

# Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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PO Box 347  
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546  
760.924.1800 phone, 760.924.1801 fax  
commdev@mono.ca.gov

PO Box 8  
Bridgeport, CA 93517  
760.924.1800 phone, 760.924.1801 fax  
www.monocounty.ca.gov

## DRAFT MINUTES

October 29, 2020

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**Members:** Stacy Corless, Bob Gardner, Mono County Supervisors; Cleland Hoff, Lynda Salcido, Sandra Moberly, Town of Mammoth Lakes; Denee Alcalá, Caltrans; Doug Power, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center; Jan Cutts, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; Michael Grahek, Los Angeles Department of Water & Power; Heidi Calvert, California Department of Fish & Wildlife.

**Staff:** Wendy Sugimura, Kelly Karl, April Sall

**Guests:** Sandy Hogan

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### 1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ATTENDEE INTRODUCTIONS

- Stacy Corless called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. via Zoom. Attendees recited the pledge of allegiance to the flag and introduced themselves.

### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

### 3. MINUTES: Review/approve draft minutes from April 30, 2020 & July 30, 2020

- Moved to the next meeting due to lack of quorum. No members objected.

### 4. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE: Agency planning issues & pending projects

- Items four and five on this agenda were combined at this meeting for efficiency.
- **Denee Alcalá, Caltrans:** CA Transportation Plan 2050 was out for public comment for 60 days and the public comment period ended on October 22. Construction operations are moving into winter suspension. Olanca Cartago four-lane project is making progress, Caltrans is relocating utilities for this project. On November 18 the Town of Mammoth Lakes will host a multi-agency Winter Preparedness Stakeholder meeting. Long Valley Wildlife Crossing Project update: Caltrans applied for a pre-proposal for a Wildlife Conservation Board Prop 68 grant but was not invited to submit a full proposal. This was intended to fund the environmental document phase of the project. BLM has received a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to purchase deer fencing materials that will be placed along a section of Hwy 395, just past the Mammoth Creek bridge area. Caltrans maintenance staff will install this spring 2021. Caltrans is working with California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) and the California Deer Association to apply for a grant next fall for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant to fund deer fencing materials near a deer crossing project for the Sonora Junction Shoulders Project which is currently in the environmental studies phase. Further coordination with other agencies is needed to determine appropriate location and amount of fencing needed to best direct the deer to the crossing structure near Burcham Flat Road.

Doug Power (US Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center): Sonora Junction is right next to the base, could you go over that Sonora Junction project again?

Alcalá: It's a shoulder widening project. I can email details to you.

Power: You mentioned a fence and a deer crossing project...

Alcalá: They were concerned with what to do there since it is so narrow with some retention basins in there but also concerned about entrapment of the deer. We want to protect the roadway while facilitating movement of the deer. Currently in the environmental studies phase.

Power: Any idea on when construction would begin?

Alcala: Construction would begin 3-4 years out at least.

- **Heidi Calvert, California Department of Fish & Wildlife:** Our COVID response is not much different from our last meeting and most CDFW staff are still teleworking for the indefinite future. Field work is being conducted with stringent protocols and best practices. Remote hunter check stations have been set up to validate game which is done by appointment only. At the CPT last meeting I covered the bacteria outbreak at our Fish Springs, Black Rock, and Mojave hatcheries. The fish have been disposed of and the facilities are being cleaned/disinfected. CDFW hopes to bring fish back in four to six weeks. CDFW is working on a vaccination for the bacteria and is looking into different vaccination protocols for small fish. CDFW's goal is to vaccinate fish before putting them into the raceways to protect them from any sort of environmental carrier that might come in. Birds are the likely cause of this outbreak. CDFW is conducting a study and sampling fish adjacent to the hatchery to see if the bacteria might still be in the environment, the results of this study will be one to two years out.

Michael Grahek (Los Angeles Department of Water & Power): CDFW has a maintenance department there, DWP operates a well there, but the water goes through the hatchery. There was a transition point where maintenance responsibility for some of the components fell to CDFW. I would like to speak with that person to make sure we're clear on where the line of demarcation is with regard to maintenance.

Calvert: My understanding is that DWP owns/operates/maintains the wells and that we are not allowed to do any maintenance or servicing on those wells. Happy to put you in touch with our Senior Hatchery Supervisor or the manager at either one of those facilities.

Grahek: There's a backup engine that drives the pump and the well, if there is a power outage the backup engine drives the pump and the well. The generator and the angle drive is part of CDFW responsibility and want to make sure that we are performing maintenance in a time that is advantageous for both parties.

Calvert: We talked about doing that now while the wells were down but, we'll circle back and coordinate on that.

Grahek: Want to make sure that my staff is ready to go in about three weeks when you're ready to put fish back.

Quick note on fish stocking in Mono County, all fish are tested before entering Mono County waters. The Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep captures were completed last weekend. CDFW was awarded a State Wildlife Grant for two native fish positions. One will be in Bishop working on Inyo/Mono and parts of San Bernardino County and the other will be in Ontario. These positions will allow CDFW to do native fish work and put together a management plan for those species. One Environmental Scientist and two Scientific Aid positions are currently open to do bobcat survey work in Bishop or Ontario. This is a statewide effort so CDFW has these three positions in every region throughout the state and will involve data collection (two years) that will be used to develop a Bobcat Management Plan (third year).

- **Michael Grahek, LA Department of Water & Power:** Construction yards are back to full force, maintaining proper distancing, offices are open normal hours and staff is rotated in and out with two-day minimums. In Mono, LADWP is doing work on Cain Ranch, we have not had an A&R Keeper (Aqueduct & Reservoir Keeper) there for a number of years. Aiming to construct a new building for the A&R by next summer.
- **Jan Cutts, Humboldt-Toiyabe NF:** Office continues to provide services via "walk-up" window only. During the summer, wilderness permit issuance for "walk-up" permits were handled via the new "walk-up window" and reserved permits were emailed out. Christmas tree permits go on sale on Monday 11/2, and will be issued from the "walk-up window." Other limited services available including purchasing maps and selling fuel wood permits. Most staff are still teleworking 100% until things change. Hiring/new staff: (1) seasonals will be hired for the Bridgeport Winter Recreation Area, (2) new Recreation Officer Kim Murcia starts on 11/9, and (3) currently conducting reference checks/interviews from a solid application pool for

Wilderness and Trails position. Slink Fire is not 100% contained due to peat bogs in the Mill Canyon and Bagley Valley Area and won't be out until winter. Budget work going on, USFS currently developing a program of work for next year. Worked with Matt Paruolo (Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Coordinator) to update the Buckeye Hot Springs project which is funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and help from the Town of Mammoth Lakes. We are getting an agreement in place and that project will be implemented this winter/spring/summer and hoping to finish the project in fall 2021. Also working on last-minute Great American Outdoor and Capital Improvement Projects funding requests that include taking care of deferred maintenance associated with some of the aging facilities/buildings, trails, & campgrounds.

Stacy Corless (Mono County Board of Supervisors): I was in a meeting yesterday with Region 5 and they were talking about the Great American Outdoors Act project funding across the region, do you have information about the funding for your region?

Cutts: Yes, there's a set amount of funds that each forest is putting together proposals for and I believe it's 10 million per forest for Region 4. Forests will compete with each other at the Regional Office then the Regional Office will send proposals to the Washington Office which will be select projects for funding. Ideally, we'd like to work with our partners on these proposals but the last two replies due have had such quick turnaround times we've just been using the projects we've had on the shelf for a while. We're currently talking about Fiscal Year 22, but the following three years of funding will provide the greatest opportunity to coordinate. Matt Paruolo and I will brainstorm projects for Bridgeport this winter. Combining the Great American Outdoors Act with the Capital Improvement Projects and Federal Transportation Funding into one larger effort and called the National Asset Management Program.

Corless: Through the Washington Office, we heard there was a lot of deferred maintenance money? So, I assume that's what that is?

Cutts: Yes, I think that's what you're hearing as well. We don't often get opportunity to ask for money, so we're excited to spend time putting together a proposal for future projects. We had a Capital Improvement project for Buckeye Campground which is a developed campground run by Westrek and we put that project together about five years ago to expand RV sites, deal with the water system, and improving the day-use area at Buckeye Hot Springs. The work that we're doing with Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership, Matt Paruolo, Town of Mammoth Lakes, and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is a great partnership and puts us in a great position to compete for funds.

- **Doug Power, US Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center**– In March, COVID shut down operations and we've been slowly resuming operations. In September, we had a battalion come in from Camp Lejeune and looks like they might have brought COVID with them. We do have active COVID cases which just recently started, the first indication of this was Thursday. We have taken action and our medical clinic is working closely with Dr. Boo. In terms of cases, as far as permanent personnel those that live and work here, there are eleven total cases, seven marines, one civilian police officer, and three spouses in housing. The exercise force from Camp Lejeune has 27 positive cases and they are quarantining at the base, in addition, one British Royal Marine has also tested positive and has already recovered/gone home. A good article came out from the Secretary for the Navy on why we train during the pandemic.

Cleland Hoff, TOML Council: Is this public information?

Power: Yes, we're pushing this out to the public.

Cleland Hoff, TOML Council: So, this came from Camp Lejeune? So we're talking about North Carolina?

Power: Yes, as near as we can tell. They go into a two-week quarantine prior to leaving and they test prior to leaving. So that is merely an educated guess that that's where it came from.

We lost 3,000 acres on the northwest edge of our training area due to the Slink Fire. Huge thanks to the Forest Service and local firefighters who helped save our housing area in Coleville and for the swift response when the fire started going towards the base. There was a change in

command in July, Colonel Dan Wittnam is now in command. I would like to get him to a CPT meeting (potentially January as scheduling allows). 245th birthday of the Marine Corps is on November 10. Still teleworking from the base, broken down into three tiers: Tier 1 is active duty, essential personnel (firefighters, police, officers, maintenance workers, plumbers, and electricians). Tier 2 is me and I telework from home and go into base when needed. Tier 3 is 100% teleworkers. Over 1,200 personnel are training right now with social distancing. November and December we'll be transitioning to winter training.

- **Sandra Moberly, TOML:** The Parcel, the affordable housing project, is our big project right now, the draft Master Plan was released on Monday and the public comments period is from now (10/26) until the end of next week (11/6). Public hearings are anticipated in December with the Planning Commission and final approval of the Master Plan is anticipated in January. The Master Plan would be for the overall project and the design and Use Permit for Phase 1. All subsequent phases would come back for design review approval through the Planning Commission and Town Council. A joint meeting with Town Council and Planning Commission will be held on November 10. This is a quick timeline due to funding opportunities and if it is met, construction would start next year. Air service is scheduled this year for Mammoth. United will start flying on December 17 with flights to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Denver. A smaller airline, Advanced Airlines, will also offer flights to Burbank, Carlsbad, and Hawthorne.

Calvert: If we had some concerns about wildlife crossings and speed limits who is the best person to get in touch with? Would that be Rick?

Moberly: Yes, Rick is our new Wildlife Officer and Code Compliance Officer.

- **Lynda Salcido, TOML:** The County just released new clarification on gatherings. Currently working with Mammoth Mountain to assure a good opening. The Mountain has an elaborate plan of physical distancing, masking, food/drink operations, etc. There was a community meeting last week and everything is predicated on staying open, controlling the number of cases, and following strict protocols for testing, contact tracing, and quarantining for guests and employees. The motto continues to be, "Stay Safe to Stay Open." Mono County has a new program called the "Right to Recovery Plan" which provides funding for people who are quarantined. Money is available until December. Sandra do you want to speak about the Business Assistance Program?

Moberly: Third round of the Business Assistance Program and \$100,000 of funding is available. We expect to disperse close to that amount and overall, it has been a successful program. The program will end in the next couple of weeks.

Salcido: Town Offices are open and everyone is working every day. Rules are in place in the office, how is that going, Sandra?

Moberly: It seems to be going fine, as far as I know we haven't had any cases. We do have people working from home due to childcare issues. Generally, everyone is in the office.

The Town and County are currently in the Orange Tier, our tiers are regulated by the state of California. An increase of COVID-19 cases would slide us back one or two tiers as the Mountain prepares to open in November 14.

Hoff: Maybe you could speak to the testing we have available?

Flu vaccine clinics have been conducted as drive through clinics, though there were a few walk-ups that were accommodated. Our thirteenth flu clinic will be in Bridgeport on Saturday. After that we'll have shots available once a week at the Health Department at the Mono County Civic Center. Flu shots can also be obtained from other private providers and pharmacies. As for COVID-19 testing, Project Baseline is here, next week testing will be Fridays in North County/Coleville/Walker. Testing is also occurring at Toiyabe Medical Clinic but they are only open a couple days a week. Mammoth Hospital testing by appointment and in their ER. The Health Department will be doing testing two days next week but will increasing to three or four days a week after that for the winter season.

- **Wendy Sugimura, Mono County:** In terms of COVID-19, the Mono County Community Development Department (CDD) does the code enforcement along with other partners at the

Town, Sheriff's Department, and the DA. If any one does see violations such as a business not requiring employees or members of the public to wear masks please send an email to [covid19violations@mono.ca.gov](mailto:covid19violations@mono.ca.gov). Anyone can report a violation, including members of the public, and comments relevant to other jurisdictions will be redirected to the relevant point of contact. CDD has been very busy with numerous development applications/projects. The big development project right now is Tioga Inn which we are still working on. The Board did certify the Environmental Impact Report but did not approve the project. The project will be brought back to the board. There was a meeting yesterday on the West Walker River Trails project, which is just getting started. Another project that is getting started is the JL ATP project on SR 158, which is looking at multi-modal options along SR 158 and in June Lake Village and is funded by a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant. The Groundwater Sustainability Planning effort is still ongoing, and the Tri-Valley is the only part of the County directly involved in that. The North County Water Transactions Project is related to water transfers to Walker Lake in Nevada to protect that ecosystem. We are still working on it and briefly had to table it, but we will be picking up that project again soon. As far as housing, the State Housing and Community Development Department is starting a Technical Assistance Program in the Eastern Sierra so we're pulling together the different Eastern Sierra jurisdictions for this, including TOML, City of Bishop, and Alpine County. Trying to scope out some ideas to see what the technical assistance from the State would look like in the Eastern Sierra. We're looking at regional collaboration with other agencies to get solutions for all of our agencies.

- **Bob Gardener, Mono County:** The Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership is still asking for possible projects as part of their Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant. That deadline closes this Saturday (10/31) at midnight. Over 80 projects have already been proposed. Separate from that effort there is a Regional Fire and Forest Capacity Program funded through the Sierra Nevada Conservancy that is also asking for projects. Our COVID numbers are up to 182 cases in the County. The advice on gatherings was put out a few days ago and that information is on the County website.
- **Stacy Corless, Mono County:** I represent our three-county region, Mono/Inyo/Alpine, on that Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board. In addition to the efforts of the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP), the Sierra Council of Governments is also looking at creating a program of work around wildfire prevention and sustainable recreation through the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments. This effort just started, and it has to get approval from each member agency but the Council of Governments Board did pass a resolution to start that effort. The Sierra Council of Government now has a part-time staff person to help with this effort. This would be good to bring back to the CPT at a future meeting. During the winter it might be the ideal time to do a multi-agency wildfire update and potentially invite the consultants who are working on the RFFCP. We had some issue with our distribution list for this meeting, we will send out the list to be updated. Matt Paruolo, the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Coordination who was housed under Mammoth Lakes Recreation is now a Mono County employee doing the same type of work as Jan mentioned earlier. I will make sure he is added to this list so he can give us updates as well at these meetings.

## 5. AGENCY UPDATES ON CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

### 6. SAGE GROUSE UPDATE: Various agencies

- **Wendy Sugimura, Mono County:** There was Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) meeting yesterday. A lawsuit was filed at the end September against the US Fish & Wildlife Services' decision not to list the Bi-State Sage-Grouse population as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. That is just in the preliminary steps. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between agencies to work on the Bi-State conservation effort and that MOU needs to be renewed. They discussed potentially expanding it to some of the local agencies. Funding for the next year was discussed, there are lots of projects in the 2021 Bi-State Action Plan that need to be implemented. Much of the Bi-State work, especially the field work, was put on hold due to

COVID. My staff usually participates in lek counts but they were cancelled this year. Despite this, an incredible amount of data was collected this year so there is still some good information about the trends of the leks. There is an annual Traditional Ecological Knowledge Summit to involve the tribes in Sage-Grouse management and decisions being made to managing vegetation, particularly the removal of pinon trees which are part of their cultural heritage. That summit will be moved to a digital format this year. A lot of working going on in Long Valley; state, federal, and local agencies are working with LADWP about management of Sage-Grouse in Long Valley. Great to see all of these agencies working together.

- **Sandy Hogan, Public/Local Transportation Commission Member:** The Eastern Sierra Land Trust finally closed on the 4,100-acre Conservation Easement for the Hunewill Ranch in the Bridgeport Valley. We are working on some other properties that have sage grouse leks and we always welcome input.
- **Heidi Calvert, CDFW:** New listing decisions include: (1) upgrading the Desert Tortoise listing from California State Threatened Species to Endangered, (2) listing the Joshua Tree as Threatened and (3) the Mountain Lion has also been listed as threatened down south in LA/San Bernardino/Riverside area. Inland Fishing Regulations have also been adopted.  
Hogan, Public/Local Transportation Commission Member: I would like to ask Dennee about the tortoise listing and the Olancho/Cartago project.  
Alcala: Caltrans received an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) from CDFW in November 2018 for Desert Tortoise and the Mojave Ground Squirrel so as far as I know all the mitigation measures that were ascribed in the ITP will hold. We will need to go back and get a permit for the recently listed Joshua trees and blend it into the existing ITP.  
Calvert: Yes, that's my understanding.  
Alcala: So, there shouldn't be any hold up on this project.

## 7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Wildfire update, including the Regional Forest and Wildfire Capacity Program and the Inyo National Forest Eastern Sierra Resilient Communities Project (aka the Mammoth Donut).
- Potential visit from the Colonel.

## 8. ADJOURN at 10:23 a.m. to next meeting: Thursday, January 28, 2021, at 9 a.m.

*Prepared by Kelly Karl, Associate Planner*