

## SLO County Quarterly WMA Meeting

### UCCE Auditorium

Video recording:  [SLO WMA Meeting-20230126\\_140217-Meeting Recording.mp4](#)

January 26, 2023 2:00-4:00 p.m.

#### Attendees:

- Colleen Grant, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Ventura Office
- Matt Prendergast, National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Templeton Office
- Zella Redus, SLO County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures (Ag Dept)
- James Moore, SLO County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures (Ag Dept), **co-chair**
- Mark Skinner, Coastal Resource Conservation District (Coastal RCD)
- Jon Hall, Land Conservancy SLO (LCSLO), **co-chair**
- Pat Abel, landowner
- Jocelyn Prieto, SLO County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures (Ag Dept)
- Jonathan Briggs, SLO County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures (Ag Dept)
- Vincent Peinado, SLO County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures (Ag Dept)
- Kathryn Holt, SLO County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures (Ag Dept)
- Samantha Alvarez, Coastal Resource Conservation District (Coastal RCD)
- Alanna Kiefer, Coastal Resource Conservation District (Coastal RCD)
- Carolyn Geraghty, Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP)
- Jenn Fields, Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP)
- Karen Lowerison, SLO County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures (Ag Dept)
- Craig Duprey, SLO County Parks & Recreation Department
- Pete Sarafian, independent volunteer
- Kate Montgomery, SLO Beaver Brigade (SLO BB)
- Amy Smart, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District (US-LT RCD), **co-chair**

#### Roundtable introductions and organization updates (00:00 – 10:23)

#### Upcoming CDFA Grant for Ag Dept (10:24 – 20:40):

- The CDFA recently awarded the Ag Dept a \$42,000 grant. It will be in effect from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025. It was written to cover a broad area and multiple invasive weeds, so the Ag Dept can build on prior grants and previously started projects (for example, CDFA's 2020 grant that funded a project removing jubatagrass in Los Osos). The grant covers Los Osos, El Chorro Valley, and the Hwy 1 corridor, which means some county parks will also be included, further allowing the department to build on previous/existing projects. The department intends to secure drone services and is currently looking for a drone operator. The services of the CCC may also be utilized.
- There are issues with access to certain weed populations on foot. In particular, jubatagrass on the outskirts of Los Osos and Morro Bay. The CCC would be the ones to tackle those.
- Pete will send James some photos and possibly maps of jubatagrass locations.

- Amy and others will communicate with James about drone contacts. James has an operator in mind but wants to connect with Chris Greer first to see what his take is.
  - The operator James has in mind needs imagery at a certain quality level to make the spray pattern as accurate as possible, which is essential. Cal Poly might be able to help with the imaging, but this is not guaranteed because they must be able to provide images at that quality level.
- Pat asks what do you do with removed plant material? Do we have an incinerator?
  - Ag Dept: no, we cut and bag flowers/plumes; we dispose of that at the dump, the rest is either left or dumped.
  - Jon: says sometimes when you pull out a whole jubatagrass plant you can just flip it 180 degrees and leave it there, and it likely won't re-root.
  - Pete: Garbage company swore to him that their composting system would destroy all the seed heads.

#### **Phragmites spread and other flood consequences (20:40 – 38:15):**

- There's been so much damage on the shorefront; from Pismo to the Santa Maria river, there is lots of detritus dislodged and floating. There has been some communication with State Parks about deploying the CCC and hopefully collecting some *Carpobrotus* off the beach before it can get established.
- This is also how European beachgrass can scatter and re-root. There is a lot of surveillance to do just to see what has moved around the landscape.
- We need to do a lot of surveillance in floodplains, for example in the Lower SLO Creek Floodplain Preserve. Floodplains can collect weed seeds after storm events. Floodplain restoration sites can feel like they're starting from scratch after these kinds of storms.
- Oblong spurge drift is a particular concern in the SLO Creek/Camp SLO area.
- Survey is needed for *Arundo* spread as well.
- Kate asks: What can SLO BB amateurs do in a successful, meaningful way to help? For example, to cooperate with another organization, maybe to help collect/provide meaningful information?
  - Amy says that although funds for the US-LT RCD's waterway surveying project have been exhausted, survey information is always helpful, so SLO BB should feel free to pass it on. In addition, if any SLO BB members who are out and about and see clumps of either phragmites or *Arundo*, they can help by double-bagging them and disposing of them. Floating pieces from the storm are particularly easy to dispose of.
  - Jon suggests that SLO BB members familiarize themselves with CalFlora for the smartphone, because records on CalFlora can help support grant funding.
    - CalFlora has some educational videos on how to use their web site (**see resources 1 & 2 below**).
  - Cal-IPC sometimes comes to do trainings and if they have grants for statewide coordination they might be able to come do that for us.
  - There's also a grant for watershed restoration-type projects from CDFW and phragmites could be a good candidate (**see resource 3 below**).
- There is funding through NRCS for disaster relief. Call their office, Hilary Phillips is the District Conservationist in Templeton and is the contact. The application is really nuanced, so reach out to them if you need assistance (**see resource 4 below**).

- There are two different funding pools through NRCS; one can cover infrastructure in some cases.

#### **Loss of control of jubatagrass on Hwy 41 and upper Los Osos Creek (38:15 – 48:00)**

- There are a couple spots in the county with significant populations of jubatagrass:
  - One is in the north coast, just south of San Carpoforo Creek. The site is possibly private property. It's on a cliff on the western side of the road and would be very difficult to treat.
  - Another is on Hwy 41, just west of the Cerro Alto campsite, on the northern side of the road (35.4283143, -120.7601292).
    - James is working to communicate with CalTrans to work on scheduling lane closures so that we can access that population. He went in to talk to them recently but they're absolutely occupied by storm work. Will revisit that when things calm down.
    - Unfortunately, it might be going over the crest and getting into the wildlands, which may be National Forest land.
    - Amy has a site visit planned with CalTrans, if James sends her a synopsis of what the Ag Dept hopes to accomplish, she will pass it along.
  - A third site is near Los Osos Creek. If you look at the hills, there's a slide on the north face that's filling with jubatagrass (on the west side of the slide scar). The jubata can be found west up the hills almost to the top of Broaderson Peak. It would be difficult to access.
    - The property is accessed via Calle Cordoniz Road. That slide is on private land. James has been in contact with the landowners. That was the spot that inspired attempting to hire a drone operator. It would be almost impossible to get to on foot. As the trail follows the ridgeline, it ducks into the private parcel before it goes back to public land. One goal in the next couple months is to reach out to that landowner and see if they have a trail that can get us closer.
    - There are also some plants in the general area around the slide.

#### **Unscheduled general discussion (48:00 – 57:40)**

- Pete mentions that the Morro Strand has been totally restructured by flooding. The dunes may be infiltrated with debris that has washed in. James points out that John Sayers is probably aware.
- Bob Conlen, formerly of State Parks is now retired and hand-pulling sahara mustard in Los Osos.
- Pat asks, how do you restore weeded ground to prevent recolonization by invasives? Is there funding for that kind of restoration?
  - Yes. In fact, restoration tends to be more commonly funded than invasives removal.
  - It's difficult to accomplish with some weed removal. Some plants, like sahara mustard, colonize habitats that are normally left open/free from plants. Since there isn't anything native that "should" go there, it's hard to keep the space free from weeds.
  - It's also tough to source appropriate replacement seeds etc; can get prohibitively expensive.

- Vincent mentions that the sheep unit leader at Cal Poly runs a herd of goats that does grazing, and they can safely consume YST. They graze before it gets spiny, then you can come behind with an herbicide (**see resource 5 below**).
  - Cal Fire also has grants related to prescribed grazing for fuel reduction, although there are stipulations about it being around permanent infrastructure (**see resource 6 below**).

#### **Call for newsletter contributions (57:40 – 01:11:19)**

- James: The Ag Dept would like to try asking for a potential commitment to contribute in the future rather than asking closer to the newsletter due date. The goal of the newsletter is to be helpful to a wide, diverse population, but specifically relevant to the WMA community. The ideal articles do not have to be rigorous/scientific at all. It would be to the benefit of the WMA to include more contributions from outside the Ag Department.
- Contributions also do not have to be long, even one paragraph would be absolutely sufficient.
- Many WMA members have written articles/pieces for their own organizations, and occasionally the WMA newsletter will excerpt these articles, and in the online edition, link to the full version on the organization's own web site. To that end, if anyone has a piece in mind that has already been written, the Ag Dept is happy to cross-publish in that way.
- Unfortunately, we aren't in a position to use a newsletter e-mailing service so we lack data on how many people open/read the newsletter. We do have a robust mailing list with many people who are unable to attend the meetings.
- Nb, there is a copy of the January newsletter, update to include functioning links, that has been posted at the SLO WMA Cal-IPC site if anyone would like to check it out (**see resource 7 below**).

#### **Any remaining comments (01:11:19 – 01:15:38)**

- Orchards along SLO Creek near the 101 Avila exit. The USDA had some experimental plots there that got washed away.
- The drought monitor report came out today, half our county appear to be no longer in drought as an erroneous conclusion from precipitation numbers.
- A baby beaver rescued and sent to Pacific Wildlife Care, needed stitching in the tail so was transferred to a more intensive facility.

#### **Resources:**

1. [Very basic introductory video on how to upload plant sightings in CalFlora](#)
2. [All the videos published by CalFlora on YouTube](#)
3. [Restoration Grant Opportunities \(ca.gov\)](#)
4. [Disaster Assistance Programs \(usda.gov\)](#)
5. [The Goat Girls \(thecaligoatgirls.com\)](#)
6. [Wildfire Prevention Grants for Prescribed Grazing - Swanton Pacific Ranch - Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo](#)
7. [San Luis Obispo WMA – California Invasive Plant Council \(cal-ipc.org\)](#)