

FRASC Meeting Summary

Attendees: David Bakke (USFS), Mark Rosenberg (FRAP), Rebecca Ferkovich (FRAP), David Porter (The Nature Conservancy), Mark Wenzel (CAL/EPA), Jonathan Ambrose (NMFS), Tony Mediati (CALFIRE), Ryan Burnett (PRBO), Lorna Dobrovolny (DFG), Peggy Cranston (BLM), Mike Jani (MRC/HRC), Ceci Dale-Cesmat (NRCS), Sue Britting (Sierra Forest Legacy), Tom Engstrom (SPI), Karyn Gear (State Coastal Conservancy), Brad Valentine (DFG), Paul Mason (Pacific Forest Trust), Tom Heot (NRCS), Mary Klaas-Schultz (FRAP), Steve Schoenig (DFG), Nic Enstill (Sierra Nevada Conservancy), Robert Motroni (CALFIRE), Fraser Shilling (UC Davis), Kelly Larvie (FRAP), Chris Keithley (FRAP), Stephen Smith (NRCS), Jim Quinn (UC Davis), Rich Walker (FRAP), Jim Spero (FRAP), Justin Johnson (FRAP), Staci Heaton (Regional Council of Rural Counties), Jennifer Cavanaugh (NRCS), Karen Buhr (CACD), John Gerlach (SAIC), Marian Ashe, Pete Cafferata (CALFIRE), T. Perry (Stewardship Council).

I. Agenda

9:00 – 9:15: Introduction and Overview

9:15 – 10:30: Panel Speaker Presentations and Questions

- Armand Gonzales (California Department of Fish and Game)
- Dan Porter (The Nature Conservancy)
- Jim Weigand (Bureau of Land Management)

10:30 – 10:45: Break

10:45 – 11:45: Group Discussion

- Problems and Threats that adversely affect wildlife and their habitat.
- Conservation actions needed to conserve ecosystems and wildlife populations.
- Adaptive Management Strategies
- Conservation planning (capabilities and limits)

11:45 – 12:00: Recap

- Review meeting discussions.
- Summary
- Questions and Comments
- Next Steps

II. Introductions and Overview

Rich Walker started with introductions and an overview presentation of the wildlife chapter from the 2010 Assessment.

- Sponsors of today's meeting are:
 - *California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) / Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP)*
 - USFS Pacific Southwest Region State and Private Forestry
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- Overview Of 2010 Assessment:

- 2008 Farm Bill “All Lands Approach” added federal lands to FRAP’s landscape
- California Wildlife Action Plan (CWAP) referenced as the main wildlife document for California
- Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE) program of CDFG results not available for 2010 report

In 2010 assessment, the relative risk to important wildlife habitat from uncharacteristic wildfire is analyzed and mapped as priority landscapes. In addition, status and trends of threatened and endangered species and patterns of distribution are examined. Topics that were covered in 2010 Assessment included:

- 1) Select Species Population Trends
- 2) CWAP threats to habitat by bioregion
- 3) Distribution maps of species richness by Guild
 - birds
 - mammals
 - fish
 - reptile
 - amphibians

III. Panelist Presentations

Armand Gonzales (California Department of Fish and Game)

Armand provided an overview of the Wildlife Action Plan and DFG efforts towards the next report. Major themes included;

- Threats
 - Population (human) threats to wildlife from such things as roads, sprawl, development, fragmentation
 - Climate Change
 - Poaching
 - Invasive Species
 - Loss of habitat to development (and agriculture?).
- Impacts
 - Degradation of habitat
 - Less water, higher water temperatures
 - Less resilient habitats and populations
 - Invasive species, competition, predation
 - Negative Human – wildlife – encounters
 - Pathogen and Disease spread
 - Loss of commercial opportunities.
 - Nocturnal species impacted by city light pollution.

- Actions:
 - State WAP
 - Assess stressors and threats at different scales
 - Using an ecosystem approach to address regional scale problems that may get swamped by the amount of high value habitat in other regions when conducting a statewide analysis.
 - Baily ecoregion map
 - NFMS zones for coastal areas
 - HUC 4 watersheds
 - Identify conservation needs and priorities
 - Identify data gaps – Aquatic Habitats are a huge data gap
 - Developing Companion plans
 - Aquatic and riparian habitats
 - Forest and rangelands
 - Increase collaboration
 - Interagency collaborations and develop a ‘shared purpose’ examples include:
 - Maintaining habitat elements (large woody debris)
 - Water course buffers
 - Compatible survey (mapping) and analytical methodologies

Dan Porter (The Nature Conservancy)

Dan Porter provided a summary of TNC issues in related to coastal Forest and Rangeland wildlife habitats and discussed how TNC is shifting focus from protecting ‘representative’ habitats to a focus on ecological systems and processes. He identified a desire to conduct work at a moderate scale (regional), and thought that FRAP (data and products) could play a role in providing key mapping and monitoring pieces at that scale.

Major themes included:

- Impacts
 - Redwood Harvesting
 - Wine Grape ‘Harvesting’ – meaning production and conversion of habitat to grapes
 - Land Use Change and conversion
 - Increasing demand for products
 - Endangered Species Act (ESA) issues
- Actions
 - Science based review
 - Analysis of economic and ecological tradeoffs
 - High Conservation areas
 - Development of focused plans at moderate (mid) scales.
 - Focus on analyses that assist Local policy to address, mitigate and adapt to conservation issues and ecological process questions/
 - Focus on identifying and addressing conservation priorities.
 - Measureable progress towards identified goals and priorities
 - Range of Values include:
 - Salmonid restoration and protection
 - Forest and productivity (and Carbon?)

- Water quantity and quality
- Biodiversity
- Estuary protection
- Agents of Change
 - Wine grape production
 - Timber harvest
 - Roads
 - Habitat Fragmentation
 - Habitat Conversion

Jim Weigand (Bureau of Land Management)

Jim Weigand is an ecologist with BLM and shared his perspective on wildlife habitat issues in CA from their perspective.

Major themes included:

- Agents of Change/Threats
 - Fire
 - Urban development
 - Climate change
 - Energy Development
 - Historical issues included
 - Mining impacts
 - Livestock grazing impacts
- Impacts
 - Water quantity/quality for habitat and wildlife
 - Post fire erosion
 - Urban runoff
 - Mercury pollution aerial transport into new ecosystems after nearby fires
 - Unknown impacts on wildlife
 - Degradation of landscapes in NE CA is an issue for BLM
 - Climate Change impacts on 'sky islands' in Southern CA and other areas – this issue relates to the anticipated movement of habitat ranges for certain vegetation types such as (high elevation) white fir. There are areas where these habitats have 'nowhere to go' under changing climates and thus, wildlife dependent on those habitats may be left without needed habitats and have no connections to patches of these habitats that may survive.
 - Renewable Energy development impacts on Mojave habitats
- Actions:
 - Balance between economic and ecological demands on the landscape
 - Some critical details are missing at appropriate scales (riparian habitats/oasis in desert ecosystems) – can make it hard to assess impacts and look at performance trends

Coordination is a challenge – and there are both site based issues and data needs statewide but not much is in between.

IV. Discussion:

- FRAP can play a role in coordination and helping develop a road map for agency actions and priorities in forest and rangelands.
- DFG Performance measures for conservation success
 - Status of review
 - Species of special concern reports
 - Mammals
 - Birds
 - Fish
 - Incidental take and other compliance monitoring
 - No statewide performance strategy at this time.
 - Update data
 - Veg and other datasets.
 - Big data gap on aquatic habitats.
- Crisis based monitoring has been the historical approach – often done by species i.e. sage grouse or spotted owl.
 - BLM developing an Assessment, inventory and monitoring (AIM) strategy to track trends in ecosystem condition on BLM lands.
 - Hierarchical and scaled
 - NE CA (Pilot area)
 - MRIADI software being used to define natural systems and quantify/characterize them
 - Quantitative look at resources
 - Sonoran joint venture
 - Transparent conservation rule sets
- Central Coast Range Analysis
 - Rate of conversion vs rate of protection – we are still losing ground
- FRAP can play a role by providing a quantitative look at resources
- Regional analyses are also needed with statewide analyses.
- Better integration of agency planning efforts was a theme
- Some FRAP 2010 assessment products miss local/county concerns
 - Example – SD has the most T&E species in the country
- Gnat catcher, fire impacts, and post fire management of burned areas are all issues.
- Suggestion that FRAP has time to do a big data gathering exercise and package it also for regional uses.
- Multivariate assessment of wildlife values with results relevant at local/regional scales is desired.
- Need to provide guidance on Post fire habitat management
- SPI and other landowner perspective - checker board pattern near NFS lands – one consistent data source for these areas would be a big help in conducting analyses, especially for the smaller land owners
- MRC stated that much of their data is available to us for analysis and they would like to see if we could get similar data from other large landowners and use these in ‘case studies’ or to address regional analysis needs.
- Sue Britting suggested we consider doing more with fire severity and remote sensing similar to what Jay Miller’s group with the USFS are doing on FS lands (dNBR RAVEG analysis).
 - Fire severity, effects, and opportunities.

- Some discussion of cultural attitudes towards natural resources give the changing demographics in CA
- Fire suppression and loss of disturbance regimes (fire?) is an issue for wildlife dependent on a distribution of habitat types, conditions, and seral stages.
- Integrated Resource Management was a theme also. Discussion of permitting process being streamlined among agencies – new legislation and the 1% timber tax on imported wood mandates this and provides funding.
- We have an issue with 'Prey' – not enough food for predators due to lack of diversity in habitat and seral stages due to the suppression of fire and other disturbance that mimic's this (timber harvest).
- Question for PFT (Paul Mason) regarding if FRAP plans to use ARB Forest inventory of carbon from forest and rangelands under AB32 – Chris K. responded we were working with ARB at a technical advisory level and also to help integrate CAL FIRE activity data (fire perimeters, harvests, etc) into their process.
- FRAP should also work on developing maps, data, analyses and trends for issues of common concern across agencies and stakeholders. Support multiple objectives and multi-ownership analyses.
- Support collaborative efforts
- NMFS comment about central coast conservation planning effort – using a down-scale approach 100k watershed. Pulled together data from DFG on in stream habitat types. They can share with CAL FIRE. Also mentioned a "SWAMP" database – possibly utilized by the water boards in CA.
- Mention of the California Cooperative Forest Plan for property owners –a management plan concept that identifies what owners are planning to do for their land and makes that data available to agencies for trend analysis.