

BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

P.O. Box 944246

SACRAMENTO, CA 94244-2460

Website: www.bof.fire.ca.gov

(916) 653-8007

**RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 23, 2023, 12:30 PM
Hybrid Teleconference and In-Person Meeting

Location: Robert Cabral Agricultural Center, 2101 East Earhart Ave. Stockton, CA

ROLL CALL**RMAC Members Present**

Chair, Dr. Marc Horney – in person

Vice Chair, Rich Ross – in person

Joel Kramer – virtual

Dr. Paul Starrs – virtual

Cole Bush – in person

Bart Cremers – in person

Dr. Stephanie Larson – in person

Lance Criley – virtual

Taylor Hagata – virtual

RMAC Members Absent

Billie Roney

Andrée Soares

Katie Delbar, ex officio member

RMAC Staff

Dr. Kristina Wolf, Environmental Scientist – in person

Department Staff

Steven He, Technical Support – in person

Victor Young, Technical Support – in person

Public Attendees – John Austel, Sheila Barry, Michael Borba, Christopher Danch, Henry Danner, Max Hylaris, Roger Ingram, Bridget King, Ahmad Majid, Isabella Mattioli, Cinda Mattrocce, Kalli O'Connor, Ziani Paiz, Pearl Hoog, Ziani Paiz, Shannon Rich, Kent Reeves, Brian Shobe, Anna Szalay, Dustin Wallis, Alan Bower, Evan Conklin, Jeff Creque, Sarah Digness, Roxanne Foss, Elizabeth Garcia, Jeanette Griffin, Audrey Hill, J. Lopez, Susan Marshall, Madison Muschetto, Paul Ohlman, Samantha Omana, Matthew Shapero, Audrey Snyder, Theresa Becchetti, Karen Sweet

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 Number on the agenda and documented below in order of their introduction during the meeting. The meeting webinar may be viewed by registering your information at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/994051299845455274>

AGENDA ITEMS: [RMAC Agenda online](https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/wzmjs1rx/february-23-2023-agenda-final_ada.pdf) (https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/wzmjs1rx/february-23-2023-agenda-final_ada.pdf)

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

See results of roll call, above. Dr. Wolf reviewed the webinar format and functionality. Board and Department staff troubleshooted technical difficulties at the new location, particularly with audio.

2. Staff/Chairman's report – Dr. Marc Horney, *Chair*

Dr. Horney provided an update on several items in motion:

- The Annual RMAC Public Educational Workshops were planned this year in partnership with Cal Poly's Swanton Pacific Ranch Fuels and Vegetation Education (FAVE) Program under the direction of Dr. Grey Hayes. The workshops were originally planned for January/February, but due to the planning processes utilized by the FAVE team we have had to delay the workshops and they will occur going through June. We have had one webinar so far, another is planned for tomorrow, and several more are planned to be happening through the Spring. The FAVE program has a website with all of the workshop information (<https://spranch.calpoly.edu/fuels>), and the RMAC also will post the speaker presentations (when authorized to share), a video recording of webinar workshops, and other related information on its website (<https://bof.fire.ca.gov/board-committees/range-management-advisory-committee/>).
- Dr. Horney met with Rich Walker of the Forest Resource and Assessment Program (FRAP). The FRAP document is a 5-year assessment of California's forests and rangelands. The next update is due in 2023/24. Information about range will include land uses, public land status, range condition, etc; Dr. Horney will connect Mr. Walker with individuals having the requisite information needed to inform this report. If there are things going on that you think should be included in the assessment, please let us know.
- On March 8th Dr. Horney will provide a status of RMAC activities to the Board of Forestry & Fire Protection ('Board'). He will update the Board on the SLGLLM committee and the progress made thus far on developing a grazing agreement template; the status of the RMAC's annual educational program; and progress on the 2022 Annual Report and Workplan. He will give a much fuller presentation at a future meeting (April). If you have thoughts about what should be included in such a presentation, let him know.
- On May 10th, the Board will have a field tour focused on rangelands at Rancho Jamul and the Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area, and this will be an opportunity to advise Board members about range issues in the state. If you have interest in attending or information about topics that should be addressed, please let us know. Desired outcomes for this event are for the Board to learn about California range issues and potential avenues to address such issues.

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

The draft meeting minutes were sent out to the RMAC members for their review. There were no corrections required.

Member Ross motioned to approve the November meeting minutes as presented; Member Dr. Larson seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Bush	Aye
Dr. Starrs	Aye
Kramer	Aye
Cremers	Aye
Dr. Larson	Aye
Criley	Aye
Ross	Aye
Hagata	Aye
Dr. Horney	Aye

The motion passes unanimously by majority vote with nine ayes: [November Meeting Minutes \(https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/fhghr4u5/06-november-14-2022-meeting-minutes-final.pdf\)](https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/fhghr4u5/06-november-14-2022-meeting-minutes-final.pdf)

4. Panel Discussion: Grazing Projects and Fulfilling California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Requirements

Matthew Shapero, *UC Cooperative Extension, Area Livestock & Range Advisor*

Len Nielsen, *CAL FIRE, Prescribed Fire Staff Chief*

Rob Hazard, *Santa Barbara County Fire Department, Division Chief*

Molly Taylor, *Community Environmental Council, Climate Smart Agriculture*

Matthew Shapero – Two observations: 1) there is uncertainty about the most appropriate pathway for environmental review when projects involve prescribed herbivory. While often the answer is “it depends” on the context, location, land ownership, and more, perhaps we can at least develop case studies and examples of what might be done in different situations to ease the burden of navigating this process; and 2) prescribed grazing projects are proceeding more slowly than they would without the requisite CEQA process, and perhaps there are ways to expedite some of these processes. Today we have gathered three individuals who can speak directly to these questions and more. The goal for today is to: 1) understand how experts in the field are thinking about environmental review pathways when it comes to prescribed herbivory; and 2) can we brainstorm ways to speed up environmental review to allow for more prescribed herbivory across the state to meet the urgent need for fuels management.

Len Nielsen shared a [presentation on the CEQA process \(https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/sragvf4e/4-what-is-ceqa-l-nielson-2023-02_ada.pdf\)](https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/sragvf4e/4-what-is-ceqa-l-nielson-2023-02_ada.pdf). Chief Nielsen leads the CEQA class for CAL FIRE, so there perhaps isn't anyone better for this. On CAL FIRE projects or CAL FIRE grant-funded projects, CAL FIRE is usually the lead agency. CAL FIRE will be providing CEQA training twice a year for relevant personnel, and the CEQA documents included in that training include the Vegetation Management Plan (i.e., Chaparral Management Plan EIR), the Board of Forestry's Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP), and CAL FIRE's Fire Plan; they also utilize CWQA for technical services like new fire stations and radio towers.

CEQA was signed into law in 1970 and is considered the most important environmental law in California. CEQA was designed for construction projects and subsequent environmental implications, and not really for things like prescribed grazing projects, but we can fit such projects into the CEQA framework. The purpose of CEQA is FULL DISCLOSURE: to inform any and all entities and individuals in the State of the potentially damaging environmental effects of its actions. This gives the public the opportunity to comment on the project and bring up any issues that might arise. It must make conclusions about the possible or potential impacts and identify ways to avoid or reduce environmental damage.

CEQA Statute is codified in Public Resources Code (PRC) 21000-21189, and CEQA Guidelines are codified in the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14 Section 15000 et seq. CEQA is determined through litigation; there is no organization policing the process; it is not a permit, it is a process. CEQA is disputed solely through lawsuits. CEQA applies to all discretionary activities proposed to be carried out or approved by California public agencies. It also applies to private activities that require Discretionary government approvals. It must address direct and indirect impacts, disclose project impacts, and mitigate impacts when feasible. Lead agency is responsible for compliance.

Key Terms

- **Project** – Section 15378; Discretionary; must assess the whole of the action, including any activities that may directly physically change the environment or indirectly cause a physical change in the environment, and that are carried out, supported by, or approved by a public agency. This is subject to public agency discretion.
 - Example: a fuel reduction project physically removes biomass, but an indirect impact may include increased recreational use by the public following the treatment. Other projects include constructing, improving or maintaining facilities; conducting training exercises; awarding grants for fuel reduction, etc. If CAL FIRE (or a public agency) is paying for the project, CEQA is required.
- **Lead Agency** – responsible for carrying out, supporting, or approving a project. For CAL FIRE, this usually means approving the project. The lead agency must ensure compliance, consult with other agencies (responsible agencies, trustee agencies) and the public, and file environmental documents (CEQA documents). A public agency can be the lead agency for its own projects, like CAL FIRE is for its fuel reduction projects and grant awards. Private projects that require government approvals, in general the lead agency is the agency that has the most liability (“most skin in the game”). Cooperative Lead Agencies are possible.
- **Responsible Agency** – public agency with proposed to carry out or approve a project for which a lead agency is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or Negative Declaration (NegDec, ND). These agencies have discretionary approval power over the project
- **Trustee Agency** – any state agency with jurisdiction over resources held in trust for the people of California.
- **Environment** – the physical conditions within an area affected by a project, and the area where direct or indirect significant effects may occur as a result of the project; includes natural and built conditions.
- **Significant Effects**
 - **Significant Impact** – a substantial or potentially substantial (judgement call by the lead agency) adverse change in any of the physical conditions with the area affected by the project. It is the lead agency’s responsibility to determine if the actions will have a potential effect based on literature, experience, and other expertise
 - **Substantial Evidence** – if this exists, an EIR must be produced. If a Programmatic EIR exists, that can be used

- Fair Argument standard – if there is a fair argume that a project would have a significant effect, the lead agency must prepare an EIR
- Thresholds of Significance – used to determine if there is a significant environmental effect; not all factors have established thresholds
- Mitigation – making a condition less severe via Avoidance (not doing part or all of the project), Rectifying, Reducing, Eliminating, or Compensating for effects.
- Avoidance – most CAL FIRE projects meet compliance standards by simply avoiding impacts (e.g., by changing timing, relocation of the project, etc).

There are many CEQA pathways and it can be very convoluted. For CAL FIRE, they generally use an Exemption process or some other CEQA document (CalVTP, VMP, NegDec, Mitigated NegDec). Statute of limitations is generally 30–35 days from public disclosure.

Dr. Horney explained that the reason we have discussed this today is because navigating the process of CEQA may be a potential obstacle to implementing grazing projects.

Speaker Rob Hazard offered his experience working through some CEQA projects, following the process that Chief Nielsen described, including one that has already been implemented, and another that is going through environmental review. Both projects were funded through the Wildfire Prevention Grants administered by CAL FIRE, which is why they had to go through the CEQA Process.

The first project was a county fire project located in a rural community involving about 400 acres of prescribed herbivory utilizing a grazing contractor. This was part of a larger, ongoing project that involved prescribed fire, hand crew work on roads, and defensible space treatments, so there were multiple CEQA pathways being utilized (VMP, Notice of Exemption (NOE)). They decided to use the VTP for this; the area had been historically grazed, and it was annual grassland, and they planned on using sheep. They also used a NOE with minor alterations to land. They used an Environmental Review Report to determine if the project was exempt, and the one mitigation they needed to do was nesting bird surveys weekly during work during pertinent time periods. The NOE process was relatively simple; a biologist was required for bird surveys, and an archaeologist was required for a check, but it was really only a month or two of work.

The second project is much larger (2,000 acres of prescribed herbivory), and the grantee is a non-profit, so County Fire was the CEQA lead. The cost of environmental review was included in the grant application, and that was key to getting this done. They considered using a Mitigated NegDec and the VTP, but ultimately went with the VTP. They utilized a Request for Proposals (RFP) to find a grazier to conduct herbivory, and anticipate being done in May. Some of the areas were historically grazed for generations, but it has been a long time since that has occurred (10–20 years), so the landscapes are changing a bit since. This took about 4–6 months to get the VTP documentation approved. Some of the challenges with the VTP included slope constraints in the VTP Programmatic EIR (no grazing on slopes > 50%), although there is a workaround (an Addendum). They are using the VTP to develop some solid Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the area (unique communities due to transition in area from southern to northern California).

Prescribed herbivory is a short-term fuel reduction activity, but it has a lot of value in annual grasslands. But it does require maintenance and ongoing management and funding down the road. It seems like there is increased advocacy for prescribed herbivory as of late, but there is also some increased nervousness around it as a practice as well. Annual grasses are a big problem for fire in the south, and often carry fire from chaparral island to chaparral island. Why do CEQA for grazing? Cattle ranchers often don't have to do this?! Because of the public agency funding source

in this case! If not government funded on private land, you could do this without CEQA. It could come from private foundations/donations, Homeowners Associations (HOA) funding, etc.

Molly Taylor spoke about her experience working with the Amador Resource Conservation District in the context of a CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant. The reason for that was to use prescribed herbivory to promote forest health, and protect the outlying areas around the city. The project area is about 1000 acres around a highway. While originally the only plan was to use grazing, they quickly realized they would need to use mastication and burning to effectively treat the fuel types. They used the different treatments in concert, depending on the vegetation and needs. The VTP was utilized for the CEQA pathway primarily because: 1) to ensure compliance and utilize the most complete CEQA pathway, and 2) curiosity around the VTP program, and desire to know if it cut the green tape at all. They are 1 year into the VTP process, and they just received the PSA from the consultant. They originally thought it would take 4 months, but it took 12 months to produce. It is expensive to hire a contractor to do this, but the Board had provided some one-time funding to a contractor to assist a subset of project proponents in producing Project Specific Analyses (PSA) for a variety of projects for which the VTP would be applicable, in order to provide sample PSAs in a variety of contexts (different treatment activities, agency types, land and vegetation types, coastal zone or not, etc).

- Question from Dr. Larson – can we get more detail on the training exercises that require CEQA coverage? Chief Nielsen was referring to the training exercises conducted with CAL FIRE crews to, for example, cut fire lines. Because the training exercises are iterative, compared to real-life scenarios for fuel reduction, they must assess impacts from all activities. This would not apply to emergency operations, which are exempt from CEQA.
- Question from Matthew Shapero – at the crux of this discussion is what seems to be a subjective decision about what pathway to take (NOE, lowest bar; or VTP, higher bar); do you think that a precedent is being set for using the VTP for grazing projects, or would there be a pathway to do something more simplistic (NOE)? Chief Nielsen referenced conducting a preliminary analysis, which includes a basic project description (who, what when where why) which will help you determine if an NOE is sufficient (avoid impacts through design; no mitigations required and no potential for environmental impact) as opposed to a Mitigated Neg Dec or an EIR. For example with Rob's project, if sheep wouldn't disturb birds, they wouldn't need to do a mitigation (bird surveys), but given that they had local Audubon resistance, they did this to satisfy them; that's why they ended up using the VTP.
- Question from Dr. Horney – when Molly said that the PSA was very expensive to produce for the VTP, what was the ballpark cost? Molly stated it was around \$60,000–\$80,000. Rob Hazard stated that it was \$100,000 for the 2,000 acre project in Santa Barbara, plus additional funding for nesting bird surveys.
- Question from Len Nielsen – what is the average that the Board is paying for when it comes to PSA production for the PSAs. Dr. Wolf responded that an initial set of funding of \$2.1 million was provided to develop PSAs to showcase and provide examples of different uses for the VTP. An additional \$2.4 million was allocated for a second set of one-time funding. Approximately 20 projects were covered by the initial set of funding, but she did not have the information about how much each project cost, or what the average cost was. \$80,000 sounds like a reasonable estimate.
- Question from Member Bush – when the treatments are needing to be done now, we don't have time for a year of CEQA review; this is an important consideration, and we need to talk more about this going forward. The process takes a long time and it is expensive. Our job is to expedite the treatments for safety, but it is difficult to do when CEQA holds up the implementation.

- Ms. Taylor noted that this can create a reliance on these consultants; she cannot imagine that the public agencies could manage the environmental review properly, as it is not that user-friendly. Was this intended to be relegated to the realm of environmental consultants? Chief Nielsen noted that the intention of the VTP was to provide a more straightforward, checklist-type process for identifying impacts and mitigations. But the analysis does require a certain level of environmental expertise, and that has been the challenge with the CalVTP. Developing the first VTP can be difficult, but subsequent ones are usually much easier, although surveys can add some time to the process. But over time, the review process should shorten as more PSAs are produced that can act as examples for other projects, and as project managers gain experience utilizing the VTP.
- Member Ross noted that when people try to use the VTP as long as they thoroughly discuss in the PSA all the different possible impacts, they are less likely to have issues with litigation.
- Kent Reeves asked: Are there circumstances in which prescribed grazing projects could be exempt from CEQA when it would otherwise be required? Chief Nielsen noted that this would only apply if there was an emergency declaration by the Governor.
- Member Kramer asked if you can give an example where previous datasets or surveys were available that could be utilized so you wouldn't have to do that survey again, and can utilize that to satisfy requirements of CEQA? Chief Nielsen said under the Fair Argument Standard, examples do NOT expire; only if the site conditions have changed or there has been some other management within the site that changed, you may have to consider that, but the old data would still be valid if you can make a case that the conditions are still similar. However, you should always check for new circumstances (e.g., new species may be present in an area, etc).
- In regards to potential ways to streamline the process:
 - Mr. Hazard commented that it would be nice to have a better understanding of when nesting bird surveys are really required, given the resistance to not doing them in his area. Given that prescribed herbivory is so flexible and really has a light impact relative to many other tools (e.g., burning, mastication), and it seems like the one that is a no-brainer for managing fine fuels (1-hr fuels) and having little to no adverse environmental impacts. The old VMP is also used, and doesn't require a consultant to implement, and while they have to hire a contractor for the surveys, it's relatively inexpensive and straightforward. He agrees the VTP will get easier over time; the VTP came out at the start of the pandemic, so there were no classes conducted, etc. Over time, the consultants are learning a lot about using the VTP, and eventually this will be a lot easier and streamlined.
 - Ms. Taylor – it would be helpful to have access to an advisory committee that applicants could turn to better understand if they need to utilize the VTP or if another pathway would be sufficient. Advisors could be really helpful with making this determination, because it can feel very subjective.
 - Chief Nielsen – noted that the VTP is meant to be a long -term fix (projects are covered for ~10 years) for addressing CEQA compliance, and there is a learning curve. If you have no environmental impacts, an NOE is great; 1 or 2 impacts, a Mitigated NegDec is great (can last more than 10 years); more than that, an EIR will likely be needed (e.g., a Programmatic EIR like the VTP, VMP; or an EIR).

5. Annual Report and Workplan & Annual Priorities – Dr. Horney, *Chair*

Timing: 1:52

The draft of the 2022 Annual Report & Workplan was emailed to the RMAC members and all revisions and edits were incorporated. Since the version that was sent to RMAC members in December and January, more edits had been made; in this version the major changes included:

- Terminology changes to clarify difference the between:
 - a. “Priorities” – overarching larger goals, laid out in the Strategic Plan; there are four main ones, and since the CDFA is not currently enforcing FAC 7273, we have left that out for this year.
 - b. “Goals” – annual priorities that feed into accomplishment of the larger RMAC priorities
 - c. “Objectives” – tasks to complete in the current year to accomplish the goals of the RMAC, and ultimately, the annual and overarching priorities.

Dr. Horney will make assignments to RMAC members for the different objectives, and Dr. Wolf will send them out via email after this meeting, and then members will have until the next meeting to withdraw from the assignment. Please review the timeframes for goal completion as well.

Member Bush recognized the work put into the report, and it is helpful for acknowledging the work that has been done and the direction of the committee going forward.

No additional updates or revisions were requested, and Dr. Larson motioned to accept the Annual Report and Workplan as presented; Member Cremers seconded the motion.

Andrée Soares	Absent
Bart Cremers	Aye
Billie Roney	Absent
Cole Bush	Aye
Paul Starrs	Aye
Katie Delbar	Absent
Joel Kramer	Aye
Lance Criley	Aye
Marc Horney	Aye
Rich Ross	Aye
Stephanie Larson	Aye
Taylor Hagata	Aye

Motion passes unanimously with 9 ayes. The Annual Report and Workplan is posted online:

<https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/7208/white-paper.pdf>

<At this point, the meeting recording becomes largely unintelligible; meeting notes are provided based on recollection, visuals on the recording, notes prepared by Board staff for content presentation during the meeting, and notes taken during the meeting.>

6. Update on Working Group or Advised Agency liaisons – Dr. Wolf, Board staff

- **Natural & Working Lands Team:** Dr. Wolf provided an update on RMAC member or affiliate interactions with working groups. Dr. Wolf was asked to join the Natural & Working Lands (NWL) team under the Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), and members were invited to join the first meeting of the NWL Expert Advisory Committee (EAC), which was established by AB 1757. AB 1757 directs the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Air Resources Board to establish an expert advisory committee to inform and review modeling

and analyses for natural and working lands, to advise state agencies on implementation strategies and standardized accounting, and to provide recommendations on addressing barriers to efficient implementation of climate action in natural and working lands. The NWL EAC will support the implementation of AB 1757. The current membership of the NWL EAC is available online: <https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Expanding-Nature-Based-Solutions/AB-1757-Expert-Advisory-Committee-MembersBio-and-Headshots-2723edits.pdf>. The EAC is currently lacking tribal representation, and Dr. Wolf did provide one name to CNRA as a recommendation to fill this seat, and provided feedback to the organizers on topics to cover at the inaugural meeting. Dr. Wolf also took notes at the first NWL EAC meeting; the meeting was recorded and is available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwNZYic0e8w>. As part of this effort, the CNRA will be funding between \$5-6M of core climate change research to support the 5th CA Climate Change Assessment. A competitive solicitation will be administered this Spring on a variety of topics (https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/btrjr0c/6-ca-fifth-climate-assessment-topics_ada.pdf). Dr. Wolf will be reviewing and scoring proposals received under the 5th Climate Assessment Request for Proposals (RFP). Additional information can be found online:

- 4th assessment: <https://climateassessment.ca.gov/>
- 5th Climate Change Assessment website: <https://opr.ca.gov/climate/icarp/climate-assessment/>
- To join the Listserv for the 5th Climate Change Assessment: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/SPAC6FK/CCCA>
- Many datasets are already available that will be used to inform the assessment, and will be updated going forward: <https://analytics.cal-adapt.org/data/>
- https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/btrjr0c/6-ca-fifth-climate-assessment-topics_ada.pdf
- You can get involved by filling out the survey here: https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=OtQQFfwu1kGZWuhPTXdUkCeLo3LueN9Ei8Gc-9U_6R9UODJGsvIRQkMzNkREODIDQIFIRkc1WIM3Mi4u
- **Healthy Soils Initiative (HSI)** – This is a Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) program to establish actions and targets for improved soil health. The initiative manager left CDFA in December right at start of forming this team, so we are working to reestablish connections now. Members Kramer and Bush had volunteered to join as liaisons to this team, and we met with Deputy Secretary Virginia Jameson on Feb 14th, and she is rethinking how to approach this program, and has asked for input on this.
 - The HSI started a few years ago, bring together state agencies to do activities to bolster soil health across the state, focused on State Responsibility Areas (SRA) and beyond.
 - The HSI was pre-funding for the Healthy Soils Program (HSP), and the HSP came out of the HSI; they have done five rounds so far. Healthy Soils Demonstration Projects are their biggest area of research; they can be demonstration projects, or they may be a partnership with research universities or other organization, with the goal of monitoring changes as a result of practice implementation.
 - <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oeffi/healthsoils/DemonstrationProjects.html>
 - Other actions taken by the HSI:
 - Healthy Soils Week/World Soils Day events

- Stakeholder Partnership workshops
- Provide resources online
- There will be a need to support the implementation! If AB 1757 gives a mandate for CDFA (or related to CDFA), perhaps HSP could then take it and run.
- The **Strategic Growth Council Land Access Task Force** with CNRA is another opportunity to provide input, if they are open to receiving feedback. We have not heard back from Deputy Secretary Jessica Morse on this, and I have followed up several times, but will follow up again.
- Fish and Game Commission (Commission) and the State Board of Forestry (Board) **Joint Policy on Hardwoods**: https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/yvtej2ji/6-joint-hardwood-board-policy-1994_ada.pdf
 - There is language in here referencing RMAC, and if folks would like to provide feedback, now is the time. This will be discussed at the March Board meeting as part of the Management Committee on Tuesday, March 7th. Public comment will be entertained then as well. Seems like there are a lot of recommendations for RMAC to be consulted, but as far as I know, this has not happened, at least not in recent years.
 - RMAC-Pertinent Text
 - “The Board reviewed the need for statewide regulation of hardwoods and decided that such controls are not warranted at this time. Rather the Board opted for a renewed effort to encourage local government and citizens to design strategies that will address local hardwood management and conservation. Should this fail, the Board, in consultation with the Commission, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program, the Range Management Advisory Committee and any interested parties, will examine the need for statewide legislation and take regulatory action, if necessary, to control harvesting and conversion of hardwood-rangelands using existing statutes.”
 - “In addition to the joint policy, the Board of Forestry charges the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection with the following:
 - Consistent with available personnel, provide staff support to the Range Management Advisory Committee;
 - Provide active liaison to the Commission and Range Management Advisory Committee on issues related to forest and vegetation management, wildfire protection and prevention, and the assessment of hardwood resources.”
 - ***Note: since this meeting, the agenda item to discuss the Joint Policy on Hardwoods was delayed until the May 9th Management Committee meeting.***

7. Educational Workshop Series Planning Update – Dr. Horney, *Chair* and Dr. Wolf, *Board staff*

Members Bush and Kramer were involved in this at the start, but as Cal Poly took over the planning, the RMAC was not kept informed in as timely a manner as we would have liked, and the deadlines originally agreed upon could not be met. Additionally, staffing changes have slowed down planning progress. Dr. Horney and Dr. Wolf have stepped in to take a more active role in planning. Cal Poly will still manage the three webinars and two of the field days. The RMAC will

take over planning the other two field days. At this time the CA Fire Science Consortium (FSC) partnership is no longer active at this time because our former collaborator there has moved on and has not been replaced.

- Cal Poly Swanton Pacific Ranch Fuels & Vegetation Education Program team have planned or will continue planning the following:
 - Webinars
 - Request For Proposals (RFP) Workshop Joint Range Conference with the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition (CRCC) tomorrow, Feb 24, in Stockton: <https://spranch.calpoly.edu/navigating-proposal-process-wildfire-fuels-treatment-using-prescribed-grazing>. Speakers will include
 - Dr. Marc Horney, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo: Making your Case - Important Elements to Consider in Developing Proposals for Funding Grazing Treatments for Fuels Removal
 - Dr. Stephanie Larson, UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE): How to Implement Grazing into a Vegetation Management Plan.
 - Marshall Turbeville, CAL FIRE: Grazing to reduce wildfire intensity, rate of spread, and resistance to control
 - Ryan Nielsen & Clayton Koopmann: Grazer perspectives on developing and applying for grazing projects
 - Grazing License – planning meeting has happened, still working on a date but likely to be April or May; in talks with DGS to see about adding them in. Right now it will be Julea Shaw (Department of Fish & Wildlife), Lisa Worthington (CalTrans), Marc Horney, Len Nielsen (CAL FIRE), and maybe a representative from the Department of General Services.
 - Management Plan –Still trying to pin down a planning meeting date; would be Alan Bower (NRCS), Morgan Doran (UCCE), Sheila Barry (UCCE), and Roxanne Foss (Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting, VNLC)
 - Field Tours
 - Likely to be a combination of the Cal-Pac SRM Spring Field Tour and RMAC Field Day – tentative April 28, but May 22 being entertained. Will occur at Rancho Jamul and Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area, and likely last all day
 - Speakers will include representatives from UC Berkeley, Resource Conservation Districts, UCCE, VNLC, US Geological Survey, and CDFW
 - East Bay Regional Parks District – March 16th, full, waitlist only, please sign up for the waitlist here: <https://spranch.calpoly.edu/targeted-grazing-fuel-reduction-case-studies-east-bay-regional-parks>
 - Goal: Participants will improve their understanding of why people might choose targeted grazing as part of a vegetation management and fuels reduction strategy, and how that gets implemented.
 - Fuels Reduction Coordinator at East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), Steve Keller, will explain what is required to manage a grazing contract on a day-to-day basis. Rangeland Specialist at EBRPD, Allison Rofe, will discuss the goals of the East Bay Regional Park’s

livestock grazing program including treatment, design, permitting pathway, and methodology of partnerships. Star Creek Land Stewards', Bianca Soares, will highlight targeted grazers' ability to adapt methods based on project goals and differences in specie's grazing styles.

- RMAC Planning Team
 - Field Tours
 - Paso Robles/Salinas River – speakers are likely to include Beth Reynolds, Cal Poly SLO & the Goat Girls; Jay Enns, Paso Fire Department; LynneDee Althouse & Meade (A&M); Katie Brown, A&M; Daniel Keeley, A&M; Dan Turner, San Luis Obispo Fire Safe Council
 - Ojai Valley – speakers are likely to include Cole Bush, Shepherdess Land & Livestock; Michael Leicht, Ventura Brush Goats; Matthew Shapero, UCCE; Chris Danch, Ojai Valley FSC; and Tom Maloney, Brendan Taylor, and/or Vivon Crawford, Ojai Land Conservancy

8. State Lands Grazing License & Land Management (SLGLLM) sub-Committee Update – SLGLLM members and Dr. Horney, Chair

The SLGLLM draft documents have not been revised since summer 2022, and are still in draft stage; any members that would like to volunteer to help move this process forward would be much appreciated. The most recent draft documents presented to the committee are available online:

The committee skipped to Item #10, and returned to Item #9 thereafter.

10. Draft of pamphlet on Prescribed Herbivory for CAL FIRE Fuel Reduction Guidance – Roger Ingram, California Wool Growers Association

Roger Ingram explained that the CWGA Targeted Grazing committee developed a draft about prescribed grazing to be added either as an addendum to the CAL FIRE Fuels Reduction Guidance (<https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/media/umkhhdb/fuels-reduction-guide-final-2021-print.pdf>) or incorporated into revised future versions. Mr. Ingram shared the 228-word draft plus photos and captions, and it is available online: <https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/kcedgjo4/10-prescribed-grazing-draft-for-fuels-reduction-guidance.pdf>

Member Kramer provided some feedback to the committee: After a discussion with Forester Stan Hill, he “thinks discussing the relationship of grazing and prescribed fire could be very relevant. Timing and intervals are critical. If space permits, here are a couple of examples:

- Prescribed burning could strategically follow grazing to eliminate the seed source on desiccated plant materials that could not be grazed, like Russian thistle in dry months.
- Grazing could follow after cutting a fire break or burning a fire break. While a fire break might need to be maintained every 2-3 years, air quality restrictions makes that impractical. Grazing keep down shrub recruitment in the break and widen the interval for maintenance to 5-10 years.”

Dr. Wolf clarified that we have inquired with CAL FIRE about their interest in including this in their fuels reduction guidance; we have received several acknowledgements from CAL FIRE that they

are discussing this possibility, but no decisions have been made. Mr. Ingram suggested that perhaps this could be brought up in Dr. Horney's report to the Board.

Dr. Wolf inquired about a timeline for producing the deeper dive white paper on integrating prescribed herbivory into fuels treatments. Mr. Ingram stated that there are a lot of needs for this converging (e.g., SB 675, needs for advisory support for people applying for wildfire prevention grants, CEQA requirements for prescribed grazing), and the committee would be willing to work on helping to develop this, along with Member Starrs and Dr. Larson, although it will be a much larger effort. The committee is also thinking of developing a grazing management plan template for people to refer to.

Member Bush – it sounds like the white paper would include a literature review which would help identify the current state of the science, and the data gaps that exist. She suggests we take the previous white paper (2015: <https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/7208/white-paper.pdf>), update that and bring it back to the committee for review, and then they move forward on the other steps.

9. Range Management Workforce Development Grant update – Dr. Susan Marshall, Cal Poly Humboldt

Dr. Marshall was snowed in and was unable to join us, but Dr. Horney walked through her slides and provide input on the status of the workforce development grant. The slideshow may be accessed online (https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/wxsal25d/9-workforce-development-s-marshall_ada.pdf) along with a pre-recorded video of Dr. Marshall presenting the information (<https://screenpal.com/watch/c0n0qJVyyMd>).

Dr. Marshall's recording provided updates on two workforce development issues:

- Society for Range Management 0454 (federal rangeland management specialist job series number)
- US Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture funded California Rangeland Education Development (CRED) Grant

Four working groups have been meeting on the 0454 issue since 2022, with much buy in from the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. They are trying to identify the disconnect between students making it from high school to college and then these more specialized career paths in range management. The working groups met on February 15th and there were ~70 participants.

1. Annual Report Card for the Profession
2. Youth and Outreach Group
3. Public Relations and Branding
4. Curriculum

At this time we are seeing a lot of people retiring from agencies while many are not graduating with adequate range credentials.

The second push is the CRED grant funded at \$30,000. This is a planning activity grant, and their objectives are to:

1. Identify strengths and witnesses in the existing curricula – are taking an inventory of all range classes being offered in California

2. Create a comprehensive CRM study guide to be posted as a curated collection on “RangeDocs” – this will be more accessible than previous resources. RangeDocs is a partnership out of the University of Arizona, and they will host the documents (<https://docs.rangelandsgateway.org/>).
3. Suggest new integrative courses for contemporary challenges in ecosystem stewardship – this is to address the question as to whether or not we are missing anything now, as things have changed over time
4. Develop a prescription to assess participant skills and accomplish goals – i.e., for someone aspiring to take the CRM exam, this would help them understand what courses they have taken or will need and if they meet the educational requirements to qualify to take the CRM exam, and to help them determine if they can accomplish their goals to fill in any educational gaps needed to qualify them to take the exam. The University of Nevada, Reno, has something of a 0454-fill in program to help with this, and we would like to do something like this in California with a CRM focus and a focus on California ecosystems.
5. Create a pilot place-based learning cohort in partnership with a working ranch to develop learning opportunities in a meaningful way, and to help meet the goals of the collaborating landowners. There would also be some online learning.

Another objective of this, while not explicit, is that if we want to recruit CRMs, we should target landowners, ranchers, and agencies that have great field experience but are missing some courses here and there in order to be eligible to take the CRM exam.

The CRED program has already collected more than 100 responses at the Nevada and California Cattlemen’s meeting. About 90% of respondents had heard about the CRM program. Most participating students were animal-science majors only. Many were interested in learning more about the program and/or were interested in either being a host or becoming a CRM. Participants will also be polled at the CRCC at their booth tomorrow (Feb 24th) at the Joint Range Conference.

10. Updates from Partner Organizations & Public Forum

a. Legislative Updates

b. Updates from Partner Organizations

i. California Farm Bureau

ii. California Cattlemen’s Association

iii. University of California Cooperative Extension

iv. California Wool Growers Association

v. California Resource Conservation Districts (CA RCD)

- CARCD is applying for a CDFA Healthy Soils block grant to distribute funds for Incentives Projects.
- Southern California Carbon Farming Hub received a CDFA Conservation Planning grant and projects will include two Audubon Habitat Management Plans and one Grazing Management Plan on ranches in San Diego County.
- Mapping report upcoming for change in area of grazing land in San Diego County before 1986 to the present.
- CARCD is holding a conference throughout March, including a dozen panels and presentations on Forest and Fire Resilience.

- c. **Members of the public** may address the Committee on any topic within its jurisdiction not otherwise on the agenda. Items will not be discussed in depth but may be agendaized for the next committee meeting.

NEXT MEETING: The suggested next meeting day is Monday, November 14th 12:30 PM

The next meeting of the RMAC will be held in Stockton at the Ag Center on 2/23 in the afternoon, followed by the RMAC educational workshop series on 2/24. The 2/24 morning workshop will be free, as part of the RMAC educational series, and will focus on RFPs and navigating the application process for grazing agreements, with emphasis on state lands. This will be followed by lunch (if you registered for that) as part of the CRCC Summit, which will follow that day in the afternoon.

11. Adjourn