



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

Collaborative Group - Meeting Summary

Meeting held December 11, 2019
 Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

Meeting in Brief

The Collaborative received a presentation on PG&E's Community Wildfire Safety Program (CWSP), which aims to reduce wildfire risks and ensure the safety of customers and communities. Major ongoing and expanded actions include real-time monitoring, enhanced vegetation management, safety inspections, proactive power shutoffs for safety systems hardening, and outreach.

The Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) recently established Golden State Natural Resources (GSNR) program to develop biomass facilities in the Sierra Nevada. Other goals of the program are to improve public safety by reducing fire risk, support forest restoration, enhance carbon sequestration, and support rural economies. RCRC is planning two projects to produce and export pelletized fuels products.

Looking back on 2019 SOFAR activities, participants appreciated the value of the Science Talks and other learning opportunities, substantial progress in the focus areas, and development of the [controversial and non-controversial activities](#) to help streamline project approval and SOFAR support. The Collaborative identified a number of goals for 2020, including additional learning and evaluating different management treatment approaches and their impacts; supporting local economies; developing safe egress and emergency access networks; communicating issues related to the three Cohesive Strategy goals; and building local and future capacity.

The Collaborative will next meet on **February 12, 1:30-4:00** at El Dorado Irrigation District.

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Have an announcement you would like to share via the SOFAR list-serve / website?
 Send information to Stephanie Horii, CBI (shorii@cbi.org)

Action Items

Who	What
CBI	Develop 2020 draft work plan for Collaborative to review at February meeting.

Meeting Summary

Information Sharing

PG&E's Community Wildfire Safety Program | Pamela Perdue, PG&E

[View [Slides](#), [CWSP Factsheet](#), [PG&E Supported Equipment in El Dorado County](#)]

PG&E established the Community Wildfire Safety Program (CWSP) in 2017 aimed to reduce wildfire risks and ensure the safety of customers and communities. Due to the extreme weather and wildfires in recent years, PG&E expanded and enhanced the program. Major ongoing and expanded actions include:

- Real-time monitoring and improved intelligence/tools
- Further enhanced vegetation management
- Accelerated safety inspections to inform maintenance and repair
- Proactive electric power shutoffs for safety – Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS)
- Strengthening the system's resilience through equipment/infrastructure hardening
- Improving customers and communities' situational awareness and emergency response

Monitoring. Both internal and independent experts support the program's 24/7 monitoring system enabling PG&E to monitor wildfire risks in real time from PG&E's Wildfire Safety Operations Center (WSOC) and inform coordinating prevention and response efforts. PG&E also expanded their monitoring infrastructure network ([view list](#) of PG&E weather stations and cameras in El Dorado County).

Safety Measures. PG&E is further enhancing their vegetation management and worked with stakeholders to focus fuels reduction on vegetation with higher wildfire risk potential (e.g., removing vegetation directly above/around powerlines, but leaving low-risk vegetation underneath poles for soil integrity, wildlife habitat, etc.).

PG&E's aggressive safety inspection of its infrastructure led to expedited maintenance and repairs. PG&E is also replacing their automatic circuit breakers and reclosing devices with ones that have remote capabilities (because an automatic device could ignite a fire if it sends its automatically generated electrical signal when a powerline has fallen into dry brush).

PG&E will continue to improve its PSPS process (2018 and 2019 offered substantial lessons learned); PG&E expects some efforts like hardening infrastructure will require major modifications and take several years to resolve.

System Hardening & Resiliency. PG&E is installing stronger poles and covered powerlines and tailoring equipment replacement using more granular analysis of fire-prone regions. PG&E will continue to pilot establishing resilience zones to ensure electricity is available to central community resources during a PSPS event (e.g., powering stoplights for a city's main roadway for safe egress).

Discussion

Attendees highlighted the need for improved coordination and collaboration to avoid inadvertent impacts related to CWSP implementation. For instance, reducing vegetation on one property may drive the vegetation to grow laterally into neighboring properties like along roadsides, increasing those land managers' vegetation management efforts. There was also a request for improved communication/coordination between PG&E and property owners to track completed work, property access permission, etc.

An attendee suggested increasing the internal capacity of large property owners, like PG&E, to conduct their own vegetation management to help address a shortage of local trained personnel available to work on other properties. Several observed a nationwide shortage of trained personnel qualified both in electric work and vegetation management, and the various efforts at the local and legislative level underway to help address the problem.

PG&E should also more widely publicize evidence of PSPS' effectiveness to reduce wildfire risk (e.g., many examples of storm/high wind damage to powerlines that could have started a fire).

Several raised concerns about the negative impacts from recent PSPS implementation and the time needed to minimize PSPS implementation (e.g., system hardening). The group emphasized the need to have reliable access to power for crucial facilities and communication abilities. Pam added that PG&E has been working with several partners to ensure power is available to these crucial facilities (whether customers or not); the State is working to require that telecommunication companies provide plans for these power emergencies.

Members emphasized – remember the whole watershed system and socioeconomic impacts (e.g., safe, affordable drinking water), which will require continued and enhanced collaboration, particularly given limited available funding and resources.

Biomass Economic Opportunities – Golden State Natural Resources | Barbara Hayes, Rural County Representatives of CA (RCRC)

To help reduce wildfire fuel risks due to biomass buildup, the RCRC recently established the Golden State Natural Resources (GSNR), a public benefit, non-profit corporation. GSNR will remove low to no-value forest fuels to create pelletized fuels products for export to Asian countries aiming to reduce their carbon footprint. The GSNR program's goals include improving public safety by reducing fire risk, supporting forest restoration, enhancing carbon sequestration, and supporting rural economies.

RCRC signed a 20-year Master Stewardship Agreement (MSA) with USFS Region 5, enabling the opportunity to implement the GSNR program in any of California's 18 national forests. RCRC's current and next steps include conducting a feasibility study and cost-benefit analysis, selecting and piloting two sites, and exploring financial models (e.g., non-profit status) to be investor-ready by the end of 2020's first quarter to help finance the pilot projects.

Discussion

The group expressed wide interest in the GSNR program implementation. Major takeaways from the discussion included:

- What will be GSNR organization and legal structure (e.g., how will it utilize investors and be a non-profit)?
- RCRC focused on exporting to Japan and South Korea because a large, consistent market already exists, and California can more directly ship pellets compared to current major suppliers (primarily east/southeast US regions). RCRC is interested in developing more local markets in the future.
- Leveraging partnerships and resources is essential to the program's success. The group identified several coordination and partnership opportunities, including connecting with past/current grant awardees conducting related work.
- Work can occur on non-USFS lands as well. RCRC is working with CAL FIRE and Caltrans to explore similar arrangements like the USFS MSA.
- Several factors help advance GSNR implementation, including the USFS MSA, the many RCRC affiliates, and being a public entity. RCRC also plans to hire contractors to conduct the project NEPA/CEQA environmental processes for the two pilot sites, then consider conducting a statewide programmatic process.
- Project site viability depends on a number of factors, particularly infrastructure (railway and roadways, power access, water, etc.). The operations model will differ depending on the site.
- The Lassen and Stanislaus counties are the potential pilot sites. El Dorado/Sierra/Plumas area is in tier 2 and may be ready for GSNR planning in about 2-3 years if they can develop a solid model from the pilot projects.

Planning

2019 Review

The group identified several SOFAR activities that worked well in 2019:

- SOFAR Science Talks and other guest presentations.
- Field tours, including Red Fir and Caples.
- Advanced progress in the three [focus areas](#) (and upcoming meeting to evaluate future priority needs and potential new focus area).
- Effort to identify and distinguish [controversial and non-controversial activities](#) to help streamline project approval and SOFAR support.

2020 Goals

Resilient Landscapes

- Continue Science Talks and other presentations: Malcolm North's forest resiliency presentation; Caples prescribed fire lessons learned; and Scott Stephens.
- Explore the range of mechanical treatments and other available treatment options advanced via new technology.
- Understand forest management impacts on migratory deer.
- Discuss forest products and establishing viable market, and a potential colocation plant.
- Finalize the red fir management strategy.
- Share lessons learned and next steps for applied fire management strategies.
- Utilize landscape assessment models (e.g., Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative's assessment) in project development.

Safe & Effective Wildfire Response

- Enhance coordination and leveraging partnerships across organizations/agencies for safe egress and emergency access system in the region (including beyond SOFAR boundaries).

Fire-Adapted Communities

- Implement projects in the Chili Bar to Georgetown focus area.
- Build local and future capacity (training younger generations) to work in the forest and deepen understanding of forest management.
- Explore opportunities to communicate the importance of defensible space, balanced with the value of native plants and ecosystems.

Cohesive Strategy cross-cutting

- Continue to advance work in the focus areas.
- Field tours - visit a recently treated area and an untreated area.

SOFAR Collaborative

- Articulate how SOFAR activities link to its broader vision.
- Document and share progress made in focus areas and elsewhere.
- Prioritize one communication strategy or product (e.g., short video).

Next Steps

CBI will develop a draft 2020 work plan for SOFAR review and discussion at its next meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

Collaborative	Landscape Vision Committee
(No January meeting) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• February 12, 1:30-4:00 @EID• March 11, 1:30-4:00 @EID	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• December 12 @EID• January 23, 1:00-3:30 @EID
Always check sofarcohesivestrategy.org for meeting location and latest information.	

Meeting Participants (who signed in)

Autumn	Gronborg	American River Conservancy (ARC)
Randy	Hanvelt	Associated California Loggers (ACL)
Lester	Lubetkin	CA Native Plant Society (CNPS), El Dorado Ch.; Oak Hill Area FSC
Norma	Santiago	Catalytic Connections (via phone)
Sandy	Anderson	Central Sierra Economic Development District
Kristine	Guth	El Dorado County
John	Wilcox	El Dorado County
Brian	Veerkamp	El Dorado County - District 3 Supervisor
Mark	Egbert	El Dorado County & Georgetown Divide RCDs
Steve	Willis	El Dorado County Fire Safe Council

Dan	Corcoran	El Dorado Irrigation District (EID)
Brian	Deason	El Dorado Irrigation District (EID)
Craig	Thomas	Fire Restoration Group, Georgetown FSC
Ben	Sher	LBS Ranch
Kevin	Vella	National Wild Turkey Federation
Pamela	Perdue	PG&E Community Wildfire Safety Program
Barbara	Hayes	Rural County Representatives of CA(RCRC)
Eric	Brown	Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)
David	Zelinsky	Sierra Club; Maidu Group; Placerville FSC
Josh	Sjostrom	US Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Liz	Meyer-Shields	US Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Jason	Sieg	USFS - ENF - Georgetown
Scot	Rogers	USFS - ENF - Placerville
Tim	Taylor	