

Counting Carbon: Assessing Potential Climate Change Benefits From Forest Management

Communications plan for the Alder Springs Fuels Reduction Stewardship Project

I. Background

In 2006, the Mendocino National Forest, Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW), and Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development received funding from our National Office to partner with the State of California for a project that will demonstrate and evaluate potential market opportunities for carbon sequestration and carbon offsets. This project will take place in conjunction with the Alder Springs Fuels Reduction Stewardship Project and will monitor fuels management treatments in order to accomplish the following:

- Quantify greenhouse gas emission reductions resulting from fuels management treatments
- Evaluate and quantify potential revenues in current and future carbon markets
- Evaluate potential for renewable energy credits and incentives associated with biomass energy production

This project is of great relevance due to increasing interest in carbon management, renewable energy production, and because of the magnitude of national forest system lands in need of fuels reduction treatments and project funding. The Forest Service is supporting this project in order to assess the potential for generating possible market incentives for fuels treatments, which would help extend our landscape treatment capability.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this communications plan is to ensure effective and timely communication throughout the implementation of the Alder Springs Fuels Reduction Stewardship Project and associated research. A primary goal of this plan is to ensure that partners, cooperators, and other key audiences understand the purpose and potential outcomes of the research being conducted, and to garner support from those audiences for this project and future proactive efforts that seek to understand the potential benefits of forest management for mitigating climate change.

A variety of methods and tools will be used in order to accomplish the communications goals for this project. Tools and methods to be employed range from simple email messages and news releases to web based information and field tours. Within this communication plan, the general approach is to use these methods and communications products not only to inform audiences about the project's progress, but also to educate audiences about the science we are testing and the efforts of the Forest Service and our partners to mitigate climate change.

III. Goals

- 1) To ensure timely and effective communications with our target audiences
 - a. Objectives:
 - i. Ensure that the project web information and InBrief are updated and distributed within 24 hours of a significant project milestone or event
 - ii. Ensure that key agency line officers including the R5 Regional Forester, Mendocino National Forest Supervisor, and PSW Station Director are conversant in the latest project developments by providing them with weekly updates
- 2) To manage expectations surrounding the project's research component
 - a. Objective:
 - i. Ensure that target audiences clearly understand the purpose and scope of the research by developing talking points that accurately describe the research and by ensuring that at least one of those points are used in all briefing products
- 3) To maintain or enhance the credibility of our agency and partners regarding forest management and climate change
 - a. Objectives:
 - i. Develop a key message and talking points that characterize the unique and proactive nature of the research, and incorporate at least one of those talking points into all external correspondence.
 - ii. Maintain a positive image of the work being conducted and the net benefits of both the fuels reduction and research by ensuring the use of consistent messages. Updates for factual information and messages should be made for all communications products within 24 hours.

IV. Target Audiences

- 1) Internal
 - a. Regional Forester (Bernie Weingardt)
 - b. Deputy Regional Forester (Beth Pendleton, Tom Tidwell)
 - c. Regional Leadership Team
 - d. R5 Ecosystem Conservation Staff (Art Gaffrey)
 - e. R5 State and Private Forestry (Laurie Tippin, Julie Lydick)
 - f. PSW Station Director (Jim Sedell)
 - g. Mendocino National Forest Supervisor (Tom Contreras)
 - h. Grindstone District Ranger (
 - i. Mendocino NF Employees
 - j. WO Research (Ann Bartuska)
 - k. WO
 - i. Ecosystem Services Coordinator (Rob Doudrick)
 - ii. Ecosystem Services Specialist (Beth Egan)

DRAFT
02/05/2007

- iii. National Woody Biomass Utilization Team Leader (Ed Gee)
- iv. Assistant Director, Forest and Rangeland Management (Tony Tooke)
 - v. Legislative Affairs
 - vi. Office of Communications
 - vii. International Forestry

2) External

- a. State of California (Doug Wickizer)
 - i. Winston Hickox (Chair of the AB32 Market Advisory Committee)
- b. Winrock International
- c. California Forestry Association (Steve Brink & Dave Bischell)
- d. American Forest Resource Council
- e. Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
- f. California Biomass Consortium (Bryan Jenkins, ED)
- g. Trade publications (SAF, CFA magazine, others?)
- h. Federal Elected Officials (Coordinate w/ Stephanie Gomes)
 - i. Senator Boxer
 - ii. Senator Feinstein
 - iii. Congressman Herger
 - iv. Congressman Thompson
 - v. Congressman McNerney
- i. State and local elected officials
 - i. Glenn County Board of Supervisors
 - ii. Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa
 - iii. State Senator Sam Aanestad
 - iv. Governor Schwarzenegger
 - v. Lt. Governor Garamendi
- j. Local Media
- k. Regional Media (Coordinate w/ Matt Mathes)
- l. PG & E
- m. US EPA
- n. Environmental Organizations

V. Project Timeline and Action Items

- 1) Contract Advertisement – January 19, 2007
 - Action Items:
 - i. Update InBrief and distribute to internal audiences and partners.
 - ii. Contractor advertisement placed in newspaper of record
- 2) Contract Award – April 14, 2007
 - Action Items:
 - i. News release to external audiences
 - ii. Update InBrief. Distribute InBrief and news release to internal audiences and partners

DRAFT
02/05/2007

- 3) Research work begins – as soon as project sites are accessible (last spring 2007)
 - Winrock crews begin plot measurements for pre-treatment conditions

- 4) Project work begins – No earlier than July 15, 2007 due to Limited Operating Period
 - Action Items:
 - i. Update InBrief and distribute to internal audiences and partners
 - ii. Continue to update briefing papers, presentations, etc. as the project progresses.

- 5) Project timber operations completed, research operations continue – March 2009
 - Action Items:
 - i. Update InBrief and distribute to internal audiences and partners
 - ii. Continue to update briefing papers, presentations, etc. as research progresses.

- 6) Final work completed, research findings published – 2 to 3 years following completion of timber operations.
 - Action Items:
 - i. Evaluate findings for potential political/public interest. This may result in a need for a new communications plan.
 - ii. At a *minimum*, finalize InBrief and distribute internally and to partners; and...
 - iii. Distribute news release to external audiences

Additional Action Items	Responsibility
Once operations have begun, provide a tour for Regional Forester Bernie Weingardt	Tom Contreras
VIP tours as requested	TBD
Provide Regional Leadership Team presentations as needed or requested	Bruce Goines, Mark Nechodom
Develop and maintain a project information package for distribution	MNF, R5, PSW Public Affairs Reps.
Develop project PowerPoint and update when InBrief is updated	MNF, R5, PSW Public Affairs Reps.
Misc. communication product development (before/after photos, media tour, b-roll, fact sheets, talking points, etc)	MNF, R5, PSW Public Affairs Reps.
Web-based information – Based from State and private forestry site at the regional level. Associated with biomass, and including carbon sequestration information.	MNF, R5, PSW Public Affairs Reps. w/web managers

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

DRAFT

02/05/2007

- Primary Regional Office Contact – Bruce Goines
 - RO Public Affairs contact – Jason Kirchner
 - Maintains communication with State of California (Doug Wickizer), MNF (Janet Flanagan), and PSW (Mark Nechodom)
 - Provides weekly updates to RO target audiences, with an emphasis on keeping the Regional Forester and Deputy Regional Foresters informed
 - Provides updates for WO NFS target audiences and serves as primary contact for WO NFS information requests

- Primary Mendocino NF Contact – Janet Flanagan (Project lead)
 - Nancy Mulligan as a backup contact
 - MNF Public Affairs contact – Phebe Brown
 - Maintains communication with RO (Bruce Goines) and PSW (Mark Nechodom).
 - Provides project updates as needed/requested to MNF Forest Supervisor and forest leadership team.

- Primary Pacific Southwest Research Station contact – Mark Nechodom
 - PSW Public Affairs contact – TBD
 - Maintains communication with Winrock International, other related research cooperators and consultants, RO (Bruce Goines), and MNF (Janet Flanagan)
 - Provides updates for PSW target audiences with an emphasis on keeping the Station Director informed
 - Provides updates for WO Research target audiences and serves as primary contact for WO Research information requests

- Dissemination of information to external audiences
 - Congressman Herger
 - MNF – Phebe Brown, coordinating with RO (Stephanie Gomes)

 - US Senators (Boxer, Feinstein)
 - RO PAC – coordinate with Stephanie Gomes

 - State and Local elected officials
 - MNF – Phebe Brown
 - State executive agencies
 - RO – Bruce Goines, (working with Mike Chapel, Chris Nota)
 - PSW – Mark Nechodom

 - Biomass Consortium

 - Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
 - MNF – Janet Flanagan

 - California Forestry Association & American Forest Resource Council

DRAFT

02/05/2007

- MNF – Nancy Mulligan will provide updates at their quarterly meetings
- Local Media
 - MNF – Phebe Brown
- Regional Media
 - MNF, R5, PSW Public Affairs Reps. coordinating with RO Matt Mathes
- Trade Publications
 - MNF, R5, PSW Public Affairs Reps.
- PG & E
 - MNF – Phebe Brown
- Academic and Technical Journals
 - PSW – Mark Nechodom
- Communications product development – MNF, R5, & PSW public affairs reps.

VII. Communications Plan Monitoring

- An annual review of the communications plan will be conducted in February of each year in order to ensure that the plan is still meeting the communications needs of the project. All of the project partners should participate.

VIII. Key Messages

1. This fuels project and the associated research are important first steps toward understanding how public forest management might contribute to mitigating global climate change.
 - I. Talking Points:
 - Although research models already suggest that there are likely climate change benefits to be gained from forest management, this is the first time those models are being tested on an actual forest management project.
 - There are three ways in which a fuels reduction project might reduce greenhouse gas emissions:
 - 1) Thinning the forest improves forest health, and a healthy forest absorbs more CO₂ from the atmosphere,
 - 2) Thinned forests are less likely to experience catastrophic wildfires that release vast amounts of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere,
 - 3) When the biomass from a thinning project is used to generate electricity, the net amount of carbon released into the

DRAFT
02/05/2007

atmosphere is lower than when fossil fuels are used to generate the same amount of energy.

- At its most basic level, this project is about “counting carbon.” If this fuels project saves more carbon than it releases into the atmosphere, then we will have shown a benefit for greenhouse gas reduction.
2. The Forest Service is supporting this project in order to assess the potential for generating market incentives for fuels treatments, which would help extend our landscape treatment capability.

I. Talking Points:

- If the research demonstrates a net carbon benefit, a key goal of this project will be to determine whether new financial incentives exist for forest management projects.
 - Carbon credit trading markets already exist in Europe and Asia, and markets are beginning to take shape within the United States. If carbon credits can be gained from forest management, they may provide market incentives that would allow the Forest Service to treat more acres, improving forest health and reducing the threat of wildfire.
 - Although biomass from forest management projects already has some economic value for energy production, that value often is not enough to recover the costs of the fuels treatment. If a net carbon benefit is shown to exist then carbon credit trading has the potential to increase the number of forest health projects that the Forest Service can offer.
3. Although the carbon research associated with this project is important, this project will also accomplish essential hazardous fuels reduction work for the Mendocino National Forest.

I. Talking Points:

- The Alder Springs fuels reduction project was developed using the Healthy Forests Initiative and stewardship contracting authorities.
 - 1) The HFI streamlines paperwork and processes and reduces the time between when a hazardous fuels condition is identified and when work is actually implemented on the ground.
 - 2) Stewardship contracts permit the Forest Service to trade goods for services; that is, it allows private organizations or businesses to remove forest products such as trees, undergrowth and biomass in return for performing work to restore and maintain healthy forest ecosystems.
- The Alder Springs project was developed to create landscape change throughout areas considered at high risk for catastrophic wildfire for both wildland urban interface protection and ecosystem health.

DRAFT
02/05/2007

- The Alder Springs project on the Mendocino National Forest is one of nine participants in a national pilot effort that will demonstrate land management activities that maximize the effectiveness of fuels treatments.

IX. Key Contacts

Bruce Goines
Biomass Utilization Specialist
Pacific Southwest Region
USDA Forest Service
707-562-8910
bgoines@fs.fed.us

Mark Nechodom
Research Social Scientist
Pacific Southwest Research Station
USDA Forest Service
530-759-1706
mnechodom@fs.fed.us

Janet Flanagan
Eastside Planning Officer
Mendocino National Forest
530-934-1259
jflanagan@fs.fed.us

Jason Kirchner
Public Affairs Specialist
Pacific Southwest Region
USDA Forest Service
707-562-9014
jdkirchner@fs.fed.us

Phebe Brown
Forest Public Affairs Officer
Mendocino National Forest
USDA Forest Service
530-934-1137
pybrown@fs.fed.us