

FRASC Meeting Notes November 7, 2013

Green Infrastructure, Sustainable Recreation and Connecting People to the California Landscape

Attendees (25 people in person; 4 people on-line)

I. Chapter Review from 2010 (Robin Marose)

- Theme: Green Infrastructure for Connecting People to the Natural Environment
- The analysis in 2010 placed a higher value on green infrastructure that is close to people and urban areas.
- Status and Trends (2010):
 - Declining budgets and reduced hours, deferred maintenance were trends in State Parks
 - Static or declining attendance in many locations despite increase in population (except for OHV use)
 - Change in demographics is driving a demand for different types of recreational opportunities
 - California's statewide outdoor recreation strategy is formulated through:
 - CA Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP and CADP&R)
 - The Recreation Policy (State Park and Rec Commission)
 - CA Dept. of Parks and Rec's OHV Recreation Division legislatively mandated Strategic Plan
- Analysis Findings at the county level -- amount of green infrastructure versus percent protected. This analysis shows which counties have open spaces to recreate and how much of it is protected. Protection by county; management status (non-profit; local; state; and federal)
- Priority Landscapes:
 1. Conserving Green Infrastructure
 - a. Asset is green infrastructure (unprotected) CPAD database; ranked by proximity to an urban center
 - b. Threat – areas ranked based on the timing and density of future development (ICLUS)
 - c. Results – Summarized by county and bioregion levels. Sierra abundant; protected at higher elevations
 2. Maintaining Green Infrastructure
 - a. Assets - recreation Areas – Green Infrastructure; ranked by nearby populations
 - b. Threats – Wildfire, forest pests
 - c. Results – varied regionally; summarized by county – lots of So. California counties ranked as high priority due to population and wildfires.

Question: Are these 2010 analysis appropriate and should they be retained in the 2015 assessment? Are there additional analyses that should be done?

Question: How did we handle areas like the Yolo bypass that people value as green infrastructure? Robin – I think it isn't well represented.

Comment: Outdoor recreation for youth – consider using a socio-economic metric that identifies communities that are poorer and may lack the ability to make trips to the outdoors.

Question (Kingman): How did you establish the threats and assets? Many areas attract visitors from much further from the park location? Robin: Good point – we may be undervaluing remote park locations and the role they play.

II. Fraser Shilling (Indicators)

- We have started developing candidate indicators for each chapter topic.
- Examples:
 - Climate Change – Total above ground carbon; sequestration rate; predicted changes in temp and precip
 - Wildfire – Percent of communities at risk to wildfire (WUI)
 - Green Infrastructure – forest productivity, recreation, forest adjacent communities, open space in conservation, park accessibility, indicators developed by other agencies, ecosystem services
 - Sustainable Rural Economies (employment, migration patterns, job-specific, employment...)
 - Urban Forestry (Impervious cover, tree and canopy cover, days over 90 degrees...)
 - Water Resources – Tie to the Water Plan; BMPs, amount of impaired waterbodies...
 - Wildfire – Fire regime departure metrics
 - Climate change – effects on fire season and fire severity
 - Wildlife – Tie with DFW Wildlife Action Plan (plant distribution, bird distributions)
- Next Steps
 - Expand search; combine candidate indicators into sets per chapter
- Questions:
 - Will climate change include coastal fog? No, just part of the narrative discussion.
 - Population growth and carbon impacts; will that be included? It was an analysis that was done in 2010 and it could be carried over to 2015.

Panel Discussion

Larry Orman. Metropolitan open space issues. Have observed that the FRAP assessment is an amazing document and unique as a planning document; fills a void for consistent planning of resources. Supports a conversation between rural communities and its urban base. What is the utility of this assessment and other major efforts that are going on in the state. Example, Parks planning commission. What does the assessment influence?

1. Framing points about green infrastructure
 - a. GreenInfo Network. A lot of the conversation hinges on water and green infrastructure in an urban landscape. Why should we talk about green infrastructure?
 - i. Land focus
 - ii. Focus on urban area
 - iii. A lot of variations in how to approach green infrastructure. Example: ecological assets, hydro assets, rec assets, working landscapes, cultural assets
 - iv. Natural green infrastructure and a social green infrastructure

- v. Pivotal resources: protected lands, urban parks, urban green solutions, habitat reserves, natural processes...
 - vi. What does it help us do and who is it for? How will it interface with policy and decision makers.
 - vii. Good Examples: Bay Area conservation planning; conservation lands network
2. Protected areas data. CPAD. www.CALands.org
 Protected open space: parks, preserves, wilderness; owned in fee by agency or NGO
 Statewide data; represents 1,000 agencies; ownership level; access
 Why a good inventory matters; example incorrect maps used by Google.
 Funding through Strategic Growth Council;
 Issue over easement data in CPAD.
 3. A hidden threat. Map of private rural lands; the parcelization matrix; shows areas that are subdivided and subject to future development. An important threat layer.

Bob Kingman (Sierra Nevada Conservancy). Previously worked for the Tahoe Conservancy on recreation and public access issues. SNC has promoted sustainable recreation. Means that in the future those places are protected and will remain available as open space and recreation in the future. Issues of concern is to be careful not to destroy the resources from the impacts from tourism at popular locations. Determining what is sustainable level of recreation is a big challenge. Dependent upon the protection of the resource, a strong economic base to maintain the resources. SNC are an entity that is an intermediary that can work with the local communities and all citizens that benefit from the resources that are being protected.

Trinidad Juarez (USFS). Last assessment he asked to include information on scenic quality. Provided a map for the Sierra that potentially could be used in the 2015 assessment. Raised the question of under served populations that simply don't have the means to visit and recreate in these outdoor open space areas.

Question 1. What are the greatest threats to the existing network of parks and open spaces?

Trinni – Map of scenic attractiveness provides an example of how to depict scenic areas that are distinctive and represent high value assets. In the Sierra the threat is forest health; risk of wildfire.

Bob – Number 1 issue is a concern about the next generation of stewards to protect the green infrastructure; taking responsibility as a steward. They need to develop an appreciation of these lands. Promote CA Children Outdoor Bill of Rights. The regulatory framework guide where recreation can occur. The types of recreation on public lands is huge and keeps evolving.

Larry – Agrees with Trinni's concept of developing a map layer that highlights the most scenic areas. Rural sub-divisions are an invisible threat that is a big concern. Climate change has huge potential impacts; and who is the next constituency?

Public Comment (Greg Guisti). Trinni's map and social aspects of resource areas. Attractiveness is subjective, based on judgement. Wonder how this type of presentation will be perceived in an area that is rated as having low scenic (i.e. ugly) value. Response: If FRAP chooses to use the map they could change the terminology.

Public Comment (Bruce Gwynn). Local non-profit groups are the eyes and the ears on the ground for the stewardship of many public lands. Comment on the role of NGOs.

Response (Larry): It is clear that State Parks is reviewing the management of parks and developing a new strategy. The struggle is that as we decentralize management; we may lose consistency.

Response (Bob): Not only is there an issue about how to maintain or protect them, but how to connect them.

Question 5. Can the configuration of parks and open spaces serve as a broader network of protected areas that enhance the conservation of forest ecosystems?

Response (Larry): Funding through bonds are not likely to be available to safeguard new lands. The issues is identifying prioritizing. We have never done a good job of prioritizing in California.

Response (Bob): Look at the resource in a different way. Example, a project in Tahoe for a kayaking trail that would allow people to visit locations without being in a car. SNC is looking at duplicating this idea on the lower Owens River. Allowing paddling recreation trips on the Owens River; low impact and low speed. Identifying specific spaces for specific uses; segregating uses that are not compatible.

Response (Trinni): USFS has through the Sierra Dialog has engaged public discussion. Work with CSU Chico to explore developing a way to get young people involved in forest management and stewardship issues. Also, stressed the need for an all lands approach.

Public Comment (Greg). North Coast – lots of public land; protection of private and commercial timber lands is important; they need to remain profitable. Also, have the lands is non-industrial. The transfer of family owned lands to the next generation and stewardship is important issue. Establishment of a special fund to support open space has worked well in Sonoma.

Response (Larry): These issues speak to the working landscape across California; maintaining private lands that provide open space and natural resources. The speciality market in agriculture has shown great growth and it might work well in forestry.

Response (Bob): Also, an issue of scale. The smaller landowner doesn't have the resources to operate in the way that large landowners do.

Question 2. CA demographic base is as diverse as its landscapes. Does the current configuration of parks and open space meet the needs of demographic groups.

Response (Trinni). Transit needs to under served populations is important, but often overlooked. Careless California, represents groups that do not have a car and limited access to open space lands. Analysis showed from Bay View Hunters point to Muir Woods (4 hours). A large part of the population does not have access.

Response (Bob). California does strive to meet the needs of its population, but it can do better. Changing demographics and where population centers are growing force us to be behind and lag behind the need. However, California has very high visitors and tourism. Metropolitan owned camps in rural areas are a resource (infrastructure) that is diminishing.

Response (Larry): Hope this question stays in the assessment. This issue is we have large urban populations with limited access; how do we involve them? Tools – requires local and regional

engagement. How do we get people to the long distance recreational opportunities. Park service surveys include demographic data is available. Also, a public health issue to keep people active.

Public Comment (John Buckley): The current configuration of parks and open space does not meet the needs for central valley residents. Access to natural forests and other lands are lacking. More than a need to create more parks; need some sort of movement to make these spaces relevant to young people with inspiring programs.

Public Comment (Fraser): The ability to have parks put around your town is part of the political muscle that some communities have. We need to tailor new parks to make up the gap. This may shift how priority landscapes. We may want to put parks where there is a deficit; need to rethink the combination of threats and assets. Brought up an equity issue; some communities have parks and some are lacking or deficient in parks.

Public Comment (Brian – BLM). Youth Summit held this summer revealed that barriers to access. When we asked young people what keeps you from going out to open spaces. Many responded that their parents were not comfortable to pursue these activities.

Public Comment (Clay). Flood ways. Cities built on rivers have flood ways with levees. For example the American River Parkway here in Sacramento. These opportunities exist in other locations across the state.

Public Comment (Lisa). State Parks does an assessment of who uses their parks. This includes an assessment of how cultural groups use parks differently.

Question 5. Should ecosystem services be considered as an equal priority for parks or open spaces?

Response (Larry): Climate change will influence how we use the resource. Carbon sequestration and conservation of water are leading examples. The absence of public funds will have market approaches drive investment.

Response (Bob): Sustainable recreation can benefit from maintaining upper watershed areas, forests, for the benefit of water storage. The Rim fire is a current example of how water infrastructure can be greatly impacted. Need to think long term and proactively to monetize all of these environmental services that open lands provides.

Response (Trinni). USFS is being required to look at adjacent lands in their management plans.

Public Comment (Bruce Gywnn): Livestock ranchers are changing there practices to benefit environmental services. There is a loss of large mammals across the landscape. Reintroducing livestock into areas where there would historically have been disturbance is needed.

Public Comment (Buckley): Differ to comment on that perspective. Should all activities carry equal weight? The sustainability of the ecosystem is the highest priority; then look at what uses can be supported.

Public Comment (Jim Suero): What do we do with logs that we are trying to get rid of on Park lands? There need to be some legislative changes to allow agencies to better manage public lands.

Public Comment (Bakke): Who will use information from this chapter?

Comment (Larry): Is it possible to create an ancillary document in a different format to reach another audience. More of a 20 page document.

Comment (Klaus): The equity issues and engaging young people leads to other audiences beyond the Board of Forestry. Look for other avenues to provide information that reaches groups that are not traditionally part of the stakeholders for the assessment.

Comment (Clay): The way to get this in circulation is to get it into the hands of people that will quote it. For example, legislative staffers will read the report and introduce it to the legislature.