

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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DRAFT MEETING NOTES

January 26, 2017

Members present: Stacy Corless, Mono Supervisors; Steve Nelson & Mark Spendel, BLM; Ryan Dermody, Caltrans; Erin Nordin, USFWS/Reno; Heidi Calvert, CDFW; Doug Power, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center; Jay Hall, Adam Reigle & Joseph Lent (video), Bridgeport Indian Colony

Members absent: Jon Regelbrugge, USFS/Inyo; Adrienne Thatcher USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; Cleland Hoff, Mammoth Town Council; Deanna Dulen, Devils Postpile National Monument; Kathleen Morse, Yosemite National Park; Rana Saulque, Benton Paiutes

Staff present: Scott Burns, Tony Dublino, Wendy Sugimura, Jake Suppa, Michael Draper, Paul McFarland (video), CD Ritter

Guests present: Alex Aguilar, SCE; Kay Ogden & Susanna Danner, Eastern Sierra Land Trust; Sandra Moberly, Town of Mammoth Lakes; Danna Stroud, Sierra Nevada Conservancy; Wendi Grasseschi, Mammoth Times; Sally Miller, resident; Greg Loveland, LADWP; Jora Fogg, Friends of the Inyo; Virginia Chadwick, MC-3 Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ATTENDEE INTRODUCTIONS: Chair Stacy Corless called the meeting to order at 9:16 a.m. in the Town/County Conference Room at Minaret Village Mall in Mammoth Lakes. Attendees recited pledge of allegiance to the flag and introduced themselves.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: No items

3. MEETING NOTES

MOTION: Approve draft meeting notes from Oct. 27, 2016, as amended: 1) Item 7, second sentence of first graph: Final rule **to list species** in 2014; and 2) end of graph above meeting break: Materials **went to there are designated for** Olancha/Cartago project. (*Dermody/Calvert. Ayes: All.*)

4. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE: Agency planning issues & pending projects were presented.

5. GROUNDWATER MONITORING & RESPONSE PLAN FOR CD-IV GEOTHERMAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: Steve Nelson, BLM, recalled Mammoth Pacific transferred to Ormat, which authorized CD-IV in 2013. MCWD (Mammoth Community Water District) was still expressing concerns not apparent in BLM data dating back to 1980s, fears originally expressed by CDFG (California Department of Fish & Game at the time). Water was acknowledged as a significant resource requiring shallow groundwater monitoring plan. Policies were implemented unless appealed or litigated. Ormat chose to be good neighbor, did not start building in 2013.

The tool BLM uses in geothermal implementing regulations can add conditions of approval (anything to ensure project is done appropriately), in coordination with LVHAC (Long Valley Hydrologic Advisory Committee). Regulations are not easy to understand if not dealt with daily. BLM invited MCWD to participate, but could not require. MCWD has stayed engaged. Monitoring plan was prudent decision, no pushback. Renewable energy was important endeavor. Primary concerns: Reduction in amount of shallow cold groundwater and amount of surface water, and degradation of water quality. Private negotiations with Ormat/MCWD at facilitated meetings on unresolved issues. BLM assembled "small team" to compile "final plan," which was approved/distributed Jan. 13, 2017. In its leadership role, BLM clarified misunderstandings on requirements. Two versions of plan by Ormat and MCWD. After feedback from both, BLM at all

levels addressed monitoring plan it could implement with confidence in doing what needs to be done. Small team reviewed all input to create "final plan." Some level of certainty now. Plan objectives: Identify/implement shallow groundwater aquifer, surface water resource, and deep geothermal reservoir monitoring strategies and protocols. Establish framework for determining and implementing appropriate responses. Guiding principles: Regulatory framework; and ongoing consultation/coordination. BLM has sole regulatory authority under Geothermal Steam Act. USFS has authority over surface management. Coordinate with LVHAC (Long Valley Hydrologic Advisory Committee). Respect agreements between Ormat & MCWD. Adaptive monitoring approach. Coordinate with USFS, APCD (Air Pollution Control District), USGS (US Geological Survey), and LVHAC (not regulatory body or BLM advisory committee). Lots of people have knowledge of hydrologic resources. LVHAC = BLM nexus with Mono County. Nothing said about response plan, but entities wanted it. Plan sections: Monitoring plan, data management/reporting/plan evaluation, and response action plan. BLM involves other entities, but has sole authority. Multi-jurisdictional well network. Federal geothermal resource, so BLM would be permit holder at new site. Baseline monitoring period for 18 months prior to production. Wells are in and data collected. Earliest start would be winter 2018. Quarterly data review. When first shared, entities appreciated stripped-down, cleaned-up resolution of stuck issues. Can move forward now. Clean energy and clean water are super important for entire country.

6. CONWAY RANCH GRAZING: Corless cited reformulated BOS meetings Feb. 7 and 21. Tony Dublino presented mitigation strategies for sage grouse & Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep. Described public process, reiterating interest in collaboration with agencies for future grazing. Series of 2016 public meetings. Issuing RFP (Request for Proposals) for grazing by any species was suggested at Lee Vining. Went to BOS to issue RFP for livestock grazing, or limited species, or do nothing. BOS wanted to engage more with agencies. Issued request for letters of interest to grazing operators (seven) for grazing at Conway, mitigations proposed. Expecting all back, schedule meeting Feb. 3 with CDFW/USFWS to look at letters, mitigations, discuss status species. Feb. 7 at BOS. Confusion about workshop, mitigations discussion, presentation. Have Feb. 21 grazing issues. Corless requested comments. Steve Nelson indicated BLM unlikely to comment as agency, but would provide assistance on grazing management strategies/challenges/opportunities or technical support. No allotments are tied to Conway.

Plan for Feb. 7? Agenda item to clarify process for generating RFP and technical discussion about Feb. 21. Materials for Feb. 21 to be submitted Feb. 7? Corless described a bit of false deadline. Hard for BOS if not have written information in advance. BOS will provide direction Feb. 7.

Important for USFWS to present recommendations for public to hear. Need experts to weigh in, educate everyone. Sally Miller indicated interest by local grazing operator to extend proposal deadline. Dublino also got inquiry on extending deadline. Looking for preliminary information about approaches. Have 200-page baseline of conservation easement, thought it not necessary to extend. Miller thought if allow one to bypass, would have to extend for all. Dublino stated no letter now would not disqualify operator later. Miller considered grazing alternatives from CEQA perspective. Other ways to manage ranch for wildlife? Corless thought it important that BOS hear that.

Amid confusion on intent of BOS meetings Feb. 7 and Feb. 21, the following comments were received:

Ilene Mandelbaum asked if invitation had been extended to state and federal entities for presentation. She advocated for agency presentations, public comment.

Heidi Calvert asked if CDFW was on Feb. 21 agenda.

Miller saw importance of latest science on issue to new board members and citizens.

Mandelbaum thought it extremely important for BOS to hear from agencies on work they've been doing before any further determination.

Lisa at Center for Biological Diversity by phone was concerned about other important issues such as wildlife habitat. Choosing RFP seemed to exclude alternatives without public discussion.

Miller wondered about action resulting from RFP. One operator? Among sheep operators? Among cattle operators? Maybe BOS could choose type of grazing based on letters.

Would no action mean return to irrigation? Dublino noted obligation to maintain conservation values of property (irrigating meadow). Corless speculated Feb. 21 decision could be no RFP for grazing.

7. REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AWARD: Susanna Danner, Eastern Sierra Land Trust, mentioned \$8 million project from NRCS (National Resources Conservation Service) under USDA (US Department of Agriculture): agricultural water quality and sage grouse sagebrush habitat conservation. People on public lands eligible also. Improvements to fencing could reduce grouse mortality. Private lands: Willow plantings, fencing changes, and more-efficient irrigation structures. Program competitive nationwide. One of three in CA, only one in NV. Bi-state is a national leader. Decades of partnership to leverage likely why project selected for five-year

term. Any land owners who meet goals will be eligible, funding directly to private land owners or public lessees. Get news out this week. Great example of teamwork.

Could Mono apply? Government agencies cannot apply. Under farm bill, meant to serve private agriculture.

Land trust goal? Sign agreement, help with reporting, and leverage federal investment by bringing other things to table. Rangeland stewardship projects qualify. Large part goes to conservation easements in California and Nevada. Negotiate with private ranchers. One purpose is to fund innovative and highly leveraged projects; i.e., Bi-state action plan. Joint effort stems from Bi-state. Attendees applauded award.

8. MONO BASIN EDISON FACILITY UPGRADES: Alex Aguilar, SCE, cited huge area with high-voltage lines. Doing 84 structure replacements, 44 poles in Lee Vining area. Replacing wood structures with steel along 395. USFS opposes galvanized poles, so tint redwood Sierra. Upgrade substation in Bishop area, power outage overnight. Work at Crowley Lake for downed power line that feeds Casa Diablo and Mammoth. Build temporary line. If Casa Diablo goes down, MMSA (Mammoth Mountain Ski Area) goes down. Relay testing done after significant rain, so contamination washed away. In drought so long, maybe salt from lake was cause, and rain cleaned it off. Rebuilding infrastructure. Crews working on cleanup/replacement effort. All built to standards for water to shed, not sit on top. Removing old-style insulation. Newer polymer beads up water, path for electricity is gone. Paul McFarland asked if salt plays role in arcing/sparking, are lines regularly cleaned in Mono Basin? *Heavy equipment from Lundy south. Never done in this area, so odd/rare to find salt as cause.*

9. INITIAL OUTREACH ON COUNTY MARIJUANA POLICIES & REGULATIONS: Michael Draper reviewed new Prop. 64 that decriminalizes weed and permits residential growth of up to six plants/residence. State is working on business licenses, but local governments have to permit first. Mono has nothing on books about cannabis businesses, therefore moratorium till mid-December. State would allow unless explicitly prohibited. Task force committee from 15 Mono departments held one three-hour meeting. In preliminary stage of addressing needs. Continue task force meetings, do outreach to RPACs, Town, BOS public workshop in March to discuss. Anticipate two-month public outreach, three-month policy effort.

Steve Nelson acknowledged grow operations on national forests, but not here. Colleagues on west side have questions. Weed is still illegal under federal law. Draper attended cannabis summit in Sacramento. State Water Board is stepping in for regulation. Draper identified land uses where cultivation would be permitted and appropriate (AG, OS). Corless indicated BOS is not interested in ban, but does not want to become "Marijuana Mecca." Draper noted CEQA process. CDFW wants more information before CEQA.

10. WILDLIFE SUBCOMMITTEE: Needs direction on composition & scope. Wendy Sugimura is looking at who should be on it, goal, how often to meet. Ryan Dermody indicated it takes team to go for grants so Caltrans would not bear entire cost. Caltrans will not be lead, but will participate.

Automatic sensing systems? Dermody indicated Caltrans can break down hot spots, but that technique does not work. Sugimura will send to BLM, Town, Caltrans, USFWS, CDFW, and Sierra Nevada Conservancy email on scope, attendees, schedule meeting, and determine goals. Additional financial need to match grants, etc. Could need MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) later.

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: 1) Caltrans needs wetland riparian lands in northern Mono, former stewardship committee;

12. ADJOURN at 11:40 a.m. to next meeting Thursday, April 27, 2017, at 9 a.m.

Prepared by CD Ritter, CPT secretary