



Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group Strategic Plan

May 2018 – April 2023

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Introduction

The Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group (Working Group) is a team with forestry and conservation expertise, working together to provide education and resources to forest landowners. Members include forest landowners, land trusts, watershed councils, and local and state agencies.

Sonoma County has more than half a million acres of coniferous, mixed hardwood, and riparian forests, and oak woodlands, most of which are privately owned and managed. These unique forests provide a suite of ecological and economic benefits to citizens of Sonoma County, including fish and wildlife habitat, clean air and water, carbon sequestration, recreation, and beauty. Managing these forests will maintain ecological abundance and monetary value across landscapes through generations.

Mission Statement

Protecting forests across landscapes and through generations.

Goal

Protecting and sustaining healthy forests, woodlands, and watersheds in Sonoma County.

Strategy

To provide forest landowners with access to information, forestry expertise, and potential funding. We wish to see all forests managed for ecology, economy, and fire safety.

Audience

All private and public landowners and resource managers of forests or oak woodlands.

Work Plan Activities

The Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group Work Plan will be comprised of fulfilling the main activities of the Working Group in meeting its above stated mission. The Working Group provides education and outreach for the health of Sonoma County's forests and woodlands. Working Group members represent multiple organizations with differing roles within the fields of forestry and conservation and leverage one another's knowledge and technical expertise for achieving the Working Group's goal to protect and sustain healthy forests, woodlands, and watersheds in Sonoma County. The work plan is organized by central activities the Working Group will carry out over the next two years: education and outreach; operations; service provision; and fundraising.

Education and Outreach

The Working Group will continue to provide education and outreach services in Sonoma County to meet our mission. Education and outreach will be comprised of the following activities:

EDU 1. Provide education on the topics of water conservation, wildfire protection, biodiversity, wildlife habitat and fisheries, and restoration. The five topics were chosen based upon survey responses.

EDU 2. Focus education efforts around specified topics in targeted locations as follows:

- Provide education and collaborate with local organizations, such as Friends of the Mark West Watershed, on water conservation as well as biodiversity in the Mark West Creek Watershed.
- Provide education on wildfire resiliency, forest hydrology and benefits to salmonids, and keeping the forest and watershed healthy during an expected increase in cannabis grows in the Mark West Creek Watershed.
- Provide education on water conservation as well as wildfire protection in the Laguna de Santa Rosa Watershed. Collaborate with local organizations in the watershed, such as the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation.
- Provide education on the legacy of logging, including erosion and sedimentation concerns from roads upslope of salmonid bearing streams and restoring secondary forests to health, in the Austin Creek, Jenner Gulch, Lower Russian River, Gualala River, Sheephouse Creek, Willow Creek, Freezeout Creek, and Coastal Tributary watersheds.
- Provide education on keeping structures on your property safe from falling trees while maintaining a healthy forest in the Lower Russian River.
- Provide education on managing overgrown forests with high fuel loads, improving biodiversity, forest hydrology, and sudden oak death in the Salmon Creek Watershed.
- Provide education about tree mortality in the Coastal Tributaries.

EDU 3. Conduct outreach with organizations, agencies, and other stakeholders in potentially all Sonoma County watersheds, as allowed by Working Group capacity, to target education efforts relevant to the natural resource concerns and needs of constituents in each watershed. Watersheds include:

- Alexander Valley
- Austin Creek
- Jenner Gulch
- Sheephouse Creek
- Lower Russian River
- Gualala River
- Maacama Creek
- Petaluma River
- Russian Gulch
- Sonoma Creek
- Stemple Creek
- Sulphur Creek
- Estero Americano

- Green Valley-Atascadero
- Willow Creek
- Blucher Creek
- Pocket Canyon
- Scotty Creek
- Salmon Creek
- Dutch Bill Creek
- Dry Creek
- Middle Russian River
- Mill Creek
- Bodega Bay
- Smith Creek
- Freezeout Creek
- Coastal Tributaries
- Mark West Creek

EDU 4. Facilitate three to four brown bags, workshops, or community meetings per year. Proposed ideas include:

- Traditional Oak Management with Clint McKay, Pepperwood Preserve
- Defining preservation, restoration, and conservation
- What's the difference between a RPF and a forester? Who can you hire to do what?
- What is a Watershed Council and a Community Forest and how do you get involved?
- User-Friendly Monitoring of Forestlands: Why monitoring is important, what to monitor, and the most effective methods
- Wildfire Protection and Prescribed Burns
- Community Wildfire Protection Plans with Caerleon Safford, FireSafe Sonoma
- Understanding Forest Hydrology
- Implementing Large Scale Thinning in Sonoma County
- Working Together: How to Have Stronger Collaborations with Neighbors
- How Forest Landowners can Utilize Agencies and Nonprofits
- Riparian Habitat and Forests
- Prescribed burns with the University of California Hopland Research and Extension Center
- Popular 2017 North Coast Forest Conservation Conference presentations to potentially use for future brown bags/workshops:
 - Forests: A Place to Gather (*Reno Keoni Franklin*)
 - Working Together (*Penny Sirota, Judy Rosales, Caerleon Safford, Linwood Gill*)
 - Solutions to Forest Challenges (*Sasha Berleman, Mark Grandek, Shanti Edwards, Noah Levy, Steven Swain*)
 - Building Opportunities for Voluntary Forest Carbon Offset Projects (*John Nickerson*)
 - Forest Management across the Ownership Spectrum (*Darin Jarnaghan, Daniel Falk, Mike Miles, Chris Kelly*)
 - Asserting Leadership for Forest Health (*Robert Ewing*)

EDU 5. Provide information on available resources (e.g. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's [CAL FIRE] California Forest Improvement Program [CFIP] funds, the Natural Resources Conservation Service's [NRCS] Environmental Quality Incentives Program [EQIP] funds, local Resource Conservation District [RCD] assistance, University of California Cooperative Extension [UCCE] Forest Stewardship workshops, etc.), and conservation easements to forest landowners across Sonoma County.

Target outreach on available resources as follows:

- Mark West Creek Watershed: UCCE Forest Stewardship, conservation easements, CFIP
- Salmon Creek Watershed: CFIP, EQIP, RCD assistance
- Gualala River Watershed: CFIP
- Laguna de Santa Rosa Watershed: CFIP, EQIP, RCD assistance, UCCE Forest Stewardship
- Sonoma Creek Watershed: UCCE Forest Stewardship
- Salmon Creek Watershed: CFIP, EQIP, RCD assistance, UCCE Forest Stewardship, conservation easements

Conduct outreach in other watersheds to better understand assistance needs and interest. Further assistance for landowners who are planning forest management activities on their land by providing information on where to find qualified laborers, how to limit expenses, and assistance with permitting processes and utilizing other resources.

EDU 6. Update the Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group website.

- List Registered Professional Foresters, tree service providers, and other skilled laborers for forestland owners.
- Update and add detail to the website's contact list.
- Post proceedings from the 2017 North Coast Forest Conservation Conference.
- Develop a list of forest management organizations, agencies, and other groups and make the list available on the Working Group's website.

EDU 7. Manage social media outreach.

- Update the Working Group's Facebook page monthly or as appropriate.
- Manage the Working Group's Yahoo! group and listserve.
- Adopt other social media platforms and conduct outreach: Instagram.

EDU 8. Pursue opportunities for additional expertise from outside groups and organizations.

- Seek to work with California State Parks to carry out a fuel load management demonstration for forest landowners.
- Seek to work with the Friends of the Petaluma River to bring forest conservation education to the Petaluma River Watershed and leverage the Friends of the Petaluma River's expertise on water quality and issues of public access to nature.
- Leverage wildlife and plant monitoring work of Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods into Working Group education activities.
- Present on relevant topics to Stewards of the Coast and Redwood's seminar series for its docents.
- Work with the Salmon Creek Watershed Council to bring relevant forest conservation education to the Salmon Creek Watershed community.

EDU 9. Seek education for the Working Group on how to best assist public and private forest landowners in acquiring the resources necessary for restoring and conserving healthy forests.

Operations

The Working Group will carry out operational activities to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency. Operations activities will be comprised of the following:

OP1. Collection and management of the following data:

- Working Group members and contact information.
- Working Group meeting regular attendees and contact information.
- Working Group sponsors and contact information.
- Working Group brownbag, workshop, and event attendees and their contact information.

OP2. Archive and chronicle documentation of Working Group brown bags, workshops, and other events.

OP3. Continue utilizing Working Group members and internships to carry out Working Group coordination and other tasks as appropriate.

OP4. Document in-kind contributions from Working Group members.

Services

In addition to the Working Group's traditional role as an education and outreach service provider, Working Group members will explore new opportunities, roles, and tools for the advancement of its mission.

SER 1. Participate in the process of updating Sonoma County's General Plan as it regards forests.

SER 2. Explore opportunities to improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of permitting processes for sustainable forest management practices. Look into options for the preparation of Program Timberland Environmental Impact Reports for forests in Sonoma County.

SER 3. Seek opportunities to engage and provide regionally relevant input to the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to inform their role in developing statewide forest policy and guidance policy for the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

SER 4. Seek opportunities to advance carbon market opportunities for small landowners (State Air Resources Board Cap-and-Trade market and other voluntary markets, such as that developed by the Climate Action Reserve).

SER 5. Engage potential partners for future joint projects and/or enhancing outreach efforts. Noted partners include the Sierra Club, Forest Landowners of California, the Forest Guild, the Society of American Foresters, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, Friends of the Mark West Watershed, and the Alpine Club.

SER 6. Engage forest groups in other counties to leverage opportunities and/or assist interested stakeholders in other counties in initiating a forest group for their county, watershed, or region.

SER 7. Conduct a gap analysis for the working group to determine where education and outreach targeting is needed.

SER 8. Put forest landowners in contact with tree service providers, skilled laborers, and Registered Professional Foresters. Create a database

SER 9. Participate in Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District's Vital Lands Initiative by providing Working Group feedback.

SER 10. Promote forest conservation for and by highlighting climate change adaptation and mitigation benefits.

SER 11. In response to the wildfires of fall 2017 on the Coast Range landscapes of Northern California, the Working Group created the Fire-Resilient Forests Initiative (FRFI). The FRFI is committed to assisting with coordinating and implementing forest recovery with multiple partners by supporting regional approaches to scientific analyses and technical assessments, dissemination of locally-appropriate land management expertise, and hands-on landowner outreach. The FRFI will create a series of short term and long term goals to implement county wide recovery plans.

Fundraising

The Working Group will carry out fundraising activities in relation to group-defined goals.

FUN 1. Seek funding for ongoing Working Group coordination.

FUN 2. Identify additional monetary needs of the Working Group.

FUN 3. Research and apply to applicable grant programs.

FUN 4. Explore avenues of fundraising additional to available grants.