

**Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group
Two-Year Work Plan**

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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 Sonoma County's forests across landscapes and through generations.

GOAL

Protecting, enhancing and understanding Sonoma County's forestlands.

STRATEGY

To provide the public, forest landowners and managers, and related professionals with access to a community of practitioners and a forum for learning and collaborating.

AUDIENCE

The Working Group membership is made of forest landowners and managers, natural resource managers and researchers, fire management practitioners, and related professionals. Our outreach audience is the public at large and specifically, small-acreage forest landowners.

The Working Group aims to maintain a *diverse* membership – inclusive of the broad spectrum of Sonoma County's forestland stakeholders – of which there are forestland owners, managers, enthusiasts, dependents, investigators, advocates, and more. There is also diversity in the demographics of these various stakeholders as well: age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, political affiliation, and religious belief or ideology. The Working Group welcomes and seeks diversity in its membership.

WORK PLAN ACTIVITIES

The Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group Two-Year Work Plan activities are focused on 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 often represent diverse organizations with differing roles within the fields of forestry and conservation, and they leverage one another's knowledge and technical expertise for achieving the Working Group's goal to protect, enhance and understand our 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.

Network Support

The Working Group will continue to provide network support, to its members and the public at large, to meet our mission. Providing a space for discussion, support and collaboration is one of the primary functions of the Working Group. The benefits of the Working Group network include participating in an on-going conversation with local forest stakeholders about the state of forestry and individual members' operations. We discuss best practices, challenges, opportunities, advice and resources. We collaborate to achieve the greatest outcomes. From our conversations, new solutions arise to common problems. Any member of the public can participate in the network.

NET 1. Hold monthly public meetings and provide participants the time to one, discuss their needs, two, provide updates on their projects and three, collaborate with other members on their issues.

NET 2. Maintain an email listserv that facilitates individuals in making contact with the group and other individuals so as to take advantage of the benefits of the network.

NET 3. Maintain focus on our mission, engage in productive discourse and maintain respectful conversation. Refer to [the Charter](#) for rules of conduct

NET 4. Invite diversity in the network. Encourage participation by the diversity of community and those not represented currently. The community is defined by those who reside and work in Sonoma County, not those that own land in Sonoma County. The network is also open to partners in neighboring counties.

- I. Create a subcommittee to address our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion needs
- II. Measure success using a baseline
 - a. Take a demographic snapshot of who is in the Working Group at this time
 - b. Track changes over time with goals
- III. Establish goals for increasing diversity, equity and inclusion. Some possible groups to outreach to:
 - a. Tribal representation or partnership
 - b. Latinx community
 - c. PG&E employees and contractors (ex: Davey Resources Group)
 - d. Vineyards and other agricultural landowners with forestland
 - e. A diverse professional profile across the labor force. Those that we are lacking currently include landscapers, forest crews, Licensed Timber Operators, PG&E vegetation management crews. What others are we missing?
 - f. Diversity in landownership in terms of where the land is: coastal, inland, upland, riparian, wetland, fire footprint, etc.
- IV. Make a plan for engaging those groups identified and for taking suggestions for new groups as needs arise

NET 5. Support work force development opportunities in the following industries: forestry, fuels management, woody biomass utilization and wood products, natural resource management, and other industries that are found to directly support the sustained maintenance of Sonoma County's forests.

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.

In the activities outlined below, the Working Group will focus its educational messaging around these core topics to expand the public's understanding of these concepts as they relate to Sonoma County's forestlands: silviculture, water conservation, wildfire management and resilience, biodiversity, wildlife habitat and fisheries, ecosystem services, and land protection and restoration.

EDU 1. Keep informed of forestry issues, best management practices and services available, to ensure we are providing each other and the public with updated information.

- I. Stay informed on forestry issues and emerging fields and science
- II. Learn from technical service providers about the best practices for reaching the public, specifically land managers, with technical information
- III. Stay informed of regional planning and other initiatives being conducted by local, state or federal governments, universities and other institutions, NGOs, etc.
- IV. Update Working Group public-facing documents as needed to reflect new information

EDU 2. Sonoma County has numerous valued watersheds and subwatersheds, many of which are forested. Support partners in gathering and maintaining data about watershed conditions. Data may be related to: vegetation type, percent cover, riparian cover, forest health or status, species of concern, vegetative and nonvegetative fire fuels conditions, hydrology and erosion, acres in agriculture, number and size of developed parcels, wildland-urban interface conditions, invasive species or disease prevalence and risk, acres burned in wildfire, acres burned in controlled burn, presence of active watershed council, fire safe council or other, organizing body, existence of a watershed management plan, acres addressed under forest management plan, acres planned forest treatments, etc.

Watersheds include, but are not limited to:

- Alexander Valley
- Austin Creek
- Blucher Creek
- Bodega Bay
- Coastal Tributaries
- Dry Creek
- Dutch Bill Creek
- Ebabias Creek
- Estero Americano
- Freezeout Creek
- Green Valley-Atascadero
- Gualala River
- Jenner Gulch
- Lower Russian River
- Maacama Creek

- Mark West Creek
- Middle Russian River
- Mill Creek
- Petaluma River
- Pocket Canyon
- Russian Gulch
- Salmon Creek
- Scotty Creek
- Sheephouse Creek
- Smith Creek
- Sonoma Creek
- Stemple Creek
- Sulphur Creek
- Willow Creek

EDU 3. Host or co-host five brown bags presentations and five workshops per year. Advertising strategies include advertising to Working Group listserv, e-newsletter recipients, partner organizations, watershed councils, fire safe councils, neighborhood associations and county supervisors.

First priority is to co-host events with partners, to leverage their efforts and assist them in reaching a wider audience.

Second priority is to organize original events that are collaborative, timely and help fulfill an unmet need. At every chance possible, collaborate with partners. Examples of timely topics are: addressing drought in winter and wildfire in spring, so as to get ahead of the curve. We should aim to address urgent matters when they arise. Events may be held virtually or in-the-field. The latter is especially helpful when demonstrating a best practice. Virtual events are the most accessible and can be viewed afterward if recorded and shared on the website.

- Host an annual presentation from CALFIRE reps on summer fire outlook in spring.

Third priority are topics of interest that are not timely or do not fill an existing need.

List of popular topics:

- How-To Stewardship education for land managers (planning, implementing, funding, monitoring, forming neighborhood councils, advocating)
 - How and why to develop neighborhood collaborative forest management plans
 - 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
 - Working Together: How to Have Stronger Collaborations with Neighbors
 - How Forest Landowners can Utilize Agencies and Nonprofits
 - Prescribed Burn Associations and Prescribed Burns, How They Work, Timing, and By Whom
 - Forestry 101: Forest Management for Erosion Control, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improvement, Fuels Reduction, and Forest Health, Regulation (Forest Practice Rules, home defensible space)

- How to recover from a wildfire
- How to start a fire safe council
- Past, present and future conditions of Sonoma County forests (traditional practices, historic conditions, trends over time, climate change impacts, future projections, diversity of ecosystems)
 - Traditional Oak Management with Clint McKay, Pepperwood Preserve
 - Forest Habitat and Forest Species
- Defining our work conceptually (preservation, restoration, conservation)
 - Defining preservation, restoration, and conservation
 - What is a healthy forest? Exploration of different forest types and ecosystems, considering climate change.
- Special topics (fire management, riparian forest care, oak restoration, urban forestry)
 - Understanding Forest Hydrology Implementing scalable biomass management strategies for Sonoma county
 - Riparian Habitat and Forests^(OBJ)
 - Prescribed burns with the University of California Hopland Research and Extension Center
 - Re-Oaking plan for Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Laguna Foundation replanting fire impacted areas in Sonoma County. Oak survivorship after fire.
 - Wildland fire destruction: Opportunities for improvements
 - How the CA Urban Forest Council is working to address urban forestry in the WUI
- Understanding policies and planning initiatives (PG&E settlement funds, Vital Lands Initiative, County CWPP, ordinances)
 - Community Wildfire Protection Plans with Caerleon Safford, FireSafe Sonoma
 - How Vital Lands Initiative works to protect Sonoma County forests
 - PG&E vegetation management policy and implementation
 - Riparian Combining Zone Code and riparian forest fire fuels management
 - Riparian Habitat, Species, Understanding Forest Hydrology, and Lake and Streambed Alteration 1600 Permits
 - Defensible Space Ordinance Enforcement Conversation with County Fire, Fire Safe Sonoma, CALFIRE, ORR, SEC, PG&E
- 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 4. Facilitate or attend five House Meetings or Community Meetings per year. Might include gatherings of neighborhood groups, HOAs, councils, or events put on by county supervisors. These

events are intended to support landowners in addressing local forest issues, understanding the funding and technical assistance available to them, and getting help coordinating across property lines.

EDU 5. Provide information on available financial, technical and educational 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 land owners and managers across Sonoma County.

Provide this information in the following ways:

- Maintain this information on the Working Group Website
- Link to assistance on each quarterly newsletter
- Offer at every public educational event
- Offer technical assistance "open house" as annual event

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

- List contact information for Registered Professional Foresters, tree service providers, and other skilled laborers for forestland owners. Check with professionals to get their approval on listing.
- Post proceedings from the 2017 North Coast Forest Conservation Conference.
- Build out the Learning Library
- Post recordings of past events
- Fundraise through a Donation webpage

EDU 7. Maintain communications with members and the public at large.

- Produce quarterly e-newsletter to keep members informed of events, opportunities and resources. Will be sent to General Membership as well as any member of the public that requests to receive it.
- Manage the Working Group's email listserv to share Working Group news and materials and host relevant conversations.

EDU 8. Invite partners and interested parties to participate in the Forest Working Group network, particularly those that represent areas of forestry not already represented in the network. Survey past participants who have not returned to the Working Group and ask what their motivation is for leaving and how the Working Group could better meet their needs.

EDU 9. Develop a video for publication on the Working Group website. Video will inspire and educate forest landowners to take action as stewards of their woods.

- The video will feature multiple forest landowners, fire survivors, foresters, and the trees and wildlife themselves. Video will focus on reasons landowners steward the woods, funding and technical resources available to them, how the Forest Working Group can help, and what this specific moment in history means to our community: climate change requires that we enhance every carbon sink and prepare our ecosystems for inevitable wildfire.
- Video will be hosted on the website and shared out in quarterly e-newsletter.

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 and County Update of the CWPP as it regards forests. Appoint a few contacts or small committee to this task.

- Support CWPP team in identifying, quantifying and prioritizing values/assets on the landscape to protect with projects
- Act as a conduit for reaching partners and players that can provide useful input
- Review plan sections and approve

SER 2. Support any opportunities to improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of permitting processes for sustainable forest management practices. Support the preparation of Program Timberland Environmental Impact Report for forests in Sonoma County.

SER 3. If requested, respond to requests for input from agencies, such as California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, USDA's NRCS and others, to provide input into developing statewide forest policy.

SER 4. Learn more about what the opportunities are for small landowners to participate in voluntary markets such as State Air Resources Board Cap-and-Trade market and others.

SER 5. Engage potential partners for future joint projects and/or enhancing outreach efforts. Noted partners include the Taking Action for Living Systems, 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. If requested, 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. Communicate forest conservation's role in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

SER 8. In response to the wildfires of fall 2017 on the Coast Range landscapes of Northern California, the Working Group created the Taking Action for Living Systems (Living Systems) group. Living Systems 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. Living Systems will create a series of short term and long-term goals to implement county wide recovery plans. Ways to engage: Coordinating on the conference idea, or a workshop on fuel treatments are two ideas for actions. Another idea is partnering on a public meeting about Living Systems work. We could invite the people in the NEC (Natural Enterprise Complex) areas to interface with the Working Group.

SER 9. Stay informed and engaged in the County's allocation of funds for vegetation management with the PG&E settlement money from the 2017 North Bay Fires.

SER 10. Address forest conversion threats in Sonoma County. Begin by identifying the threats, understanding the dynamics at play, and then discuss what capacity (if any) the Working Group has to address those threats. Education is the number one role the Working Group can play in preventing conversion. One possible action the Working Group can take is to build alliances with at-risk landowners/land types to prevent conversion. Steering Committee will help decide.

- Quick brainstorm on conversion threats:
 - Wildfire
 - Vineyards and other agriculture
 - Residential and commercial development
- Quick brainstorm on potential alliances to prevent conversion:
 - Policymakers
 - Farm, ranch, and vineyard owners and managers
 - Out-of-area buyers and local realtors
- Quick brainstorm on educational opportunities:
 - Research historic veg and how it has been converted

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 additional avenues of fundraising beyond grant moneys.

FUN 5. Ask for donations from participants at events, workshops, etc.

FUN 6. Fundraise on the website with Donation webpage.