

## Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance June 5, 2025 Meeting Summary

**Host:** Laura Beardsley (Whitebark Institute Executive Director)

**Facilitator:** Stacy Corless (Consultant for Whitebark Institute)

**Co-facilitators:** Wendy Grasseschi (Mono County Wildfire Coordinator), Kristen Pfeiler (Inyo County Wildfire Coordinator)

**Whitebark Institute Staff:** Annie Crowley, Heidi Porras, Porscha McRobbie

**Attendees:** Over 40 individuals representing more than 20 agencies and organizations

- **Agencies and organizations represented:** Alpine County, Alpine Watershed Group, Bishop Paiute Tribe, BLM Bishop Field Office, CAL FIRE, Caltrans, CDFW, Eastern Sierra Land Trust, ESCOG, Firewise USA, Independence FSC, Inyo County, Inyo National Forest, Lone Pine Community FSC, Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District, Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access, Mono County, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Sierra Business Council, Southern California Edison, Town of Mammoth Lakes, University of California, University of California Cooperative Extension, Wheeler Crest FSC, Whitebark Institute

### Activity Results:

#### Part 1: *Why? Goals*

**Existing ESWA Goals:** Increase the pace and scale of projects, enhance communication and act as a repository for resources and information

#### **Proposed Additional Goals:**

- Build wildfire resilience across the Eastern Sierra by working together
- Create readiness to receive state block grant funding
- Create regional capacity through partnership, lessen administrative burdens, increase efficiency and impact
- Build project efficiency through partnership/governance
- Create and implement a regional wildfire/landscape resilience plan

#### **Notes/Additions from 6/5:**

- Understanding cross-jurisdictional efforts (mapping, project status)
- New approach/mindset, not just repeating what was done before
- Landscape orientation
- Find agreement, consensus on priorities
- Tribal presence in ESWA leadership
- Cooperation, coordination across land ownership
- Understanding impact of management changes
- Integrating the Wildfire Adapted Community model into the ESWA goals
- Create a repository of knowledge of hydrant locations and responsibilities; collaborate with local fire depts for hydrants, they know locations

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- Add a component of mailing addresses for information to those not on internet

### **Part 2: *Who? Categorize Your Agency/Entity***

#### **List categories/functions of ESWA participants**

- Tribal: Bishop Paiute Tribe
- Federal: USDA Forest Service (Bridgeport RD/HT, INF), NRCS, BLM, National Park Service
- State: CDFW, CAL FIRE BDU, Caltrans, Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- Local Gov: ESCOG, Inyo County, Mono County, RCD
- Special District: RCD
- Fire Agency: CAL FIRE BDU, USDA FS, BLM, local fire departments, Mono County
- Fire Safe/Firewise: USFS, Inyo County, Mono County, Firewise Regional Coordinator, Independence FSC, Lone Pine FSC/project planner, Firewise Alabama Hills
- Nonprofit/NGO: MLTPA, Eastern Sierra Land Trust, Sierra Business Council, Whitebark Institute, Valley Outdoors, Lone Pine Firemen Association, Alpine Watershed Group
- Consultants: Whitebark, CDFWSteve Nelson, Stacy Corless, Peggy Lobnitz
- Businesses: Sierra Business Council, private sector businesses
- Academic: UC Irvine, UCCE, Cerro Coso, Inyo and Mono Adult Education, Sierra Business Council
- Land Manager: USDA FS (Humboldt Toiyabe, Inyo National Forest), BLM, CDFW, LADWP, Inyo, Mono, private landowners
- Funder: BLM, CAL FIRE BDU, CDFWINF, Mono County, NRCS, Whitebark Institute
- Grantee: USDA FS, BLM, Inyo, Mono, RCD, ESCOG, Sierra Business Council, Whitebark, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Alpine Watershed Group
- Planning: BLM, USFS, NRCS, Inyo, Mono, Whitebark, MLTPA, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Caltrans, CAL FIRE
- Implementation: USDA FS, BLM, Whitebark, Inyo County, Mono County, MLTPA, Valley Outdoors, Whitebark Institute, RCD, Caltrans, Town of Mammoth Lakes, Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- Outreach/Communications: public information officers, Whitebark
- Convener: Whitebark Institute

Participants are asked to individually review the categories/functions and add their agency (or others?) to multiple categories. If there is more than one representation per entity/agency, ask them to work together to categorize their agency/entity.

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### Notes/Takeaways:

- Fewer stickies/participants under Tribal, consultant, Business
- Missing under roles: National Park Service, Ag producers, fire recovery/restoration, local fire district should be their own category; media; businesses, contractors, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, education

### Part 3: *What?*

Participants reviewed activities, considerations under each category and added notes (these notes are in parentheses below):

Participants then placed dots under the activities they felt were most important to focus on now. The number reflects the number of dots associated with that activity.

### Governance:

13 – Administration: Address Capacity Issues and Build Capacity (coordinate and consolidate, build capacity to keep money flowing continuously, operating on different timelines)

11- Tribal Stewardship/Management Partnership, Consider and Include Tribal Nations [also under Projects] (define “consider” related to “include Tribal Nations)

12- Fiscal Services/Act as Fiscal Agent, Grant Management/Applying for Block Grant Fund/Office of Grant Administration (financial agreements, recognize different types of \$ and types of orgs/match, identify which types of agencies are best positioned to administer different colors of money; obtaining grants, understanding decision making authority and fiscal services)

11 – Org structure, charter, MOU, look at models for regional collaboratives (establishing interagency agreement to move money to implement projects, use collaboratives that already exist)

7- Avoid/Reduce Duplication (don’t establish a whole new agency, RCD?)

7- Asset Mapping/Identifying Members’ Strengths

6- Determine Decision making authority (incident command system scales well, establish guidelines for grant management and directed funding, model of governance to avoid need for total consensus)

Meetings and Membership

Compliance

Involvement—Hispanic community, non-English speaking population

### Projects:

16- Multi-jurisdictional Partnership: Early Collaboration

15- Project List and Prioritization: possible criteria = agency mandates, funding and match priorities, co2 emissions, wildlife impacts, WUI, existing projects/ongoing efforts (what is a project? Funding based, lead based, scale and timeframe, standard phases and definitions; integration of recreation projects, supports workforce working in multiple areas; create &

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manage database with easy access for all partners identify completed and potential projects; determine prioritization framework that addresses all parties' concerns)

13- Address Pain Points: Staffing, Agency Mistrust, Competing for Resources (housing; related community infrastructure, housing healthcare; rapid regulatory changes, parochial knowledge, ie, local water systems)

10- Workforce Development, Services: ("grow our own"—reduces cost of work, opportunities for local students and youth; wildfire prevention can be a business opportunity; nurture businesses to support home hardening, fuels reduction, biomass, tax-based funding won't always work; link partners with opportunities like ACE and other small implementation groups/partners; explore opportunities for youth crews/workforce)

6- Community Input: meaningful engagement in project development; Build on existing efforts, local knowledge (tap into the local knowledge base even if it defines landscape management mistakes/mishaps; continuity)<sup>3</sup> Environmental Planning and Permitting (Project management and facilitation; integrated data and modeling tools; holistic resource planning—water resources, watershed management)

5- Reduce Gap between concept to funding and implementation

4- Research, Data, Science (link between research, data and science and implementation; assign someone to feed new fire science information into the organization as it becomes available, then use it as a basis for communication to general public; group as environmental planning and permitting, community input and research/science)

1- Project tracking (treatment tracker)

Financial analysis (incentivize private sector for full cycle)

### Communications:

21- Internal Resource Sharing, communication among members (use slack or similar; project management database such as Airtable or Asana; need access to reporters, local newsletters to advertise events, share best practices on outreach and public events to avoid duplication)

14- Support for community level communications (resident outreach and communication, develop and distribute materials to groups – stop reinventing the wheel for educational materials; the Fire Safe/Firewise groups are struggling to get a database of property owners they can use to foster community involvement, need partnership with county agencies in getting information)

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12- Regional communications and Messaging (create systems—internal/ESWA, External (public), create authoritative source to filter out noise; efficiency/don't flood the channel, multi-level model needed; good communication will take diligent care and feeding; visitor/resident/business owner outreach, after-event communication to community is critical; different tools for different audiences;

8- Visitor Outreach (Utse USFS permittees to talk to visitors)

6- Outreach Events/Help Your Neighbor (PIO model, acute vs long-term comms; resident outreach and education)

5- Communication about Projects (Utilize local newspapers like Eastern Sierra Now)

3- Communicating what a healthy forest is (Region-wide book groups at local libraries, helping the community “unlearn” prior beliefs and embrace new understanding based on latest science)

### Partner Updates:

- Allan Pietrasanta/Sierra Business Council: Sierra business Council and partners, including the Trust for Public Lands and Northern Sierra Partnership are unveiling the Wildfire Solutions Coalition, a new statewide entity with the goal to increase sustained funding for wildfire resilience. One of their asks involves reauthorization of the state's Cap and Trade program (now being called “Cap and Invest” ), and 10 percent of proceeds are dedicated for wildfire work. Learn more at [wildfiresolutionscoalition.org](https://wildfiresolutionscoalition.org).
- Matt Driscoll/Sierra Nevada Conservancy: The SNC board met and approved \$10 million for a wildfire resilience grant program, starting next week, for implementation only projects - must have NEPA or CEQA done, firebreak/fuel break/veg management are examples of the types of projects that could be eligible. At the July 17 meeting, Matt can provide an in-depth update, including Prop 4 considerations. The timeline for proposals? Rolling quarterly proposals, low likelihood for September board meeting, awards coming out of December board meeting, proposals completed around September, work needs to commence before October 2026 and be ‘shovel ready.’
- Carol Snow/CAL FIRE: Our wildfire prevention grant solicitation is temporarily put on hold because it will be combined later in the summer. Money will be assigned based on what makes sense, not a lot of education or wildfire prevention projects, and reach out to unit foresters. CAL FIRE can also provide an update at the July 17 meeting.
- Laura Beardsley/Whitebark: Laura, very happy and excited about the success from wildfire resilience month; also launched the “Ignite Awareness” campaign, building an understanding of personal actions to prevent wildfire ignition. Reach out for those materials. ESCCRP implementation: immediately adjacent to communities in Mammoth,

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upcoming closure on Panorama Dome. Whitebark has hired a new environmental program director.

- CAL FIRE: Sean Landavazo, Eastern Sierra Division Chief: Update on the Baxter fire and Fish fire, resources from federal, local, and state and mutual resources best in the state, thanks to all federal and tribal partners.