, cattle producers are being asked NOT to graze for many months so that a burn can occur, and then are not being allowed to graze thereafter. Invasive plants and land management are not being considered, and instead, the goal of just burning MORE acres remains the focus. Additionally, there are only 86 CRMs left in the State, and the RMAC needs to promote that program. CAL FIRE should be hiring CRMs and folks with range background in developing burn plans. Note Susan Marshall's efforts re: training for CRM qualification.

Dr. Horney noted that Dr. Susan Marshall has recently initiated a grant program for funding from USDA for training of CRMs. Currently, if someone wants to be a CRM, they have to find an institution that would provide the required training and pass the CRM exam. Now, Dr. Marshall and Dr. Horney are pursuing funding to establish a more centralized educational program providing training that would qualify individuals to take the CRM exam.

Public participant Mr. Shobe brought up active conversations occurring around SB 977, in which there have been questions as to whether it should be required that management plans be developed by CRMs: are there enough CRMs to conduct that work? This could be perceived as a limiting factor in scaling up funding in this realm. This is also a question being discussed by Cal-Pac SRM, and there are varying opinions about this. The answer to this is not clear at this time. Information needed includes: 1) how many plans will be needed? 2) how many CRMs are active (Dr. Marshall circulated a survey about this)? and 3) how many could the CRMs do? This would be very useful to know to inform (the need for) efforts to increase the number of CRMs in the state. **The Chair will write a letter to Cal-Pac SRM to request that this be discussed.**

- **Develop educational opportunities and outreach re: fuel reduction methods**
Grazing is considered a fuel reduction method in the State’s Wildfire Resilience Action Plan, so some coordination with CAL FIRE may be in order. Is there already existing infrastructure for this kind of communication and coordination, and if not, can we help facilitate that?

This priority includes RMAC’s annual educational workshop series.

- **Develop research plan, and identify and procure funding sources**
Potential for the RMAC to develop research priorities and seek funding; this is related to Objective 4 (Monitor for issues in rangeland science and management); the RMAC could not just identify data gaps, but also help to fill them. Perhaps seek matched funding sources.

Potential for federal funding or collaborations as appropriate? Note the CDFA mandates under the FAC 7271 and 7273.

- **Increase collaborations with related agencies and bodies**, including the California Natural Reserve System interactions between RMAC and the California Natural Reserve System and entities such as the California Rangeland Trust.
- **Water Pollution Regulation, Ground Water Regulation**
Develop white papers on this topic, as the industry needs more clarity as conditions change (Dept of Water Resources, Groundwater Sustainability agencies) – overlap with CDFA programs that fund pump efficiency upgrades on wells. Is there anything that RMAC can do about the issue this year? Maybe not, but this could be part of a longer-term priority. There have been ongoing discussions between Dr. Wolf, Dr. Horney, and the Waterboards.

- **Livestock Pass Program**
Some of these county programs are getting held up over discussions on terminology and definitions. Member Ross noted that the program at this stage is “worthless”, as the county-by-county designation of the pass makes it infeasible for livestock operators to cross county lines outside their pass zone during an emergency (note: many practitioners work in several counties, but the pass may only be valid in their county of residence). He believes there needs to be a change in the program to accommodate crossing over county lines. Is there anything that RMAC can do about the issue this year? Maybe not, but this could be part of a longer-term priority.

The current annual priorities will likely include (as Action Items/Strategies to accomplish Goals/Objectives/Priorities):

- Development of templates for a grazing license and land management plan, and an accompanying Guidance Booklet, by the RMAC subcommittee on State Lands Grazing License and Land Management (SLGLLM); and
- Hybrid RMAC Educational Workshop Series.

Please send your comments to Dr. Wolf (kristina.wolf@bof.ca.gov), and the annual priorities and objectives/action items for 2022 will be set and voted on at the next meeting if there is a quorum present.

9) Updates from Partner Organizations & Public Forum

a) **Legislative Updates** – none provided

b) **Updates from Partner Organizations**

a. **Member Soares submitted a report as the RMAC representative of the California Wool Growers Association:**

Labor remains our most critical issue.

The California Wool Growers Association which represents Sheep and Goat producers in CA filed suit against the State of California and its imposition of AB 1066 on Sheep and Goat herders. We did not prevail in Superior Court but are headed to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals likely not heard until 2023. We are confident that the law as written does NOT apply overtime to these monthly salary wages and that the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) took it upon itself to interpret it otherwise. It is our position that the DIR is operating out of scope in interpreting the law.

To complicate the issue:

New and Compounding Labor Challenges: More recently, within the last 2 months, the State Wage Agency in California, the Employment Development Department (EDD), has STOPPED approving work petitions, for any laborers whose work will be with GOATS at all, under the same job classification and wage structure as for those who work with SHEEP. Although, they have been approving these work petitions as such for DECADES in California. This is CRITICAL.

They are saying that goat herders do not qualify under that section of the regulations for the monthly salary as for those who work with sheep. The EDD is saying that they need to be paid minimum wage for 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. That equates to about \$14,000/month plus room and board. Think about that for a moment. That is over \$170,000 per year for 1 ranch employee all because they work with a goat! It can't work!

As ranchers know, sheep and goats are often mixed, the work required to manage is the same. In California, many ranchers have increased their numbers of goats in an effort to contribute to the fire suppression benefits of grazing for wildfire prevention. In many areas of the State, goats can tolerate and even thrive in masticating some of the most treacherous brushy hillsides and canyons where many sheep will not, let alone humans or heavy machinery. In doing so, all of these livestock are creating life-saving fuel breaks. Unfortunately, isolated lawmakers and bureaucrats make no effort to value PREVENTION. Instead they'd rather wait for the next catastrophe and gain some political ground for their next election or appointment. In the meantime, nobody wins. These jobs will not be filled because ranchers cannot pay that wage, the State of CA loses an undervalued and almost silent life-saving wildfire prevention tool, homeowners lose homes, insurance companies lose billions, our own citizens lose their lives to wildfire and the abundance of health-related issues that arise as a result of the chronic air pollution that California is CREATING. It would be good to find out what the **net** carbon reduction in

California has been over the last 5 years. Most of the statistics that are reported do NOT take into consideration the output from wildfire. Without that piece of data, it's smoke and mirrors, fake news.

HERDER SOLUTION: We need for the EDD to revert to their own prior interpretation of the regulation that treated herders of goats the same as herders of sheep. They did so because there is no difference.

There is currently one action in place by a Rancher of goats and sheep who is desperate to get their petitions approved for workers for grazing season. It is expected to be heard by an Administrative Law Judge.

c) Public Forum – no speakers

The next RMAC meeting will be determined by poll emailed to the committee members.

Meeting Adjourned at approximately 3:15 PM.