

Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance October 16th Meeting Summary

Host: Laura Beardsley (Whitebark Institute Executive Director)

Facilitator: Stacy Corless (Consultant for Whitebark Institute)

Meeting Support: Kristen Pfeiler (ESCOG Wildfire Coordinator), Claire Galaway (Whitebark Institute), Tracy Misiewicz (Whitebark Institute), Annie Crowley (Whitebark Institute), Heidi Porras (Whitebark Institute)

Attendees: Attendees include representatives from , Alpine Watershed Group, Big Pine Paiute Tribe, California Deer Association, Caltrans District 9, City of Bishop, Eastern Sierra Council of Governments, Firewise USA, Inyo County, Inyo National Forest, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Lone Pine Paiute Tribe, Lone Pine Firesafe Council, Mammoth Fire, Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation, Mono County, National Forest Foundation, Mono County Fire Chiefs Association, Sierra Business Council, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Southern California Edison, Town of Mammoth Lakes, TSS Consultants, University of California Irvine, Whitebark Institute

Introductions/Recognition:

Laura thanked Southern California Edison for providing funding for lunch at this meeting.

Exercise: What questions do you have?

After reviewing the timeline and accomplishments thus far in ESWA planning and development, participants were asked to write a question about ESWA. Main themes from questions:

- Balancing needs (differing, sometimes competing) across region, having regional representation, equity, hear voices from communities
- Concern about how to maintain and manage ESWA—funding, staffing, etc; keep it efficient and sustainable
- How to sustain capacity for wildfire resilience
- How to prioritize projects
- How does Alpine County fit in
- What are goals for 2026 (and beyond)?
- How does ESWA engage with public?
- Are there additional groups/people who should be invited?
- How do we get major, sustained funding?

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ESCC Subcommittee Discussions

The Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance meeting focused on planning the next phase of the collaborative effort to enhance wildfire resilience across the region. Participants discussed the group's history, goals, and the importance of having broad representation from regional partners/interested parties in the planning process. Subcommittees presented their work on governance, projects, and communications, and attendees were encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback. The next and final meeting of the 2025 collaborative planning effort is November 19.

Governance Subcommittee

The group discussed the governance subcommittee's recommendations for organizational structure, decision making and an agreement.

Tribal Partnership and Inclusion

The group supported the recommendation that ESWA should meet with individual Tribes in the region to ask how each Tribe would like to engage with/be part of ESWA.

Organizational Structure:

Steering Committee

Strong consensus for a smaller steering committee to guide ESWA, emphasizing the need for neutrality, equitable representation, and consideration of regional representation; .

Working Groups

Confirmed consensus for including working groups (the preferred title) in ESWA's org structure; discussed potential focus areas of working groups: communication, projects/prioritization, infrastructure, plan development, campfire management, Firesafe/Firewise representation, and funding coordination; recognized need for ad hoc and standing working groups

Meetings

Meeting frequency: support for quarterly or bi-annual; hybrid format; consider holding in-person component in different locations throughout the region and include field trips. Consensus from Zoom participants for bi-monthly or quarterly meeting schedule.

Decision Making: Consensus Seeking with Blocking Criteria

Attendees confirmed support for consensus-seeking decision making, with blocking criteria. They asked the governance subcommittee to bring back specific guidelines, including definition of terms used.

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Agreement: Move Forward with MOU

Consensus for developing an MOU; governance subcommittee to review draft and bring to November meeting.

Communications Subcommittee

- General support for continued focus on internal communications, including creating a comprehensive contact database, streamlining partner updates, and improving grant collaboration. The communications subcommittee proposed using a form to gather detailed information from members and suggested implementing a standing agenda item for grant opportunities. Concern about not losing in-person communication through updates at meetings.
- Need to balance asynchronous communications (a tool such as Slack) with in-person meetings, while addressing technology and access gaps. Suggestion to look into Basecamp.

Projects Subcommittee

Project Dashboard Development

- Continuing development of dashboard using Airtable and ArcGIS to track projects in different stages, with plans to categorize and prioritize them for regional collaboration and decision-making. Tracy requested that participants provide any ideas or specific questions in writing during the lunch break.

Updates: Regional Priority Plan and Community Wildfire Defense Grant

Laura presented information about the Regional Priority Plan survey, part of the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity program grant that Whitebark Institute received (on behalf of the region) from Sierra Nevada Conservancy. She asked ESWA partners to review and add to a regional project list by October 27th for submission to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy by October 31st. Kristen gave a short presentation on the \$4.6 million US Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant that ESCOG recently received—great news for the region, more information to come at a future meeting.