A Brief on SNAMP for the External Oversight Committee

May 7, 2009

Overview of the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project (SNAMP)

In 2005, the State of California and US Forest Service asked the University of California to serve as a neutral third party to assist in developing an adaptive management and monitoring process consistent with the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment. UC assembled a team of researchers, the UC Science team (UCST), to carry out this task.

The goal of SNAMP is to learn how to use an adaptive management and monitoring system to understand ecosystem behavior, incorporate stakeholder participation, and inform the implementation of adaptive management for Forest Service lands in the Sierra Nevada.

SNAMP Membership

SNAMP is comprised of three equal partners: the UCST, the public, and the state and federal agencies that comprise SNAMP's Memorandum of Understanding Partners (MOUP).

UCST is comprised of researchers from the University of California, University of California Cooperative Extension, UC Merced, and the University of Minnesota. MOUP is comprised of the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Resources Agency along with several of its departments -- the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the California Department of Water Resources, the California Department of Fish and Game.

SNAMP Research

SNAMP has two study sites. The northern study site, Last Chance, is located in Tahoe National Forest. The southern study site, Sugar Pine, is in Sierra National Forest.

Specifically, SNAMP researchers are studying the effects of applying prescribed forest fuel reduction treatments on

- Fire behavior and forest ecosystem health
- Wildlife (focusing on the Pacific Fisher and California Spotted Owl), and
- Water quality and quantity

A team of scientists is also studying the adaptive management and the public participation process used for this work. Each of these groups has an associated UCST research team, and all are supported by the UCST Spatial research team. The Spatial team provides support for the other science teams through spatial data acquisition and analysis.

The study is designed to collect data using a BACI approach (Before and After treatment data collection in Control and Impact sites). It is designed to last seven years (2007-2013) and includes:
- 2 years of pre-project data collection
- 2 years of implementation and data collection
- 1 year of ecosystem recovery and data collection
- 2 years of post-project data collection

The collective research of the UC Science Teams, together with the input from public and MOUP stakeholders, will create a multi-disciplinary understanding of forest ecosystem responses to forest management and the inevitable trade-offs that are involved in forest management decisions. The study designs, applications, and results are discussed during regular stakeholder forums that will help guide future agency management decisions.

The Role of the External Oversight Committee

The SNAMP Statement of Neutrality lists three main purposes for the External Oversight Committee. The first two concern oversight, and the third for conflict resolution.

1) Provide guidance to the UCST regarding its efforts to act as a neutral third party of experts. In this regard, UCST may enlist the wisdom of the Committee to provide advice on questions or issues concerning the academic freedom of UC Science Team members.

2) Report to the ANR Associate Vice-President regarding performance of the UCST and the efficacy and wisdom of the University's service of this sort to the State of California.

3) If conflicts arise that cannot be resolved internally, the UCST lead PI will ask the external oversight committee to review the issue. The external oversight committee will then report guidance and insights back to the UCST that the UCST will then consider in creating a final resolution to the specific issue.

Already in Year 3 of the project, we have encountered situations in which questions of academic freedom of UCST members have been raised. We do not anticipate that this need will diminish as the project continues.

So far, the UCST has been able to resolve conflicts internally, and our consensus-based decision making approach has been successful. However, it is possible that we will someday need the help of the Oversight Committee.