

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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DRAFT MINUTES

April 23, 2019

Members present: Stacy Corless & Bob Gardner, Mono Supervisors; Cleland Hoff & John Wentworth, Mammoth Town Council; Brandon Fitt & Jill Batchelder, Caltrans; Deanna Dulen, Devils Postpile National Monument; Doug Power, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center; Steve Abele, USFWS/Reno (teleconference); Jan Cutts, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; Tammy Randall-Parker & Janelle Walker, USFS/Inyo; Steve Nelson, BLM (teleconference)

Members absent: Alisa Ellsworth, CDFW; Mike Grahek, LADWP; Heidi Calvert, CDFW; Erin Nordin, USFWS/Reno; Kathleen Morse, Yosemite National Park; Tina Braithwaite, Benton Paiutes; Jay Hall, Bridgeport Indian Colony

Staff present: Wendy Sugimura, Bentley Regehr, Michael Draper, CD Ritter

Guests present: Kevin Carunchio, Mono County assistant CAO; Wendi Grasseschi, Mammoth Times; Jack Benham, The Sheet; Patricia Robertson, Mammoth Lakes Housing; Bartshe Miller (teleconference); Sandra Moberly, Town of Mammoth Lakes; Matt Paruolo, Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership; Sandy Hogan

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ATTENDEE INTRODUCTIONS: 9:07 a.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: Patricia Robertson released 2018 annual report on regional housing that included first-time homebuyer loans and purchase of various types of housing. Completed five-year strategic plan. Stacy Corless noted focus on partnership

3. MINUTES

MOTION: Approve draft minutes from July 26, 2018 (*Hoff/Cutts. Ayes: Unanimous.*)

4. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE: Agency planning issues & pending projects

5. MONO/MADERA BOUNDARY: Stacy Corless indicated Mono became interested after October 2017 SAR incident. Interest and support in looking at arcane process of adjusting county boundary. Involves both counties, governor's office, legislative fix. Madera seems to be backing off, heightened presence of Madera sheriff last summer. Madera wanted to update 1994 MOU covering public safety, law enforcement responses, but many issues go beyond that. Town making huge investment in improving Reds Meadow Road, building inspection, environmental health in valley. Mono and Town responsible for thousands of visitors. Last week considered letter to Madera BOS, not just staff. Heard from stakeholders, DEPO, Bobby Tanner, Reds Meadow, Mammoth fire chief. Increased urgency around public safety and wildfire concerns that led BOS to send letter on boundary adjust first, then revise MOU. Include all partners not involved in existing MOU. Public service impacts.

Kevin Carunchio, Mono assistant CAO, tried to get boundary adjustment moving. Issues go beyond primary concerns. At last week's BOS, not just EMS but also emergency services planning around wildland fire issues. Helpful to understand organizational mindsets. Issues very real, immediate to state, local, federal agencies, private businesses on east side. Sense of urgency in respectful manner. Another county's jurisdiction. Bobby Tanner cited map drawn in 1800s; boundary makes no sense now. Convey that. Possibly sign onto letter. Maybe host Madera BOS meeting on east side. Convey refocus on issues. A little shy of geologic time periods. At least a year-long process through governor's office. CPT could get it sorted out on east side.

Corless: BOS requesting consideration of boundary adjustment, Mono representatives to Madera BOS. If not comfortable, start multi-year process to revise MOU. Maybe minor adjustments to MOU now, boundary change later.

Gardner: Congress doesn't act till fatalities occur. Maybe Madera likewise. Corless: Mono will respond, not await permission from Madera. Wentworth: Town supports Mono efforts, DEPO, walk/bike/ride, Reds Meadow interested.

Corless: Town could consider signing onto letter from BOS or write support letter. Wentworth: Work on list for Town. Corless: BOS meets May 7, approve revised letter, share with Town manager. Carunchio: Town send separate letter. MOU speaks to law enforcement duties. Letter to Madera could educate on issues.

Middle fork of San Joaquin area. Mirrors Inyo National Forest boundary. Map included in agenda at last week's BOS meeting. Carunchio: Mono BOS expended resources in past year. Joint County Counsel/County surveyor on boundaries. Resend info.

Reds Meadow Road grant from FWHA (Federal Highway Administration), then to Town. Hoff: Nothing affects Town's taking road. Wentworth: How interface with Madera.

Corless: Madera unaware of Reds project till she told them last year. Carunchio: Consider if shoe on other foot. Why would Madera change historic boundary? Corless: Why spend time on issue that does not impact them? Carunchio: Totality of issues on east side not even known. Educate Madera on what's being dealt with.

Dulen: Put patient first, minutes matter. Get scolded later. If phone call to Madera, back to Mono. Close calls. Snap decisions when life at risk. Five to 10 callouts/week. People come to DEPO. Quick response very important. Corless: Dulen's testimony to BOS conveyed seriousness of communication with Madera.

Hoff: Educate public that they're in Madera County not Mono County.

Randall-Parker: Heard from Deanna Dulen, will talk to staff on issues/concerns. No registered voters there. San Juan, CO, boundaries not fit with pattern of use. Six counties had reciprocal agreements; not make sense to take care of issue on other side. Counties had SAR specialty, performed, got paid. Maybe Madera could pay Mono to take care of issues. Corless: In MOU, but invoicing issues exist.

6. USFWS SAGE GROUSE LISTING: Steve Abele noted 2013 proposal as threatened. 2015 proposal to withdraw proposed listing was challenged immediately, trickled through courts that found in USFWS's favor on some topics, litigants on others. USFWS had one year to complete package. Timeline is Oct. 1, 2019. In evaluation biologist writes synthesis on habitats, threats. Out for peer review. Comments in from partners, revise assessment, to decision makers mid-May. Mull over assessment come up with recommendation to director/Secretary of Interior for several months. Decision by October. Federal Register 60-day comment period extension on 2013 proposal. December data request. All 2013 comments live again, must consider. Corless went on lek count last week, spectacular reaffirmed personal commitment to sage grouse preservation.

--- Break: 10:37-10:45 ---

7. WEST-WIDE ENERGY CORRIDOR: Steve Nelson, BLM, cited sketchy information. Background: Energy policy required after 2005 handled at national level. 2009 Record of Decision by Agriculture/Energy/Interior established additional planning corridor in Mono and Inyo. 1993 identified two utility corridors centered on existing infrastructure. 2009 followed alignment of preexisting corridors but changed alignment to get onto public land, off LADWP land. Primary differences through Tri-Valley, adjusted alignment west of Hwy 6. Corridor review process. Sugimura: How set in stone is alignment? Open to change? Nelson: None of corridor alignments preclude power line in any specific location. Would look at all options for applications received. Not fully set for current review. Comments on 18-23 regard new issues, continued issues, ideas on alignment. Not at any amendments. Settlement agreement after lawsuit was review every five years. No decision on corridors now. Encourages comments to identify 18-23 as corridor of concern. Sugimura: Mono submitted two comments on aesthetics and visuals, noted strong policies on undergrounding. Or, co-locating with existing overhead facilities. Mono not super supportive of concept in general. Corridor goes through significant portion of sage-grouse habitat. Section through tribal reservation lands in Tri-Valley.

8. WALKER BASIN WATER TRANSACTION PROGRAM: Bentley Regehr presented an overview. Walker Lake is in Nevada, but basin covers Mono County as well. 2012 consider transaction program. Mostly North County in Bridgeport and Antelope Valley. Nevada has begun transactions. Joint land water rights acquisitions. Issued NOP (Notice of Preparation) today, go through EIR process. Looking at potential significant impacts. Respond to concerned parties. CEQA encourages scoping meetings. Began outreach process. Fall 2019 Walker Basin begins three-year trial storage water transfer program. General objectives: Mono participate in NFWF water transfer programs. Preservation of open space, scenic vistas. Long-term leasing (two or more years) or permanent transfer of decree rights including acquisition of associated land; temporary leasing up to a year of decree flow rights; or surplus storage water sale. Six strategies described.

Sugimura: Didn't include actual General Plan policies that accompany strategies. Laid out in initial study. NOP, Initial Study to identify environmental impacts posted online.

9. EASTERN SIERRA RECREATION PARTNERSHIP: Matt Paruolo, Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership. Agreement among entities is primary economic driver not resource extraction. People are vacationing for experience. MMSA brings people to public lands. IKON pass brings more here to last bastion of quality snow in Sierra. Visitors do not distinguish jurisdictions. Objectives in Inyo Forest Plan. Sustainability is key factor. Two definitions: 1) ability to maintain at certain rate or level (economic stability tied to recreation), with service to match, partners keep up with that; and 2) tangible value of public recreation. Avoiding watershed areas, need for disbursement. Interpretive, educational programs, signage from NPS. Operations plan, permitting, contract cleaning of restrooms. Supplement staffing. Portable restroom cleaning. Mono step up volunteer events. Trail Days bring people. Messaging along highway. Snow-storage pits, use permit for Lake Mary Road, adopt-a-trail program for volunteers. OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) signage at Shady Rest. Roads built for resource extraction. \$618,000 grant to Town for planning not implementation. Corless: Meeting tomorrow more technical. Bishop/Inyo interested to sign onto partnership. NPS? Totally interested.

10. INYO FOREST PLAN OVERVIEW: Tamara Randall-Parker, USFS/Inyo, back in August Inyo released draft, got 22 objections. Met with objectors Feb. 19-21 in Bishop. Good feedback from public to clarify concerns. Objection process ongoing now. Species may be added to list. Top priority at INF (Inyo National Forest), staff trying to finish rewrite. Instructions back from regional office on what to fix. Formed seven working groups, suggested solutions. Most change in wilderness, wild/scenic river, sage-grouse, spotted owl. Heavy lift = responding to instructions by end of May, mid-June. Letter of instruction posted soon. Communications plan. Briefing months in July/August. Done by Aug 31.

11. HIGHWAY KIOSKS IN MONO COUNTY: Jill Batchelder, Caltrans, reviewed 23 kiosk sites from Topaz south that provide information on deer migration, fishing. Some signage missing or weather damaged, no ADA standards. Fourteen kiosks on state right of way, INF. Need funding. Got new signs but some welded shut. Updating signs.

Adopt-a-kiosk opportunity? Batchelder: Kiosks on Caltrans right of way, Mono property, private property. Keep message consistent, review by group to avoid random information. Potential matching funds.

Matt Paruolo would be happy to assist. Corless: Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant possible. Batchelder: Caltrans has no mechanism for its 14 sites.

Gardner: CURES (Coalition for Recreation in Eastern Sierra) started kiosks but nobody maintained.

Randall-Parker: Concern with permitting? Batchelder: Encroachment permit.

Jan Cutts: Nancy Upham helped obtain replacement signs from Diana Pietresanta. Can't re-create history, just move forward.

Batchelder: Need someone to take ownership, ask for help. Not have authority.

Cutts: Bring everyone together to talk about signs. How important to continue?

Gardner: Concerned about kiosks but can't be consumed. Need more champions in Eastern Sierra. Maybe nonprofits as well. Everybody can't do everything.

Corless: Institutional memory.

Randall-Parker: Perhaps let go, higher priority now. ESSRP convene, what like to work on, here are problems, which to address first.

Batchelder: Schedule meeting, invite players.

12. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: 1) FERC process; 2) Mono/Madera boundary; 3) SCE clearing hazard trees, pole replacement (wildfire mitigation plan) for region

13. ADJOURN at 12:04 p.m. to next meeting Thursday, July 25, 2019, at 9 a.m.

Prepared by CD Ritter, CPT secretary