

SNAMP UCST Responses to Neutrality Questions, April 2010

We (the SNAMP UC Science Team) recently responded to *two emails* sent from members of the public regarding the neutrality of some of the SNAMP scientists. Mike Chapel, coordinator for the SNAMP agency partners, has asked us to post our responses to the SNAMP website, in order to maintain SNAMP's consistency to transparency.

Email #1

The first email was from Steve Brink (California Forestry Association) in regards to Reg Barrett's letter to the CA Dept of Fish and Game Commission. Reg's letter raised questions about the decision making process that lead up to their recommendation not to list the Pacific fisher under the California Endangered Species Act. Steve's email is copied below.

"John - so is Reg Barrett's subject letter (on University letterhead) the University's official position?"

- Steven A. Brink"

Response from John Battles to Email #1

Email from John Battles May 31, 2010 regarding Reg Barrett's letter to the Dept of Fish and Game Commission:

"I am not sure why you are asking me about Professor Barrett's position on the status of the fisher.

Perhaps it is because I am the lead scientist of the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project (SNAMP). Given our role third party role in SNAMP, all UC scientists have agreed to refrain from ad hoc commentary of issues that arise related to US Forest Service management plans at the SNAMP research sites (Last Change project, American River Ranger District in the Tahoe National Forest and the Sugar Pine project, Bass Lake Ranger District, Sierra National Forest). Professor Barrett is part of the SNAMP effort. I read his comments to the California Fish and Game Commission and I see no violation of the SNAMP neutrality agreement.

Below is the link to our statement. We do have a process for resolving stakeholder concerns about the Science Team. If you have specific issues related to SNAMP, please let me know.

http://snamp.cnr.berkeley.edu/static/documents/wp-uploads/SNAMP_Statement_of_Neutrality_20070815.pdf

From my perspective as lead scientist of SNAMP, Professor Barrett's position on the status of the fisher is just that -- Professor Barrett's position.

If you have concerns about his conduct as UC professor and use of UC letterhead, you should

contact the chair of his department, Professor Allen Goldstein (ahg@berkeley.edu) and/or the Dean of the College of Natural Resources, Professor Keith Gilles (gilles@berkeley.edu).

Given the fundamental principle of the SNAMP effort, one that emphasizes transparency in all respects, I am copying my response to Professor Barrett.

Regards,

John”

Email #2

The second email was from Ed Murphy (Sierra Pacific Industries) to inform John that quotes from several SNAMP scientists were included in the Sierra Forest Legacy’s motion for an injunction pending appeal against USFS logging projects under the 2004 Framework (motion filed on April 2nd to the 9th Circuit of Appeals). These citations from SNAMP scientists stated concerns about the 2004 Framework. Ed’s email is copied below.

“Attached are the Sierra Forest Legacy’s two main filings from today in its appeal to the Ninth Circuit on the Sierra Framework.

1. The urgent motion for an injunction pending appeal against almost all logging projects under the standards in the 2004 Framework. .
2. The Legacy’s opening brief on the merits of its appeal

In the injunction pending appeal on page 15 I believe you will find more evidence of some of the SNAMP project investigators not exactly waiting for the science to form adaptive management driven conclusions and suggested mgmt changes. I don’t know all the folks working on SNAMP but the two I highlighted I know are. I thought the Adaptive Management Process was to use 2004 Framework Activities to be undertaken in a highly monitored location so as to determine if these conclusions are warranted? See highlights below.

(owl expert Douglas Temple attesting that logging under the 2004 Framework “is likely to negatively affect the owl’s population in the Sierra Nevada.”); LER 1259

(owl expert Zachary Peery finding that logging under the 2004 Framework will “significantly threaten the owl’s present distribution and population”); LER 1228

(forest carnivore expert Dr. Reginald Barrett concluding that logging under the 2004 Framework will “threaten the fisher’s viability and distribution and contribute to the present trend towards extinction”); LER 188 (forest carnivore1 expert Dr. Thomas Kucera concluding that “implementing the 2004 Framework is likely to irreparably harm the marten and its habitat”).

I do not feel anybody should be stopped from expressing their opinions, but it makes public acceptance of the ideals of adaptive management a little hard to accept when the very researchers tasked with providing the information on which to adapt have such clear pre-conceived notions as to the outcome of experiments yet to be undertaken.

I am also not sure if the requested injunction is granted that the SNAMP harvest projects will be precluded. In Table A of this same document page 21 certain projects are being proposed by Sierra Forest Legacy as being exempt from their injunction request and that list may include the SNAMP projects, I am just not familiar enough with the project names to tell.

This is just a FYI so you are prepared if someone raises this to the SNAMP folks. Call if you want to discuss my numbers are below.

Ed Murphy

Response from John Battles to Email #2.

Email from John Battles April 2010 regarding SNAMP scientists' quotes in the Sierra Forest Legacy's brief:

"We will have to dig into the six volumes of excerpts of evidence (LER's) to see where the SFL drew these excerpts.

We are aware of Doug Tempel's statement. The Team acknowledged his statement as a violation of the SNAMP Neutrality agreement. The problem was not his opinion but the fact that he used preliminary data from SNAMP related research to support his claim. We will track down the series of responses we posted and forward them.

As for Reg Barrett, he has been involved in wildlife management issues in the Sierra Nevada for many years. He did agree to the SNAMP Neutrality agreement. But the Neutrality is limited to SNAMP sites and SNAMP research. As academics, we respect the principle of academic freedom; our neutrality was limited to our role as third party experts. Here is the link to the agreement:

http://snamp.cnr.berkeley.edu/static/documents/wp-uploads/SNAMP_Statement_of_Neutrality_20070815.pdf

Also the agreement was not in place until September 2007.

The SNAMP research projects (Sugar Pine in the Sierra NF and Last Chance in the Tahoe NF) are not in Table A. So while the SFL has been very involved in the SNAMP process, the SNAMP projects have gained no exception from their request.

My guess is that the statements in the injunction, aside from Temple's, predate the SNAMP effort, an effort with the ideal of using active experimentation to address uncertainty about management actions. All the scientists involved have agreed to present the SNAMP research results in an integrated fashion with input from the entire team of researchers. However, many members of the team have a history of research on the issues (hence their status as experts). This history is part of the public record. Also we would not be involved unless there was scientific uncertainty about the impact of the planned forest management on other ecosystem resources. So a hypothesis, such as the fisher aspect of SNAMP, that states that planned forest

management will have a negative impact on fisher populations is scientifically defensible. Just as the hypothesis that the SPLATs will modify fire behavior across the landscape is valid based on our understanding of fire science and model predictions. The goal of SNAMP is to robustly test these hypotheses and quantify the impacts.

It would be ideal if all stakeholders simply gave SNAMP the seven years to conduct the study and wait for the conclusions, but the debate continues on many fronts.

I am copying this response to Ann Huber. She is the academic coordinator of SNAMP and she is initially responsible for handling concerns regarding neutrality.

Regards,

John”

Response from Ann Huber to Question #2.

Follow up email from sent in April 2010, regarding SNAMP scientists quotes in Sierra Forest Legacy Brief:

“As John mentioned, my position as Academic Coordinator covers questions about the UCST Statement of Neutrality. Per the terms of the Statement, all SNAMP PIs have agreed to refrain from endorsing or criticizing USFS management actions on the SNAMP study areas.

I have checked all of the LER's that quote SNAMP scientists in this brief and confirmed that they pre-date the SNAMP project, with the exception of Doug Tempel's statement. Therefore, with the exception of Doug's, they do not violate the terms of the Statement. The response that the team drafted regarding Doug's statement is attached. This letter was distributed at the public SNAMP Annual Meeting that year (2008), and it was an agenda item for discussion at the meeting. I am including this so you can see how the Science Team responded to the question of their neutrality in the past.

I also asked the SNAMP PIs that were quoted in the brief for their response regarding their neutrality and their work on SNAMP. The responses echoed John's statements below - the statements quoted in the brief were carefully made based on the best available science at the time. On SNAMP, each team has clearly and publicly stated their hypotheses, and they are setting out to test these hypotheses with their work on SNAMP, again, based on what is known currently about their subjects of study. If their results are shown to dispute these hypotheses, they hope to be the first to publish those results.

Please let me know if you have any further questions regarding the Statement of Neutrality.

Ann”