

SNAMP Quarterly Meeting – Q2 2011

Notes

Date and time: Thursday, July 14, 2011, 1:00 - 2:30 pm

Location: Conference call

Participants:

UCST: John Battles, Maggi Kelly, Kim Rodrigues, Rocky Gutierrez, Rick Sweitzer, Peter Hopkinson, Adriana Sulak, Susie Kocher, Zach Peery

MOUP: Mike Chapel (USFS), Dan Jiron (USFS), Barnie Gyant (USFS), Chris Fischer (USFS), Tray Biasioli (USFS), Michael Kellett (USFS), Crawford Tuttle (CDF), Todd Ferrara (CA Res Agency)

1) Budget and future of SNAMP

John described the funding situation facing SNAMP. Following recent presentations to USFS and to CA Secretary of Resources John Laird, 2011/2012 funding is on track, except for 2 outstanding issues:

- Fisher Team is short of money
- Spatial Team has no funding after August so unclear how to maintain graduate student on project.

Bigger question is how SNAMP should go forward under reduced budget. Dan has asked us to complete SNAMP in original 7-year timeframe. There are no 2012 budget numbers available yet, but we know funding will be reduced. Can SNAMP do good science at the relevant management scales under reduced budget? May have to cut back on some aspects of SNAMP. Will solicit advice from the SNAMP Grants Team first, then discuss with the public. This meeting is only the starting point for the discussion of what SNAMP can do in 7 years.

It looks reasonable to think that treatments will be finished by Oct. 2012. So there will be only 2 years to study the effects of treatments, and we will lose the 1 year of ecosystem recovery in the original plan, which was already at the limits of scientific credibility. Loss of the ecosystem recovery year will have important implications for owls, fisher, forest ecosystem health, maybe water. Then, after 2 years of research, there will be only a little time left to analyze and write after the final field season. We are going on the assumption that SNAMP will continue on a no-cost-extension into 2015 for analysis and writing. Some aspects of the project may go longer. Decisions about these matters will be made after the post-treatment data are assessed.

Team problems:

FEH: Doesn't make sense to measure tree response to treatments because trees take longer than 2 years to show a response.

Fisher: Analysis requires individual animal lifespans. Reduced post-treatment research time limits what Fisher Team can say. Fisher Team can't spin research effort up and down like Spatial, FFEH teams (neither can Water Team).

Rick said the biggest concern for the Fisher Team is amount of time post-treatment to study fisher response, especially at the population level – reproduction, survival. With the loss of the ecosystem recovery year, we may not have the best understanding of fisher reaction to treatment. It takes fishers a while to understand changes, like owls. We might not see either short-term or long-term effects of treatments. Fisher Team needs 40-50 fisher lifespans to understand population level impacts.

Value of fisher project is that it is long-term.

As regards the need for daily air surveillance to finish project, Rick said Fisher Team has already scaled back this year from 6 to 5 days/week. If Fisher Team has to pare back even further, Team will miss what is happening on the landscape.

Owl: CS owls also may take a while to react to treatments.

Rocky and Zach said that for the Owl Team, a big portion of SNAMP is the Eldorado study. It is not clear that the Eldorado treatments will be finished by October 2012, which make up ½ of the study samples. Concern that will have big impact on analysis.

Also, Eldorado study needs information on management activities on adjacent private lands. SPI is not providing this information, without which Owl Team won't get clear idea of what owls will do on a landscape level.

PPT: more concerned about being squeezed at end of SNAMP. If UCST is rushing to get results out by end of project, there won't be time for public feedback and for presenting final conclusions to public and other stakeholders. SNAMP needs to budget in time to close loop on active adaptive management, which is the whole point of SNAMP.

Susie said that PPT has worked extensively with stakeholders and teams in pre-treatment stage; there is a big need after treatment implementation and post-project to find out what was learned and to form recommendations for interpreting and using SNAMP information. She emphasized that SNAMP and PPT have commitments to go back to certain stakeholder groups to tell them SNAMP results.

Adriana wondered whether the grants team could work on obtaining additional funding for the final survey.

Water: Can scale back and model some effects.

Wildlife has the greatest problems with the reduced timeline.

John said that reduced timeline may result in short shrift being given to the integration of teams' analyses and to the evaluation of trade-offs between resources. UCST will have to rework plans and be frank about what we can do. It is hard for UCST to plan without an idea of the budget numbers.

Also need to look at post-SNAMP future – how SNAMP will inform other projects, to do with climate change, or carbon, for example. SNAMP is about to be first paired watershed experiment ever in the Sierra Nevada. SNAMP is ahead of the curve on what will be the Sierra Nevada USFS-wide treatment. Dan agreed that this is a good time for talking about post-SNAMP future, as Region 5 is revising its Forest Plan. Rick said that he will have a meeting with USFS wildlife biologist in a couple of days to discuss how SNAMP fisher data will affect new Forest Planning effort.

2) Future actions

Mike recommended that:

- a) UCST and MOUP should meet in person to discuss funding and the future of SNAMP. Meeting would need to occur after agencies have a clearer idea of their budgets (Dan: Sept/Oct for FS; Crawford: Oct for State); Dan said that we should have the USFS budget director at the meeting;
- b) then, UCST/MOUP should talk to stakeholder groups and ask for their feedback;
- c) and finally UCST/MOUP should take the proposals generated with input from UCST, MOUP, and stakeholder groups to agency leadership.

John said these meetings need to be frank discussions about priorities.

Maggi reiterated that the Spatial Team's budget needs to be addressed before October.

3) Fisher mortality

Barnie asked Rick how the cause of fisher mortalities is determined. Rick explained that they use DNA forensics to identify which predator killed fisher: bobcat, mountain lion, etc. They have developed species-specific key to id predator.

4) UCST Research Updates

Peter reviewed the status of SNAMP research and outreach activities (see attached UCST quarterly report for research updates).