



- Cohesive Strategy Goals**
- Resilient Landscapes •
  - Safe & Effective Wildfire Response •
  - Fire Adapted Communities •

## Collaborative Group - Meeting Summary

Meeting held March 28, 2019  
 Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

### Meeting in Brief

The Collaborative held its first Science Talk focused on the Sierra Nevada historical conditions to guide management considerations for effectively integrating fire treatments to the landscape. Dr. Brandon Collins, UC Berkeley and Pacific Southwest Research Station, stated that historical forests were more variable than common perceptions, and the need to embrace the inherent complexity, uncertainty, and tradeoffs related to forest and fire management. He recommended three general strategies: reduce overall tree density, reduce continuity among dense forest patches, and implement management variability (creating habitat variability) to help address future uncertainty.

The Collaborative approved a working draft of a list of actions (per edits identified during discussion) identifying controversial / non-controversial activities. The document will help project proponents anticipate support / concern with projects and plan accordingly (e.g., engage the Collaborative early in the project design process to discuss controversial activities).

The Collaborative reviewed the group's meeting framework for the remainder of 2019, which includes two more Science Talks, planning and updates in the focus areas, incorporating long-term thinking into project designs/strategies, biomass infrastructure and support, and project funding opportunities.

The next Collaborative Group meeting will be on **May 8, 1:30-4:00**. Location is to be determined.

### Action Items

Who	What
All	Send updates and meeting information to CBI to post to the SOFAR website.
CBI	Work with planning team and stakeholders to coordinate future Science Talk speakers.
CBI	Update the list of actions per the Collaborative March 28 meeting discussion.

## Meeting Summary

### Science Talk #1 | Historical Conditions, Dr. Brandon Collins

[\(View Slides\)](#) The Collaborative held its first Science Talk focused on the Sierra Nevada historical conditions. This was the first in a series of presentations and discussions aimed to deepen understanding and inform SOFAR collaborative work drawing from the best available science on the Sierra Nevada.

Dr. Brandon Collins, UC Berkeley and Pacific Southwest Research Station, presented how the forest has changed in the central and northern Sierra Nevada based on historical data analyses. This information can help guide management considerations for effectively integrating fire treatments to the landscape.

Dr. Collins stated that the historical forest landscape was more variable than commonly believed and did not uniformly consist of low-density, large trees with low amounts of ladder fuels. He shared several historical examples in the Eldorado National Forest region with multi-layered stands and ample ladder fuels, conditions similar to contemporary forests. Statistical analyses indicate the major factors driving historical tree density included precipitation, snowpack, and climatic water deficit (e.g., soil's water holding capacity). Low precipitation correlated with low tree densities, higher snowpack and lower climatic water deficit correlated with higher densities. However, the highest snowpack did not correlate with the highest tree densities. In Plumas National Forest, tree densities did not increase as much as many expected; however, continuity between patches of high-density forests increased, raising wildfire concerns.

Dr. Collins emphasized the need to embrace the inherent complexity and uncertainty of forest management. Looking forward, he offered several suggestions and considerations for forest management:

- Moderate-severity fires may be more effective for achieving tree densities similar to historical conditions (if that is the desired outcome). High-intensity fires burn off too much of the vegetation, and low-severity fires are not as effective in decreasing tree densities.
- Management decisions will need to balance sometimes competing objectives (e.g., different species' needs and forest resiliency).
- Creating and maintaining a variety of forest structures / compositions provides more options for an uncertain future.
- Explore co-benefits (e.g., carbon storage and water yield).
- Incorporate other tools like moisture variability and productivity indices to help better inform management decisions.

### Discussion

Dr. Collins suggested three general objectives for forest management:

1. Reduce overall tree density.
2. Reduce continuity of dense forest conditions (get in to dense areas early and break up patches)
3. Implement management variability to create different habitat conditions.

The group considered various management tradeoffs. For example, when it is too difficult to apply fire frequently enough to achieve a more open canopy, managers may want to choose to keep canopy cover more dense to control understory growth.

Continuity of dense forest patches is a major wildfire concern. Multiple fires can coalesce into massive wildfires. However, further studies should explore how patch continuity contributes to fire behavior.

Not much data on fire behavior exist, particularly massive wildfires. Dr. Mark Finney has recently been researching the physics of fire behavior (e.g., how duff and large woody debris impact fire behavior more than previously thought).

While there are still several forest and fire management unknowns and research needs, Dr. Collins suggested it is time to learn from applied forest management on a large spatial size (e.g., 100,000-200,000 acres).

The group also discussed several anthropogenic factors affecting historical forest landscapes, including controlled burns by Tribes and ranchers. An attendee suggested forest managers consider how to utilize logging as a tool for fuels management.

### **Next Steps**

The group identified several other potential speakers for future Science Talks (e.g., Malcolm North, Mark Finney, Scott Stephens, and Eric Knapp). The Steering Committee will work with CBI and the Landscape Vision Committee to coordinate future Science Talks.

## **SOFAR Project Support**

### **Background**

The Collaborative has been discussing what constitutes a SOFAR project (refer to previous Collaborative [meeting](#) summaries) and the process to obtain Collaborative support. Receiving a SOFAR Collaborative “stamp of approval” can especially help bolster a project proposal’s competitiveness when seeking grant funding.

At the [February 13 meeting](#), the group provided feedback on a proposed list of actions that identifies non-controversial activities and which activities warrant further discussion with the Collaborative. The list does not represent how entities will conduct forest planning (e.g., would not develop a management strategy that includes solely non-controversial actions). Rather, the list is intended to help project sponsors anticipate support / concern with projects and outline project development and timing accordingly. Non-controversial projects can move forward more expeditiously, while controversial projects are given due review and discussion for potential Collaborative endorsement.

### **Updated List of Actions**

The Landscape Vision Committee had edited the list of actions based on the Collaborative’s discussion at the February meeting:

- Included disclaimer that all projects must comply with existing rules, laws, and regulations.
- The list is a working draft that can be updated in the future.

- The committee decided to keep the “green light” (i.e., non-controversial) category of actions, as it provides guidance to project proponents on the level of controversy for different actions.
- The committee decided it was not necessary to add another bullet point on fuel load reductions in owl PACs, as this is covered in the “red light” category (indicating logging/reducing canopy cover in sensitive owl areas require further discussion with the Collaborative).
- Expanded road utility work under the “green light” category to include “routine maintenance along utility easements.”
- Restated that “modest improvements” to developed facilities means improvements to those facilities in the existing footprint.
- Removed an item under the “green light” category related to hazard tree removal, as CAL FIRE already has existing planning documents and requirements.

**Discussion**

Attendees supported the Landscape Vision Committee’s edits and offered minor additional edits.

The group decided to move meadow restoration from the “green light” category to the “yellow light,” as members felt some discussion was still warranted beyond a brief check-in.

Attendees also suggested expanding a “red light” item related to rare plant habitats to encourage project proponents to be cautious about rare and sensitive plant habitats near activities, including staging areas.

**Next Steps**

After CBI incorporates the group’s edits, the list of actions will be ready as a working draft and made available for project proponents.

**Outcome:** View updated list, version 4/24/19: [Clean version of List of Actions](#) and [Track Changes](#) of the 3/28/19 version

**SOFAR 2019 Meeting Framework**

The group reviewed the proposed SOFAR meeting framework for rest of 2019. Meeting topics were based on the 2019 Work Plan discussed at the previous meeting:

May 8	Science Talks: Community-Scale Fire and Fuels Focus Area Planning: Georgetown Community-Scale Projects Site Visits and Focus Area Activities for Summer Biomass State-Level Updates (Norma Santiago – deferred from March)
Sep 11	Incorporate Long-Term Thinking into Project Strategy and Design (e.g., integrate County Wildfire Protection Plan) Community-Scale Biomass Infrastructure Funding Opportunities for Projects

Oct 9	Science Talks (Topic TBD)
Nov 13	Focus Areas and Projects Update 2020 Planning

## Announcements and General Updates

- May 17-18: 2-day workshop on prescribed fire on private lands ([view flyer](#)).
- A training manual on mitigation best practices for community wildfire risk reduction is available ([view document](#)).
- The Chilibar to Georgetown focus area work group completed the map for the focus area, which will help strategically design/coordinate projects in the focus area.
- Attendees recommended reading/subscribing to the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network ([view recent newsletter](#)).
- This meeting was Duane Nelson's last meeting with SOFAR, as he is moving to Colorado. He conveyed his appreciation and amazement for what the SOFAR Cohesive Strategy has accomplished due to the participants' passion and commitment to the shared vision. He asked SOFAR members to reflect on and value major milestones and progress achieved due to the collaborative dialog of the Cohesive Strategy, such as Fire Adaptive 50 and projects around Highway 50, the County ordinance with support from County Supervisors, coordinated projects in focus areas, etc. He encouraged SOFAR participants to continue its collaborative discussions and help hold the agencies accountable (e.g., ensure prescribed fires occur after commercial thinning).

## Upcoming Meetings

<b>Collaborative</b>	<b>Landscape Vision Committee</b>
<p><i>The SOFAR Collaborative meets on the second Wednesday of each month.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 8, 1:30-4:00 (El Dorado Irrigation District)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Location:</b> Placerville Supervisor's Office, 100 Forni Rd, Placerville, CA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 25, 1:00-4:00</li> </ul>
<p><b>Always check <a href="http://sofarcohesivestrategy.org">sofarcohesivestrategy.org</a> for meeting location and latest information.</b></p>	

## Meeting Participants (who signed in)

Mike	Blankenheim	CAL FIRE
Steve	Brink	California Forestry Association
Norma	Santiago (phone)	Catalytic Connections
Lester	Lubetkin	CNPS, El Dorado Chapter
Amy	Granat	CORVA
Steve	Willis	El Dorado County Fire Safe Council

Heather	Campbell	El Dorado County & Pollock Pines Fire Safe Councils
Mark	Egbert	El Dorado County & Georgetown Divide RCDs
Jose	Crummett	El Dorado County GIS
Emma	Kikuyama	El Dorado County Supervisor's Office
Kyle	Ericson	El Dorado County Water Agency
Craig	Thomas	Fire Restoration Group
Vincent	Cornish	K&S Oak, Georgetown FSC
Kevin	Vella	National Wild Turkey Federation
Kathy	Lewin	Northern Sierra Summer Home Owner Association
Ethan	Koenigs	Sacramento Municipal Utility District
David	Zelinsky	Sierra Club
Barbara	Brydon	Sierra Club, Maidu Group
Ben	Solvesky	Sierra Forest Legacy
Chris	Dallas	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Rich	Wade	Sierra Pacific Industries
Brian	Veerkamp	Supervisor, District 3
Lori	Parlin	Supervisor, District 4
Duane	Nelson	Trout Unlimited; El Dorado, Fire Safe Council
Jennifer	Chapman	USFS – ENF
Jason	Sieg	USFS – ENF, Georgetown; SOFAR Representative
Scot	Rogers	USFS – ENF, Placerville
Travis	Thane	USFS – ENF, Placerville
Dana	Walsh	USFS – ENF, Norh Zone
Carolyn	Gravello	
Randy	Hanvelt	
Bob	Smart	
Sue	Taylor	