



Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group Charter

Version September 2019

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PURPOSE

The Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group (Forest Working Group) serves as a hub for Sonoma County natural resource professionals and landowners to discuss forest-related issues, share information, provide educational opportunities, and collaborate whenever possible. The Forest Working Group serves this purpose for the benefit of forestland health in Sonoma County.

VISION

Our vision is for a county with healthy forests, woodlands and watersheds, which are protected across landscapes and throughout generations by the proactive, responsible stewardship of forest landowners, both public and private.

STRATEGY

Our strategy is to empower forestland owners to become great stewards of Sonoma County's forests by being an openly available resource to all members of the public. We welcome anyone to participate in the Forest Working Group's monthly meetings, sign up to receive our email communications, utilize our website and attend educational events. Our offerings are dynamic and adaptable to meet the evolving needs of our community.

AUDIENCE

Our primary audience is all private and public landowners and resource managers of forestlands. This includes small acreage forested parcels, open oak woodlands and forests on rangeland.

We use the word "forest" as a convenient short-hand term for a variety of plant communities, dominated by woody plants, including coniferous-dominated forests, mixed hardwood forests, oak woodlands, riparian forests, and chaparral. These woody ecosystems may or may not be managed for an economic return. These ecosystems are not developed, or are lightly developed, and can include the Wildland-Urban Interface.

OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS

1. Much of the forest and woodlands in Sonoma County have been significantly altered by human development and are lacking in old-growth characteristics of their state pre-colonization.
2. While it is difficult and in some cases impossible to restore the county's forests to their pre-colonial state, there is value in stewarding forests and woodlands for increased biodiversity, proper watershed function, increased carbon sequestration, and improved aesthetic beauty, among other ecosystem services.
3. Thinning, prescribed fire, grazing, and reforestation are valuable tools for improving forest and woodland health.

4. Human beings will continue to live in forests, woodlands, and the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and the wildfire resiliency of their homes may depend on their taking actions to create and maintain defensible space, shaded fuel breaks along roads, and harden their structures.
5. Forestland and woodland management for restoration is an ongoing long-term activity.

BASIS OF AUTHORITY

The Forest Working Group is an informal public organization and as such has no legal or other basis of authority.

NON-BINDING ENGAGEMENT

Members of the Forest Working Group are in a non-binding engagement with the Group. They participate at their own will and may end their membership at will. There is no responsibility of any individual member to the Forest Working Group, with the exception of any staff who are contractually obligated to fulfill their responsibilities. Appendix A shows the membership as of the date indicated at the top of the appendix.

FINANCING

The Forest Working Group is an informal public organization without laws of incorporation or tax status, and so cannot receive funds. Therefore, a fiscal sponsor is necessary to fundraise, grant write and receive and manage grants on behalf of the Forest Working Group.

STRUCTURE & GOVERNANCE

The Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group Structural Chart

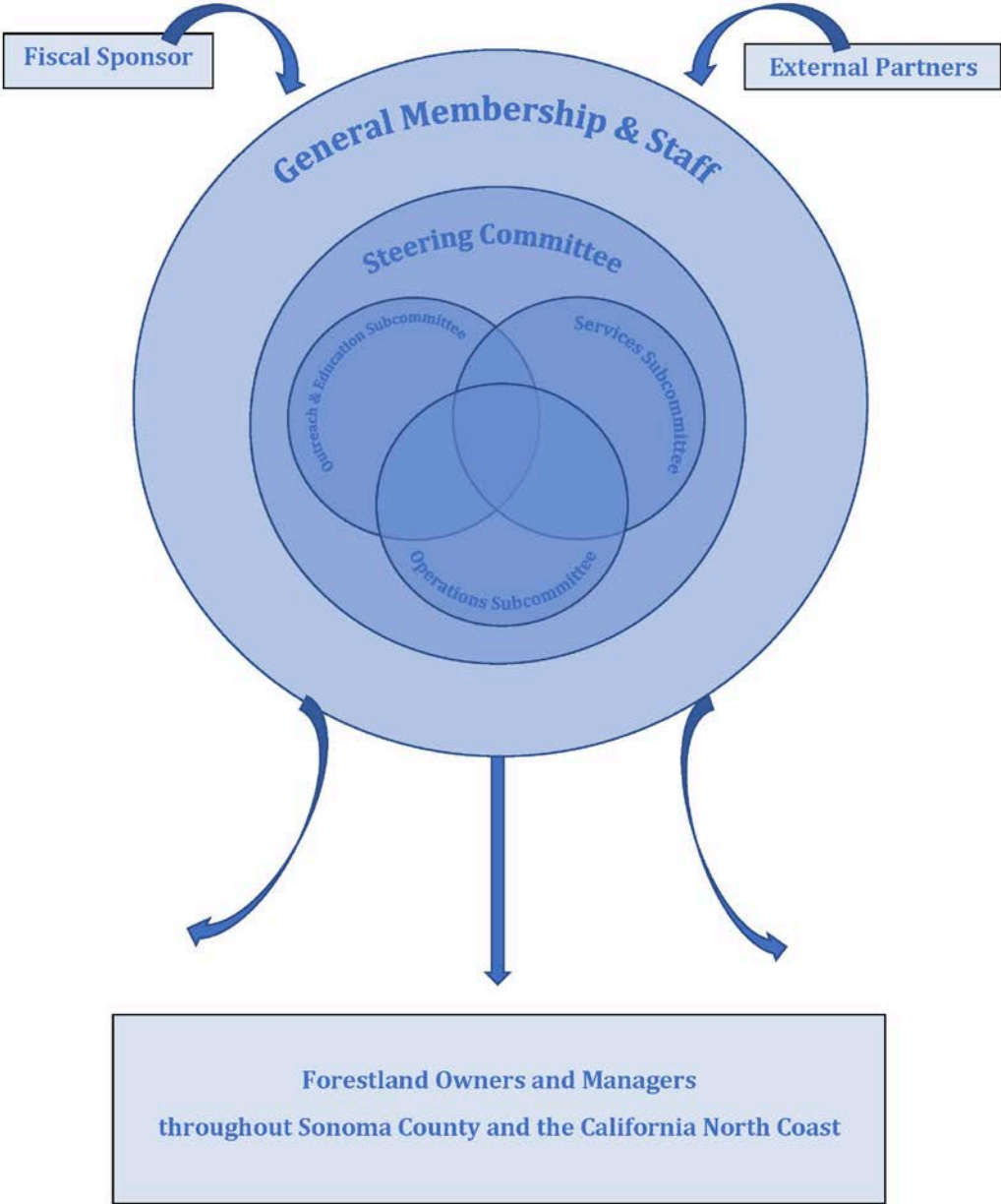


Figure 1. The structure and governance of the Forest Working Group.

Working Group

The Working Group is the collective membership of the Forest Working Group. The Working Group meets regularly to conduct Forest Working Group business, share

information, provide feedback to subcommittees and the Steering Committee, and make recommendations for the improvement of the Forest Working Group. Working group members are landowners, land managers, government and NGO representatives, private consultants, and interested members of the public.

Steering Committee

The Forest Working Group Steering Committee is open for any Working Group member to join. The Steering Committee makes decisions on behalf of the Working Group and consults with the Working Group and its subcommittees, when appropriate, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Forest Working Group as a whole. The Steering Committee also facilitates the Two-Year Work Plan and makes the final approval for these documents. The Steering Committee reviews scopes of work for staff during the development of funding contracts and proposal development, collaborating with involved parties to ensure staff is completing work with the direction of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee reviews any requests for engagement between the Forest Working Group and another external organization (e.g. letters of support, project partnerships, etc.) and must approve them before they can be performed.

Education and Outreach Subcommittee

The Education and Outreach Subcommittee fulfills tasks within the Education and Outreach section of the Forest Working Group Work Plan through developed tangible actions. The Education and Outreach Subcommittee has autonomy in developing actions and carrying out its Work Plan tasks but may seek feedback from the Working Group, Steering Committee, and other subcommittees. Members of the Education and Outreach Subcommittee oversee changes to Forest Working Group website. The website provides information on news, events and information relevant to forest landowners and managers. The Education and Outreach Subcommittee reports out to the Working Group on activities and progress on at least a quarterly basis.

Operations Subcommittee

The Operations Subcommittee fulfills tasks within the Operations section of the Forest Working Group Work Plan through developed tangible actions. These are generally administrative tasks. The Operations Subcommittee has autonomy in developing actions and carrying out its Work Plan tasks but may seek feedback from the Working Group, Steering Committee, and other subcommittees. The Operations Subcommittee reports out to the Working Group on activities and progress on at least a quarterly basis.

Services Subcommittee

The Services Subcommittee fulfills tasks within the Services section of the Forest Working Group Work Plan through developed tangible actions. The Services Subcommittee has autonomy in developing actions and carrying out its Work Plan

tasks but may seek feedback from the Working Group, Steering Committee, and other subcommittees. The Services Subcommittee reports out to the Working Group on activities and progress on at least a quarterly basis.

Fundraising Subcommittee

The Fundraising Subcommittee fulfills tasks within the Fundraising section of the Forest Working Group Work Plan. The Fundraising Subcommittee consists of the members of the Steering Committee. The Fundraising Subcommittee has autonomy in developing actions and carrying out its Work Plan tasks but may seek feedback from the Working Group and other subcommittees. The Fundraising Subcommittee may also take requests from the Working Group and other subcommittees to fundraise for specified purposes. The Fundraising Subcommittee reports out to the Working Group on activities and progress on at least a quarterly basis.

Staff

The Forest Working Group Coordinator is a member of the Working Group and supports the implementation of the Work Plan and all other related activities, including its Steering Committee and subcommittees, through coordination duties as described in the funding contract Scope of Work. The Coordinator supervises any interns. Interns support Coordinator duties and may also support additional tasks as capacity allows, and as approved by the Steering Committee.

Fiscal Sponsors

A fiscal sponsor is necessary to fundraise, grant write and receive and manage all funds and grants on behalf of the Forest Working Group.

External Partners

External Partners are organizations not part of the membership that collaborate with the Forest Working Group.

DECISION MAKING

The Steering Committee is the decision-making body for the Forest Working Group. For a decision to be made, the majority of the Steering Committee members present at the meeting in which the issue is being discussed must not be in disagreement. If fewer than half of the Steering Committee membership are present at a meeting in which an item is being discussed, a decision cannot be made until input has been gathered from at least three-quarters of the Steering Committee membership. Decision making may happen at the monthly Steering Committee meeting, during a Working Group meeting or via email communication between the necessary number of Steering Committee members. Decisions will be documented in writing in meeting minutes or email.

UNALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES

Advocacy on Behalf of Forest Working Group

Forest Working Group members are restricted from acting under the auspices of the Forest Working Group when advocating for or against public policies (e.g. making policy recommendations). However, Forest Working Group members may provide information about policies while acting under the auspices of the Forest Working Group.

Continue the list of “What we are not”:

- We do not allow/promote/tolerate public shaming of any landowners for poor management of their forestlands. ← Could go in a Rules of Conduct section as well.
- What else?

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The Forest Working Group measures the success of its activities by the following metrics:

Number of forest landowners engaged in programming

Increases in forest landowner engagement are a measure of success since our goal is to make our services available to as many forest landowners as possible.

Retention of members in the Forest Working Group

Retaining active members of the Forest Working Group is a measure of success. Losing active members is a potential indication of poor performance. Exit-interviews should be conducted with leaving members to receive feedback on the Forest Working Group’s performance.

Feedback from members

The Forest Working Group solicits feedback from its membership on a regular basis (at least annually) to hear what members feel are its strengths and weaknesses.

APPENDIX A
Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group Membership

Current composition of the Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group:

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Kim Batchelder, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- Caitlin Cornwall, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Fred Euphrat, Forest, Soil & Water, Inc.
- Lisa Micheli, Pepperwood Foundation
- Penny Sirota, Friends of the Mark West Watershed
- Adriana Stagnaro, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Dee Swanhuysen, Greenbelt Alliance

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE

Lead: Kim Batchelder, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

- Jill Butler, Gualala River Watershed Council
- Earle Cummings
- Arthur Dawson, Baseline Consulting
- Rob Gross, Landowner
- Ray Krause, Friends of the Mark West Watershed
- Judy Rosales, Coast Ridge Community Forest
- Caerleon Safford, Fire Safe Sonoma, Permit Sonoma
- Penny Sirota, Friends of the Mark West Watershed
- Adriana Stagnaro, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Dee Swanhuysen, Greenbelt Alliance

OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Lead: Adriana Stagnaro, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District

- Kim Batchelder, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- Dee Swanhuysen, Greenbelt Alliance

SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE

Lead: Devyn Friedfel, Pepperwood Foundation

- Caitlin Cornwall, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Fred Euphrat, Forest, Soil & Water, Inc.
- Jason Mills, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Jason Wells, Sonoma Resource Conservation District

FUNDRAISING SUBCOMMITTEE

Made up of the members of the Steering Committee as noted above.

WEBSITE SUBCOMMITTEE

Lead: Adriana Stagnaro, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District

- Jill Butler, Gualala River Watershed Council
- Christopher Fohner, Coast Ridge Community Forest
- Dee Swanhuysen, Greenbelt Alliance

STAFF

- Adriana Stagnaro, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District

FOREST WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

- Kim Batchelder, Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- Jill Butler, Gualala River Watershed Council
- Jared Childress, Audubon Canyon Ranch
- Jeanne Chinn, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Caitlin Cornwall, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Anne Crealock, Sonoma Water
- Earle Cummings, Sonoma Resource Conservation District
- Arthur Dawson, Baseline Consulting
- Brook Edwards, The Wildlands Conservancy
- Shanti Edwards, Sonoma Land Trust
- Fred Euphrat, Forest, Soil & Water, Inc.
- Christopher Fohner, Coast Ridge Community Forest
- Devyn Friedfel, Pepperwood Foundation
- Rob Gross, Landowner
- Susan Haydon, Sonoma Water
- Kathleen Kraft, Salmon Creek Watershed Council
- Ray Krauss, Friends of the Mark West Watershed
- Drew Loganbill, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Virginia Mahacek, Sonoma County Office of Recovery and Resiliency
- Lisa Micheli, Pepperwood Foundation
- William Miller, California Department of Parks and Recreation
- Jason Mills, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Brent Reed, Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation
- Ron Rolleri, Sonoma Resource Conservation District
- Judy Rosales, Coast Ridge Community Forest
- Tom Roth, Sierra Club
- Caerleon Safford, Fire Safe Sonoma, Permit Sonoma
- Penny Sirota, Friends of the Mark West Watershed
- Adriana Stagnaro, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Steven Swain, University of California Cooperative Extension

- Dee Swanhuysen, Greenbelt Alliance
- Kasey Wade, Santa Rosa Junior College
- Rich Walker, CAL FIRE
- Jason Wells, Sonoma Resource Conservation District

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

- Fledgling Fund
- Sonoma County Conservation Action
- Sonoma State University, Center for Environmental Inquiry
- Roger Sternberg
- University of California, Berkeley, College of Natural Resources

FISCAL SPONSORS

- Fledgling Fund