

RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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RANGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 8, 2022, 12:30 PM

Teleconference

Roll Call:

RMAC Members Present

Chair Marc Horney
Vice Chair Rich Ross
Bart Cremers
Stephanie Larson
Billie Roney
Katie Delbar, ex officio member
Taylor Hagata
Andrée Soares
Paul Starrs
Joel Kramer
Cole Bush
Lance Criley

RMAC Members Absent

none

RMAC Staff

Deniele Cade, Licensing Analyst
Kristina Wolf, Environmental Scientist

Department Staff

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

Items 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 on his report to the Board of Forestry & Fire Protection on January 19th, 2022. Dr. Horney informed the Board of the formation of the State Lands Grazing License and Land Management, a subcommittee of the RMAC. Dr. Horney also reported that the RMAC is now fully staffed.

3) Introduction of New RMAC Members – Dr. Wolf, Board Staff, Dr. Stephanie Larson, U.C. Cooperative Extension (UCCE); Cole Bush, California Wool Growers Association (CWGA); Dr. Paul Starrs, Public Member, and Joel Kramer, San Diego Resource Conservation District (RCD)

Dr. Horney introduced the four new members of the RMAC, who are filling the open seats; terms are four years. The seat types filled are as follows:

- Dr. Larson - representing UCCE, an organization that represents rangeland owners in the state.
- Cole Bush – representing the CWGA, an organization that represents rangeland owners in the state.
- Paul Stars – representing the public
- Joel Kramer – representing California RCDs

4) Approval of November 2021 and January 2022 meeting minutes – Dr. Wolf, Board Staff

Motion by Member Starrs; seconded by Member Criley

Roll Call Vote:

Bush	Aye
Starrs	Aye
Kramer	Aye
Cremers	Aye
Roney	Aye
Criley	Aye
Larson	Aye
Soares	Aye
Ross	Aye
Hagata	Aye
Horney	Aye

The motion passes unanimously.

5) California Wool Growers Association (CWGA) Wildfire and Grazing Committee and presentation on survey results of targeted grazing providers in California – Roger Ingram, CWGA

Roger Ingram gave a presentation on the activities of the CWGA's Wildfire and Grazing Committee and a Targeted Grazing Survey that was conducted by the CWGA committee.

The CWGA is a trade association started in 1860 and the ad-hoc committee on Wildfire and Grazing was formed in 2017, which Roger chairs. Roger worked for 31 years as a Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor in Placer and Nevada Counties.

A survey was developed in 2020 to help understand the size, scope, and impact of targeted grazing in California. Survey with 32 respondents (with a minimum of 50 head) was conducted over the phone; the respondents represented targeted grazing with sheep and/or goats on over 75,000 acres in California. Cattle graziers were not represented in this survey. Details are provided a PDF of the presentation and an associated handout, which are available on the RMAC website

(<https://bof.fire.ca.gov/board-committees/range-management-advisory-committee/>) under March 2022 Meeting Materials. Roger can also be contacted with questions at rsingram@ucdavis.edu.

6) Introduction to the Pathways to 30x30: Accelerating Conservation of California's Nature – Jennifer Norris, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)

Jennifer Norris, Deputy Secretary for the CNRA, spoke about California's 30 x 30 Program (<https://www.californianature.ca.gov/>), which is a part of much broader Nature Based Solutions Executive Order and AB 220, signed in late 2020, which promotes climate smart strategies, pollinators, healthy soils, and accelerated ecological restoration, and makes the commitment to conserve 30% of lands and coastal waters by 2030 (thus, the 30 x 30). The Draft Pathways document is in revision based on the comments received during the Comment Period (which ended Feb. 15).

Key objectives and core commitments were discussed briefly. Conservation areas were defined to include lands that have been protected for a long time and maintained in their natural state; the definition includes a broad range of land types and uses, including working lands, recreation lands and open spaces, and dedicated conservation areas. Protected spaces exist in a matrix of landscapes that may also meet other economic uses. Coastal waters were defined as mainly falling in the Marine Protected Areas network, and the definition of covered waters is being refined. A suite of Strategic Actions was discussed, including conservation easements, land acquisitions, conservation, restoration, mitigation, and many more.

An online web application, CA Nature (<https://www.californianature.ca.gov/pages/ca-nature>), describes lands that already meet the definition and identifies areas that might also qualify. Includes a variety of tools to help decision-makers in determining lands that could be conserved.

The program is entirely voluntary. Collaborators include regional stakeholders, working groups, Tribal councils, and a variety of agencies including CNRA departments.

A Question (Q) & Answer (A) period followed:

- Sheila Barry: **(Q)** Where do working rangelands fit in this? **(A)** it is not a simple answer, it depends on the durability of the conservation practices on those lands. All of the grazing lands on conservation easements are included, for example. So not all grazed lands will qualify, but it covers a hefty portion of rangelands. Covered lands also include sustainably managed forests, such as those with Legacy Easements and other longer-term protections. Additional conversations about what lands fall under this umbrella are ongoing.
- Billie Roney: **(Q)** From a rancher perspective, what would be some of the conflicts between what we see as conservation and preventing catastrophic wildfire (via targeted grazing, for example) and the 30 x 30 program? Sometimes in terms of following conservation needs on federal lands, for example, sometimes more fuels are left behind than would be necessary from a targeted grazing perspective **(A)** Jennifer does not know, but works closely with Jessica Morse on the CNRA team, and they are trying to see where there are opportunities for addressing fuel reduction issues to align with the 30 x 30 program. Member Roney statement: Often there are conflicts with livestock and endangered species (e.g., wolf), and conservation, and there is no easy answer, and it would be helpful if the program took these kinds of challenges into consideration.
- Andr e Soares: **(Q)** Is NRCS the lead agency on 30 x 30? **(A)** No, that is a federal agency. In California, it is the CNRA, and there is coordination with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Department of Conservation, Water Resources, State Parks, etc.
 - Chair Horney clarified that there are NRCS state offices, and perhaps they would be a good partner. Per Jennifer, yes, they are partnering with local and state-level staff of the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS).
- Joel Kramer: **(Q)** How do you define durably protected, and can you provide an example? Would it include prescribed grazing? **(A)** Durable is different from grazing. Durability is an area-based conservation measure and seeks to protect areas that will persist in their natural state and will not be converted; durability is about who owns it (won't change hands and become something else) or has some mechanism for retaining it in its current state (e.g., conservation easement, etc). The actions that can be taken span a whole range that would be potentially appropriate depending on the ecosystems and habitats, and could include prescribed fire and grazing, as appropriate. The Climate-Smart land strategy identifies ~150 actions that could be taken that could help build resilience or sequester carbon.
- Jeanette Griffin: **(Q)** what is the justification for not using the definition of conservation as "wise, sustainable use". **(A)** That section is being revised to not be "definitions", per se, and the program doesn't intend to "define" conservation. What it does mean to define is what it means to be a 30 x 30 conservation area.
- Sheila Barry: **(Q)** Is there consideration for making California's public land meet the state's definition of conservation, as opposed to just acquiring more land? **(A)** This is intended to improve conservation on lands that are already held by state,

regional, federal, and other agencies; in addition to potentially acquiring more lands that could meet the definitions.

- Andréa Soares: **(Q)** Can we see these lands that currently meet the definition on GIS? **(A)** On the California Nature website previously shared; (<https://www.californianature.ca.gov/pages/ca-nature>). Caveat: a lot of easements are not in the database yet, and that is being rectified. This tool will improve over time as more work is completed; right now, it is a prototype/in beta mode. Fully fleshed out version with more functions for queries is coming in about a month.
- Stephanie Larson: **(Q)** Could current lands with conservation easements be amended to include the wording “managing for biodiversity”? **(A)** They could be, but probably don’t NEED to be. The intention of the easement is more important than the wording. But if more management actions are added to increase habitat protections, then yes, you could add it.
- **(Q)** What is the conservation atlas and how well does it relate to the State’s GIS dataset **(A)** It is the federal version of the State’s GIS protected areas database, but for the whole country. There is connectivity between the underlying datasets for both databases, which both rely on an inventory of protected areas. California’s version is more specific to California and includes the easements database which the federal government’s version doesn’t include.
- Paul Starrs: **(Q)** The explorer shows 24% of CA currently protected/conserved in the database; is CNRA targeting any particular kind of property that could in one fell swoop move CA to that 30%? And 2) how does CA’s progress on 30 x 30 compare to other western states? **(A)** Answer to Q2: do not know but California was the first out of the gate. Answering Q1: we need 1 million acres to get to 30%, and there is no one property that would cover that. So they are looking at places where regional groups are coming together and looking to protect the land. There are underrepresented habitats (e.g., wetlands), so they are also trying to target those. **(Q)** How about Department of Defense lands, do they factor in? **(A)** Unfortunately, while the DOD lands do a lot of important conservation, USGS doesn’t code them as protected, and they do not currently show up in the CA dataset at this time.
- Katie Delbar: **(Q)** Do easements on forest lands meet the 30 x 30? **(A)** Forest Legacy and other easements, and other sustainably managed forests, do count, and are included in the current estimates in the database.
- Dr. Horney: Submitted comments on the 30 x 30 draft, but has an additional question: **(Q)** I have observed that the document uses a lot of language about expanding durably-protected designated areas for protection, but the 30 x 30 doesn’t include a lot of language on HOW this will happen, and what will happen on those lands to improve biodiversity and how that will be addressed in terms of staffing, resources, etc., to ensure that will actually happen. **(A)** They were very focused on the mechanisms that will get the land protected. Yes, there needs to be funding for managing the lands as well, but that was outside the scope of this current effort. The revised draft does do a better job at this. The California Biodiversity Network is also helping them put together a document regarding the long-term management and monitoring (data) needs around the topic of

stewardship and management. So we would likely see a more robust addressing of this in the next version.

- Andree Soares: **(Q)** Do budget dollars shown include management dollars? **(A)** In terms of the \$758 Million dollars set aside for implementing the 30 x 30 strategy, the language currently primarily focuses on acquisition, but the dollars explicitly does include a long list of how the dollars can be used, and it includes stewardship.

Approximately 4,000 people sat through the 30 x 30 webinars that were offered on the initial 30 x 30 Draft.

7) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for rangeland managers – Kristan Norman, Area 2 Rangeland Specialist; and Chris Zimny, State Forester for California NRCS, *Natural Resources Conservation Service*

Kristan primarily focuses on grazing lands (including some forest lands); Chris worked for CAL FIRE in the past. Kristan reviewed Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP); both focus on conservation and addressing resource concerns. EQIP is a financial and technical assistance program, including planning on the ground and funding through Farm Bill to implement those projects; both programs cover soil, water, air, and animal resource concerns; both work on ag, forest, and Tribal lands; projects are competitively ranked and there are multiple funding opportunities under each with different reasons to do so. For EQIP they look at vegetative and structural practices; CSP looks more at taking conservation practices to a higher level, and the payment rate is based on how much higher the conservation level is increasing from the baseline and is less structural but is based more on management practices that are enhancements, and can include some vegetative practices. Sign-up deadlines for both this year are 4/1/2022. Competitive ranking occurs in May.

IF new to conservation planning or you just need a little bit of help with improved resource management, EQIP might be the way to go; if you are already working with NRCS and are ready to take it up a notch, CSP might be the way to go. For CSP, ALL land managed by the producer MUST be enrolled and meet eligibility requirements; and at least two resource concerns must be addressed; and the stewardship threshold on an additional resource must be met by the end of the service contract of five years (note, EQIP is 3 years).

For EQIP, there are multiple ranking/funding pools, and your focus will dictate which pool you would be ranked in. EQIP is entirely voluntary and requires you to initiate. Example with Fuel Loads Management, resource concern pathway looks like: Plants → Fire Management → Wildfire Hazard/Biomass Accumulation → Several primary Grassland Practices (e.g., brush management) to address fuel load issues, as well as Supporting Practices (e.g., fencing). This is just an example, and for each practice, there could be multiple scenarios, and the technical assistance/advisor would help devise a plan to address the resource concern; it is not one-size-fits-all and could include multiple complementary approaches over time, up to three years. Under prescribed grazing, the “targeted grazing” option is not on the current list of covered activities; other options include intensive range management, deferral, habitat management, etc. What happened this year is that targeted grazing will likely go under brush management as a specific weed treatment scenario; next year may have better

funding opportunities for targeted grazing, but if they want to do it this year, you could layer brush management with prescribed grazing, but it likely won't pay as well this year. NOTE: These are meant to be incentive rates and are not intended to cover 100% of costs associated with the practice. Note, any practice CANNOT be to facilitate a land use change; the resource concern should be, in this case, something like brush management or invasive weed control.

CSP lands cover a lot of ownership and ecosystem types. The contract lengths are 5 years, compared to 3 with EQIP. Payment amounts are made at two different levels based on 1) resource concerns being addressed and 2) bundled enhancements and practices. Some enhancements can be credited in multiple years, and others can only be credited once in a five-year period. Large or small acreage properties can qualify for this program, as long as it is under the control of the contract holder.

NRCS is part of the Governor's Task Force for improving wildfire resilience by expanding the pace and scale of fuel management and reduction. Wide variety of practices for rangelands. Prescribed burning is a practice for shrublands, grasslands, and forest lands. Normally one would go through EQIP for that for potential funding, and provides a qualified person to develop a burn plan, along with additional resources provided by CAL FIRE. The program is being expanded as it can be. There are potential payments associated with the different practices associated with prescribed burning, such as for writing the burn plan, conducting pre-fire vegetation treatments and the burn itself, and more. Payments are not robust, but have been improved for the low complexity oak woodlands and high complexity conifer stands for burning alone.

For more information, contact your local NRCS field office, and the NRCS California site has that contact information.

Question & Answer Period:

- Cole Bush: **(Q)** Will this presentation be shared on a website? **(A)** Yes, this will be shared with the audience and posted online. **(Q)** Does the landowner or the ag lessee apply for EQIP? **(A)** Either, whatever works for the client; the payments would go to the applicant, whoever that is; the landowner does have to be on board with the work being done.
- Joel Kramer: **(Q)** Do you have any examples of prescribed grazing and burning being paired on one contract and area. **(A)** No, not at this time, but they do have clients in the south that are interested in combining these activities.

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

Dr. Wolf briefly updated the RMAC on the activities of the SLGLLM subcommittee: the SLGLLM has met regularly on an approximately three-week basis, with three meetings thus far and a fourth coming up on March 15th. There are three Action Teams formed within this subcommittee: 1) Grazing License; 2) Land Management Plan; and 3) Guidance Booklet to direct users (licensees and licensors at state agencies and other land management organizations for any State lands).

There has been difficulty getting feedback from the State Department of General Services, but they have been minimally engaged and will review all documents produced by the subcommittee, as this agency must sign off on all the documents for them to be put into use.

9) Discussion of RMAC Educational Workshop Series – Dr. Horney, *Chair*

- AND -

10) Discussion of RMAC Annual Priorities – Dr. Horney, *Chair*

The discussion of Agenda Items 9 and 10 were combined, given their relationship (i.e., the workshop series was an objective in 2020 to support that year's annual priorities; annual priorities and objectives were not established in 2021, but the RMAC is picking it back up again this year).

Several committee members indicated their support to continue the educational workshop series: Members Cole Bush, Andrée Soares, and Billie Roney, and Dr. Horney.

Ideas/speakers for the RMAC Educational Series:

- Member Roney – suggests someone they had experience with during the Dixie Fire; they had substantial experience in prescribed burns and fire ecology; **she will send that information to Dr. Horney and Dr. Wolf.**
- Dr. Horney – environmental impacts of targeted grazing; managing grazing for fuels control, within the context of considerations for wildlife habitat and other sensitive resources; 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).
- Member Larson – suggests something related to Roger Ingram's survey about targeted grazing, and public education on fire mitigation (also from a conservation perspective); include beef cattle in addition to sheep/goats.
- Member Soares – how was the \$200 million pledged for fuels treatments filtering down to management on the ground? Does anybody really know?
- Member Bush – 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.
- Member Kramer – prescribed grazing within the context of not just fires, but also the planning of that with drought, and the benefits of drought-planning throughout the year.
- Dr. Wolf – grazing after fire, grazing in riparian areas
- **Please send ideas for topics, speakers, and activities to Dr. Wolf (kristina.wolf@bof.ca.gov).**

In the three previous years, workshops have occurred in July/Aug, September, and November. At the next meeting, the RMAC will determine the timing of the workshop and begin

RMAC 2020 Priorities/Objectives:

Please review the current annual priorities, and suggest revisions and/or additions as you see needed.

- Dr. Horney – these are being tied back to RMAC’s statutory mandates, which includes the annual review of current priorities, and incorporation of other advised agency priorities (e.g., CDFG, California Environmental Protection Agency [CalEPA], Board of Forestry and Fire Protection [Board], CNRA)
- Dr. Horney stated that it seems the Board has some bias that Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) are more suited to develop and implement burn plans than Certified Rangeland Managers (CRMs) and believes CRMs should be recognized as also having substantial experience in prescribed burning. Suggests there could be opportunities to rectify this, perhaps via combined training programs with both RPFs and CRMs to develop burn plans.
- Member Delbar – 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.
- Member Griffin – noted that 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?
- Dr. Wolf – 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. Dr. Horney suggested that perhaps matched funding from other organizations could also be utilized.
- Member Bush – there are funding streams for range research, and at least at the federal level, perhaps **the DOD could be a potential partner for supporting range research; she has direct contacts that the conversation could be continued with, and she will share those with us.** Dr. Horney indicated that the RMAC is intended to focus on state lands, but where there is an opportunity to leverage funds, it could be investigated.
- Member Starrs – what are the interactions between RMAC and the California Natural Reserve System (which covers ¾ of a million acres) and entities such as the California Rangeland Trust? Perhaps these relationships are areas that the RMAC could work in without being too intrusive? Perhaps we can invite them to the

next RMAC meeting. **Dr. Wolf will work on this.** Dr. Wolf also indicated that the RMAC is meeting with the CalEPA and CNRA as well in the next few days to discuss where agency priorities may be synergistic.

- Dr. Horney – current annual priorities currently include 1) the efforts by the RMAC subcommittee on State Lands Grazing License and Land Management (SLGLLM); and 2) RMAC Educational Workshop Series. **Please send your ideas to Dr. Wolf (kristina.wolf@bof.ca.gov), and these priorities will be set at the next meeting.**

11) Updates from Partner Organizations & Public Forum

a) Legislative Updates

- Member Cole – Assembly Bill (AB) 1346 signed in Oct 2021 banned sale of new gas-powered small engines by 2024; Member Ross stated that this will have a profound effect on farmers and ranchers, who depend on these tools to operate, and we will talk about this at the next meeting, if Member Ross is able to lead that discussion.

b) Updates from Partner Organizations

- Member Hagata will have an update from the Farm Bureau at the next meeting.
- Member Larson indicated that two grazing schools in March and April, in Santa Rosa Junior College and Modesto Junior College, respectively; target audience in targeted graziers and landowners/managers using grazing as a tool.
- Member Kramer indicated that the non-profit that represents the CA RCDs has had some staff turnover recently. Hannah Tikalsky is the Agriculture & Watersheds Program Manager, taking over for Sara Letton.
- The CWGA March meeting is coming up in the next few weeks; they are still in litigation in regard to the California overtime bill.

Other Announcements:

- **The next RMAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 12th at 9:30 AM, and is planned to occur in person at the CNRA Headquarters (715 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814).** More information will follow prior to the next meeting as to the exact location, and the meeting format, logistics, and means of participation. Allowable reimbursement information for committee members can be found here: <https://www.calhr.ca.gov/employees/Pages/travel-reimbursements.aspx>

c) Public Forum – no speakers

Meeting Adjourned at approximately 3:55 PM.