

BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting held Wednesday, May 4, 2010
Resources Building, 1416 9th Street, 14th floor, Room 1412
Sacramento, California

Attending:

RMAC:

Ken Zimmerman, Chair
Scott Carnegie, Vice-Chair
Mel Thompson
Marc Horney
Edwin Anchordoguy
Clancy Dutra
Charles Pritchard
Leonard Hale
Bart Cremers

Representing:

California Cattlemen's Association (CCA)
California Forestry Association (CFA)
California Wool Growers Association (CWG)
General Public (by phone)
California Wool Growers Association (CWG)
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Association Resource Conservation Districts
Watershed Council of Southern California (WCSC)
California Farm Bureau Federation

Eric Huff (staff)
George Gentry

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

Members of the Public:

Noelle Cremers
Tracy Schohr

Representing:

California Farm Bureau Federation
California Cattlemen's Association/ California Rangeland
Conservation Coalition (CCA/CRCC)

~ 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 March 2010 Focus Group and Full RMAC Meeting Minutes.

05-10-01 Member Pritchard moved to approve the March 2010 Vegetation Management Focus Group meeting minutes and Vice-Chair Carnegie seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

05-10-02 Vice-Chair Carnegie moved to approve the March 2010 Rangelands Focus Group meeting minutes. Member Pritchard seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

05-10-03 Vice-Chair Carnegie moved to approve the March 2010 RMAC meeting minutes with minor corrections and Member Thompson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Zimmerman then returned to the full RMAC Meeting Minutes and inquired of Member Horney as to when a Water Focus Group meeting will be convened. Member Horney responded that a meeting will be scheduled for July.

Item 5: Discussion of Board Strategic Fire Plan Document and Related Elements of the Draft 2010 Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) Assessment. [Report from Board Executive Officer, George Gentry]

Chair Zimmerman observed that the latest draft FRAP Assessment could have bearing on the draft Board Fire Plan. The draft Assessment seems to focus on fire suppression rather than vegetation management and appears to run counter to the perspective RMAC presented in its comments to the Board on the draft fire plan. The Chairman suggested that perhaps RMAC should provide comments to FRAP on the draft Assessment. The Committee considered the Chairman's suggestion for possible action and discussed a number of topics that could be addressed in comments directed at the Assessment document.

The Chairman then addressed his concerns and questions to the Board's Executive Officer, George Gentry. Mr. Gentry provided an explanation of the purpose and audience for the FRAP Assessment. He noted that the Assessment has a dual purpose this year. The document is intended to report on statewide natural resource conditions as always, but this year also addresses specific elements defined in the national Farm Bill. The Assessment effort was funded by Farm Bill dollars and for this reason had to fulfill Farm Bill related analysis requirements.

Mr. Gentry then provided an update on the latest draft Fire Plan revisions and noted that RMAC's comments on the draft Plan were incorporated during the last Fire Plan Steering Committee meeting.

Chairman Zimmerman diverted discussion of the FRAP Assessment and Fire Plan in order to address the Committee's concerns about the loss of Williamson Act subvention funds with Executive Officer Gentry. The Members asked Mr. Gentry for his perspective on how the matter should be addressed. Mr. Gentry responded that the Board would appreciate some direction and advice from RMAC in terms of next steps the Board should take in support of the restoration of Williamson Act funding. The assembly noted that RMAC's draft letter to the Board accomplishes that purpose. Mr. Gentry added that he would address the subject in the Executive Officer's Report during the full Board meeting on the following day in conjunction with Vice-Chair Carnegie's RMAC report to the Board.

Upon Mr. Gentry's departure and in light of his report, Chairman Zimmerman observed that it appeared as though the opportunity for comment on the FRAP Assessment had passed.

Item 4: Status of VTP EIR.

Board staff, Eric Huff reported on correspondence received from CAL FIRE Assistant Deputy Director, Russ Henly regarding the status of the VTP EIR. Mr. Henly noted in an email that staffing and budget issues had impacted the EIR effort greatly. Retired CAL FIRE Deputy Chief, Jeff Stephens has been asked to consider coming back to the Department as a retired annuitant to complete the EIR work.

Mr. Stephens has not yet made a decision. If Stephens chooses not to accept the offer, the Department has other annuitants that could be tasked with the EIR. The original budget for the EIR was \$339,000.00 and the contract for outside consulting expired with about \$40,000.00 left. It is not clear at this time how much more funding would be necessary to complete the EIR.

Item 6: Status Report-Ad Hoc Committee Constituent Survey Letters.

Chairman Zimmerman thanked Member Horney for his efforts to bring forward additional comments. Board Staff Huff summarized the distribution of the survey letters and the Committee discussed the responses received to date.

The Members noted that a number of constituents had not yet provided responses and that follow-up with those individuals by phone is necessary to complete the survey effort. Upon receipt of the missing responses, Ad Hoc Chairman, Mel Thompson reported that he would collate the responses into a summary document. RMAC Chairman Zimmerman prompted the Committee to consider how best to utilize the survey responses. The Members generally concurred that the summary of constituent responses could serve as a reference document to assist the Committee with internal direction. The document could also serve as an outreach tool to maintain open dialogue with constituents.

Item 8: Focus Group Reports.

Rangeland Focus Group:

Focus Group Chair Pritchard summarized the Group's discussion of the loss of the Williamson Act subvention funds and a draft letter addressed to the Board. The draft letter is intended to bring the issue to the Board's attention and solicit its assistance in arranging meetings with the Resources Agency among others.

05-10-04 Vice-Chair Carnegie moved to approve the draft letter with amendments. Member Thompson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Co-Chair Cremers and CCA representative, Tracy Schohr discussed opportunities for private partnerships in the management of public lands. A number of possible partner agencies and project areas were brought forward.

Vegetation Management Focus Group:

Focus Group Chair Carnegie reported on the Group's efforts to provide comment on the draft State Fire Plan to date, including the provision of written comment and participation in the Board's meeting of the Resource Protection Committee. The Group will continue to monitor the progress of the Fire Plan as well as the VTP EIR.

Chairman Zimmerman reported that he received an email recently indicating that the state of Texas was utilizing RMAC's white paper on resource acquisition and management as support for legislative and administrative initiatives there. A number of the initiatives are focused upon vegetation treatment as opposed to fire suppression.

Upon prompting by Member Dutra, the Committee Members then agreed upon dates and times for the July Focus Group and full RMAC meetings. It was further agreed that the September meetings would occur on September 15-16.

Member Horney then reported on the meeting content and participants anticipated at the July Water Focus Group meeting.

Rangeland Focus Group Chair Pritchard directed the Committee toward discussion of his possible outreach to the local (San Luis Obispo) Cattlemen's Association along with Member Horney. The purpose of the outreach would be to seek funding for the local university range management program. Ultimately, Member Pritchard would like to seek state-level organization funding through a membership assessment perhaps, from state Cattlemen's, the Farm Bureau Federation, and others to help fund university range management programs statewide.

05-10-05 Member Hale made a motion to authorize Members' Pritchard and Horney to conduct outreach in support of university range management programs. Member Cremers seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 9: Comment submitted by Agency and Association Reports.

Report from California Cattlemen's Association and Rangeland Coalition (CCA)

Ms. Tracy Schohr reported on the latest activities of the California Cattlemen's Association and the Rangeland Coalition. Ms. Schohr reported that both organizations are working on the Williamson Act issue and recently submitted comments on the Board's draft Fire Plan. She further reported that the first field hearing in relation to the 2012 Farm Bill had been held on the previous day and would continue to be a focus of her organization's efforts.

The Rangeland Coalition held their annual barbecue in early April at which time the various members of the Coalition reaffirmed their respective commitments to the organization. The Coalition's "Strategic Plan" is undergoing one final internal review before it is circulated for review by various external stakeholders.

The mid-year Cattlemen's meeting is scheduled for June 14-16 and prior to that there will be a Cattlemen's Political Action Committee meeting during the third week in May that will include a golf as well as a roping tournament.

Ms. Schohr concluded her report with a note about her ongoing efforts to work with the Department of Fish and Game to conduct endangered species staff training. This effort is funded by a United States Fish and Wildlife Service grant to the Rangelands Coalition. In addition to the training, it is intended that Fish and Game staff will be able to spend time on working ranches and farms. Member Pritchard questioned whether or not a similar effort in San Luis Obispo County was related. Ms. Schohr responded that it might be similar, but not related to the Cattlemen's/Coalition effort. Chairman Zimmerman noted that he had recently interacted with a Department of Fish and Game Reserve Manager that was unaware of the

use of livestock grazing practices to promote restoration of ecological function. He wondered if it would be possible to arrange for a workshop or a meeting of reserve managers so that information on the benefits of livestock grazing on wildlife habitat can be shared across regions. Ms. Schohr concurred that there is a communication gap between the various entities within the Department of Fish and Game. She offered to assist the Chairman in further communications with the local reserve manager.

California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF)

Ms. Noelle Cremers reported that CFBF was working with its partners on the Williamson Act subvention funding issue. She further remarked on the joint CFBF and CCA effort to respond to an article in the Sacramento Bee regarding livestock grazing impacts to the Sierras. The two organizations are also collaborating on a legislative initiative concerning the “accidental take” provisions of the California Endangered Species Act. Member Thompson questioned Ms. Cremers about CFBF’s efforts to restore Williamson Act funding. He has heard that some taxpayer organizations are opposed to the Williamson Act. Ms. Cremers responded that those opposed to the Act aren’t recognizing the values of undeveloped open space. She noted that CFBF is also supportive of efforts to respond to those who have violated the Act. Member Thompson expressed a concern that the general public doesn’t understand the intangible benefits that they receive in exchange for Williamson Act tax relief. Ms. Cremers responded that the reason the Act’s funding was pulled has nothing to do with the public’s perception of the Act. The Governor is using the Act as a political bargaining chip along with countless other such funding programs. Member Thompson asked if CFBF’s efforts included discussion of alternative means for restoring the funds and Ms. Cremers responded affirmatively. Discussion concluded with general recognition of the challenges faced in restoring the subvention funding.

Item 10: New and Unfinished Business

Chairman Zimmerman reported that the National Invasive Species Advisory Committee will meet in San Francisco for a meeting from June 21-25 and the focus of the meeting will be on marine bio-invasions.

Member Thompson reported that the Woolgrower’s Association will be holding their 150th convention July 16-17. The convention will be held at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco in recognition of their organization’s history of conventions there.

Member Pritchard reported that the California Rangeland Trust will be holding its annual soiree in Livermore at the Wente Winery on June 5. He further noted that on June 29-30 the “Vaqueros” western event would be held at the Santa Margarita Ranch in San Luis Obispo County.

Item 11: Public Comment.

No comment was offered

On Member Dutra’s motion, the Chairman adjourned the meeting.

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