



The Sierra
Meadows
Partnership

Collaborative meadow
restoration and protection

3-year Work Plan

Regulatory Work Group

May 2018

Introduction:

Background and link to Meadow Strategy

Permitting and environmental compliance is currently an onerous, time consuming and costly component of meadow restoration projects and is recognized as a bottleneck for implementation on the ground. There is a need to improve the permitting processes for meadow restoration in order to increase the pace and scale of restoration to meet the targets of the Sierra Meadows Partnership as well as state and federal agencies. The purpose of the Sierra Meadows Regulatory Work Group is to address this need. Our goal is to streamline permitting and environmental compliance for meadow restoration projects so that meadow restoration can occur at a pace and scale that allows for landscape level change. Our work directly supports the SMP Strategy Approach 2 “Enhance regulatory and institutional funding capacity and coordination” with the desired outcomes of improving permitting processes and obtaining support from key regulatory agencies. Direct support, coordination, and involvement of relevant regulatory agencies will be a critical component to accomplish the SMP Strategy goal of restoration of 30,000 acres of meadow within 15 years.

Streamline: to make (an organization or system) more efficient and effective by employing faster or simpler working methods.

The Permitting Work Group’s approach for addressing bottlenecks and improving permitting and compliance processes is threefold. We will: 1) provide improved guidance on existing permitting and environmental compliance pathways; 2) engage permitting agencies to foster support for meadow restoration and to provide technical support; and 3) work to identify and implement opportunities to streamline permitting and environmental compliance processes.

Deliverables for the Permitting Work Group will include a “Permitting and Compliance Guide Book” and summaries; SMP regulatory advisory group; a set of sample meadow restoration permit documents; a permitting resources document; a permitting challenges and potential solutions white paper; codified CEQA pathway for meadow restoration projects; pilot approach to streamlining NEPA.

Task list:

Task			Completion Date
1	Finalize permitting and compliance guidebook		
	1.1	Engage staff from outstanding agencies to review (USFS –NEPA, CDFW - regulatory, Central Valley RWQCB)	July 2018
	1.2	Incorporate feedback and finalize	Sept 2018
	1.3	Develop summary/schedule documents based on guidance document	Oct 2018
2	Establish agency contacts and regulatory advisory group		
	2.1	Engage staff from outstanding agencies to participate in/with work group (USFS-NEPA, CDFW Regulatory and CEQA/Prop 1, Central Valley RWQCB)	May 2018
	2.2	Establish appropriate structure of the working group, given constraints of agencies	May 2018
3	Develop permitting and environmental compliance reference materials		
	3.1	Identify appropriate format/information outlet for materials (eg. Sierra Meadows Clearinghouse, webpage)	May 2018
	3.2	Collect example permit documents	July 2018
	3.3	Solicit agency review of examples and make available	Sept 2018
	3.4	Solicit agency tips and important links	July 2018
	3.5	Compile into regulatory tips and resources document and make available	Aug 2018
4	Organize meadow restoration permitting and environmental compliance training		
	4.1	Engage agency staff to participate	Sept 2018
	4.2	Develop/collect materials	Sept 2018
	4.3	Organize and host event	Nov 2018
	4.4	Make training materials available	Dec 2018
5	Develop regulatory challenges and solutions white paper		
	5.1	Collect information about permitting challenges from SMP (and agencies?)	July 2018
	5.2	Collect information about opportunities and solutions from other examples and agencies	Sept 2018
	5.3	Synthesize information into draft white paper	Nov 2018
	5.4	Solicit feedback and incorporate edits	Jan 2019
	5.5	Use white paper to evaluate viability of solutions (benefits, feasibility)	April 2019
	5.6	Develop information needed to make solutions viable (eg. suite of restoration techniques)	April 2019
6	Establish CEQA pathway for meadow restoration projects		
	6.1	Engage CDFW and RWQCB at appropriate level to discuss options for clear CEQA path	Sept 2018
	6.2	Investigate examples from other agencies/programs	Sept 2018
	6.3	Synthesize outcomes and circulate to SMP	Feb 2019
7	Evaluate options to streamline NEPA with US Forest Service		
	7.1	Engage Forest Service at appropriate level to discuss options for/benefits of programmatic/batched approaches	July 2018
	7.2	Research existing examples and examples from other programs	Oct 2018
	7.3	Identify options for partners to provide capacity	Oct 2018
	7.4	Synthesize outcomes and circulate to SMP	Feb 2019
8	Implement novel regulatory approaches and pilot project		

	8.1	Work with agencies to implement regulatory solutions and novel approaches	Nov 2019
	8.2	Test solutions and approaches on a project	Aug 2020
	8.3	Incorporate new approaches and lessons learned in updated version of the guidance document	Nov 2020

Task Descriptions:

Task 1: Finalize permitting and compliance guidebook

Under this task the Regulatory Workgroup will facilitate additional agency review of the permitting and compliance guidance document. This will include identifying and engaging staff from agencies that have not yet provided review including the USFS, CDFW and the Central Valley Waterboard. The workgroup will incorporate new edits from this review, as well as feedback from the recent SMP meetings, including drafting a section related to tribal consultation. We will finalize Version 2 of the guidance document and make it available to the SMP and the public. We will also develop a set of brief documents summarizing the regulatory pathways and schedule for projects on public and private land.

Deliverables		Date
1	Permitting and Compliance Guidance Document Version 2	July-18
2	Summary Documents	Oct-18

Task 2: Establish agency contacts and regulatory advisory group

Under this task we will engage additional agency staff to ensure appropriate representation from each agency with a central role in permitting and environmental compliance for meadow restoration. Recognizing that agency staff have differing capacity to engage with the group, we will work with agency staff to develop levels of engagement that are compatible with their constraints. We envision developing a tiered structure for the group, with a more directly engaged core workgroup and a regulatory advisory group that the workgroup will engage at strategic points to advance our work.

Deliverables-examples		Date
1	Agency Contacts Established	May-18
2	Regulatory Advisory Group Structure	May-18

Task 3: Develop permitting and environmental compliance reference materials

Under this task we will develop a set of example permit applications and environmental compliance documents, and a regulatory resources reference document. We will work with SMP member and agency staff to compile a set of example permit applications and environmental compliance documents for projects under a variety of scenarios. We will work with agency staff to ensure examples meet their needs to help to streamline their review processes. We will also compile a set tips for completing permitting and links to important guidance resources provided by the agencies. We will determine the best format for this information to ensure that remains current. We will work with the SMP communications group to determine the best means of making these documents available to SMP members and the public.

Deliverables-examples		Date
1	Example Permit Documents	Sept-18
2	Regulatory Tips and Resources Document	Aug-18

Task 4: Organize meadow restoration permitting and environmental compliance training

Under this task we plan to organize at least one meadow restoration and environmental compliance training. We will identify target audiences and gauge interest to determine topics, format, duration and number of trainings. We will engage agency staff to develop materials and to participate as presenters. We will recruit participants, organize and host the training event. We will make training materials available to the SMP and public.

Deliverables		Date
1	Permitting and Environmental Compliance Training Event	Nov-18
2	Training Materials Available	Dec-18

Task 5: Develop regulatory challenges and solutions white paper

Under this task we will develop a white paper that identifies significant regulatory challenges and evaluates the benefits and feasibility of potential solutions. To ensure we capture a variety of experiences, we plan to survey SMP members about their most significant permitting challenges. We will also discuss permitting challenges with agency staff to ensure we address agency to agency challenges as well. We will use this set of challenges as the basis for discussions with agency staff about potential solutions. We will research existing examples and work with agency staff to identify potential solutions, given regulatory constraints. Once we have identified a suite of potential solutions, we will evaluate potential benefits and feasibility. We will compile the results of this effort into a white paper that can we use in discussions with decision makers and to inform next steps. We will identify and develop information needed to make solutions viable, as applicable and implement approaches with each respective agency.

Deliverables		Date
1	Regulatory Challenges Survey	July-18
2	Draft White Paper	Nov-18
3	Final White Paper	April-19

Task 6: Establish CEQA pathway for meadow restoration projects

Under this task we will engage funders and regulators to determine a clear and repeatable CEQA path under common scenarios for meadow restoration projects (eg. state funded projects on federal land). We will engage key agencies such as CDFW, who has become a key funder of meadow restoration in addition to their regulatory role, and the regional water quality control boards, who have regulatory authority. We will participate in opportunities to engage on this topic as they arise, such as submitting comment letters. We will also research options for batched or programmatic approaches to CEQA that might afford an economy of scale. We will synthesize outcomes and share with the SMP.

Deliverables		Date
1	CEQA Pathway Memo	Jan-19

Task 7: Evaluate options to streamline NEPA with US Forest Service

Under this task we will explore options to streamline NEPA for meadow restoration projects with the US Forest Service. This may include programmatic or batched approaches, or means of increasing forest service capacity to complete NEPA through partnership. We will research examples from other project types and programs and discuss options with US Forest Service Regional NEPA staff. We will synthesize outcomes and share with the SMP.

<i>Deliverables</i>		<i>Date</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>NEPA Opportunities Memo</i>	<i>Feb-19</i>

Task 8: Implement novel regulatory approaches and pilot project

Under this task we will work with agencies to implement the solutions and novel regulatory approaches identified under Tasks 5-7 and pilot these approaches with an on-the-ground project. Specific activities will be dependent on the outcomes of the previous tasks, but may include workshops with agency staff and working with the other SMP groups to provide the information needed to develop programmatic approaches. Depending on timing, we are hoping to coordinate with the SMP design workgroup to utilize the same pilot project to test our new approaches. We will then incorporate lessons learned to inform our approaches and produce an updated version of the permitting and environmental compliance guidance document.

<i>Deliverables</i>		<i>Date</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>Solutions Implementation Workshops</i>	<i>Nov-19</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Pilot Project</i>	<i>Nov-20</i>

Budget- Costs per task(s)

Item	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total
Task 1			\$2,250.00
Personnel - Julie Fair	\$45.00	50	\$2,250.00
Task 2			\$1,715.40
Personnel - Julie Fair	\$45.00	30	\$1,350.00
Travel - mileage	\$0.55	120	\$65.40
Conference expenses	\$300.00	1	\$300.00
Task 3			\$1,800.00
Personnel - Julie Fair	\$45.00	40	\$1,800.00
Task 4			\$5,930.80
Personnel - Julie Fair	\$45.00	80	\$3,600.00
Personnel - Jess Strickland	\$50.00	20	\$1,000.00
Travel - mileage	\$0.55	240	\$130.80
Meeting expenses	\$700.00	1	\$700.00
Agency participation	\$500.00	1	\$500.00
Task 5			\$11,318.00
Personnel - Julie Fair	\$45.00	180	\$8,100.00
Personnel - Jess Strickland	\$50.00	40	\$2,000.00
TBD additional workgroup participant	\$50.00	20	\$1,000.00
Travel - mileage	\$0.55	400	\$218.00
Task 6			\$5,209.00
Personnel - Julie Fair	\$45.00	80	\$3,600.00
Personnel - Jess Strickland	\$50.00	30	\$1,500.00
Travel - mileage	\$0.55	200	\$109.00
Task 7			\$6,368.00
Personnel - Julie Fair	\$45.00	70	\$3,150.00
Personnel - Jess Strickland	\$50.00	40	\$2,000.00
USFS Participation	\$1,000.00	1	\$1,000.00
Travel - mileage	\$0.55	400	\$218.00
Task 8			\$87,872.50
Personnel - Julie Fair	\$45.00	280	\$12,600.00
Personnel - Jess Strickland	\$50.00	80	\$4,000.00
Travel - mileage	\$0.55	500	\$272.50
Supplies	\$1,000.00	1	\$1,000.00
Permit Fees	\$5,000.00	1	\$5,000.00
Field Surveys	\$25,000.00	1	\$25,000.00
USFS - NEPA	\$40,000.00	1	\$40,000.00
Totals			
Total 2018 (Tasks 1-4)			\$11,696.20
Total 2018-2020 (Tasks 5-8)			\$110,767.50
Total 2020 (all Tasks)			\$122,463.70

Costs through 2018

\$11,696.20

Costs through 2020

\$122,463.70

Participants and Contacts

Workgroup Lead: Julie Fair (530 478 0206 x 206)

Secondary Lead: Sheli Wingo

Participants

Name	Affiliation	Contact
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