

CAT Interagency Forest Working Group Meeting
November 24, 2009
Draft Minutes

IFWG members or alternates present: Tony Brunello (CNRA), Lynn Terry (ARB), Crawford Tuttle (CAL FIRE), Kelly Birkenshaw (CEC), Marian Ashe (CalEPA), Jim Pena (USFS)

Introduction: Tony Brunello welcomed people back after a long hiatus due to furloughs. He reiterated IFWG goals to address Forest Sector mitigation actions in AB 32 Scoping Plan and Adaptation actions. He expects forestry climate actions to become more prominent internationally. Gary Nakamura will be the new IFWG co-chair from Board of Forestry. Meetings will be held quarterly.

Review of Task Group progress and work plans

(see <http://www.climatechange.ca.gov/forestry/documents/index.html>
“Current Projects” for work plans 1-3 and “Reports” for Task 4 report)

Task 1: *Develop and fund activities to improve the technical foundation of the State greenhouse gas inventory for the forest sector.* Linda Murchison, ARB reviewed the October 19, 2009 symposium on Forest Sector Greenhouse Gas Accounting and Assessment which brought together experts on forest and GHG inventory and measurement methodologies (ground-based and remote sensing); inventory, monitoring and reporting programs; trends and threats to carbon stocks; and potential frameworks for linking inventory and Scoping Plan implementation. A key issue moving forward is reconciling ARB’s inventory responsibility for statewide data and the need for finer scales of inventory information to track specific policies and actions. Another is ensuring adequate resources, staff expertise in remote sensing and analysis, and ground truthing. Next steps include follow-up with experts, finalizing work plan by end of 2009, and developing scope of work for inventory improvements and contracts in 2010.

IFWG and Public questions, comments and discussion.

- How will ARB link with regional and national inventory efforts?
- Need to continue CA inventory efforts while keeping track of national ones; can’t wait for perfect inventory
- Consider need to refine and track GHG subtargets for specific policies and activities
- Complexity of forest sector GHG processes; issues of confidentiality
- Forest sector may be able to exceed 5 MMT target. Are wood products counted? Is biomass energy considered carbon neutral? Are benefits of using wood (life cycle analysis) considered?
- Need methodology for tracking wildfire emissions
- Need to understand how we reduce wildfire emissions
- Need to consider ecological benefits of wildfires and impacts of biomass removal on nutrient cycling and growth

- Importance of considering fire rotation intervals.

Task 2: *Determine the effect of the State's existing forest and rangeland regulations and related programs on meeting the state's GHG goals, whether simple adjustments are needed, or whether more significant action is needed.* Cathy Bleier (CAL FIRE) reviewed the draft work plan, developed primarily by CAL FIRE and USFS with input by ARB and CEC. The work plan proposes to examine existing quantitative information about forest carbon stocks and sequestration and to review state and federal regulations, assistance and management programs, and planning processes to evaluate effects on forest GHG emissions and sequestration. It identifies linkages and coordination among Tasks 1, 2 and 3, the potential for short and long term deliverables, and resource needs for more detailed analysis.

IFWG and Public Questions, Comments and Discussion :

- Focus on key regulations and programs that affect forest sector GHG emissions and threaten no net loss; can't look at everything. Need to document and display effects of current programs.
- Work Group outputs can inform future Board of Forestry actions
- An assessment of program/policy effectiveness needs to link to inventory.
- Need to add biodiversity assessment into Task 2. State has to consider all impacts before implementation.
- Need to ensure public involvement in work plan development and implementation, including stakeholders with technical expertise.
- Time frames are ambitious. Recent THP responses to public inquiries about climate change impacts state that Forest Practice Act regulations are sufficient. Is independent analysis needed?
- CAL FIRE responded to recent CEQA analyses with best available information; new information continues to be developed.
- Need common approaches and criteria for program evaluation and review.

Task 3. *Identify or develop scientific, empirically based sustainability provisions or guidelines for energy projects using forest woody biomass and forest sector greenhouse gas emissions reduction projects that can be used consistently by all state and federal agencies. The goal is to better coordinate multiple state and federal programs developed to 1) meet greenhouse gas reduction goals for the forest sector and 2) produce sustainable, low carbon transportation fuels and electricity from forest biomass feedstocks.*

Jim McKinney (CEC) reviewed the work plan to develop a definition for sustainable forest biomass for CEC's AB 118 grant program and for ARB's Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCSF) program. The work plan builds on Tasks 1 and 2; will provide for public participation and scientific expertise; may include workshops, symposia, field trips; can support case studies and research (\$2 million); will consider certification options; and may produce recommendations to

Board of Forestry as needed. Activities may extend 2 years out. LCSF process is on a 2 year time frame.

IFWG and Public Questions, Comments and Discussion

- Overlap with Task 2? Yes. Task 3 builds on Task 2 but may add a third party review of regulations
- The Renewable Portfolio Standard doesn't require additional sustainability standards; only consistency with existing regulations
- How many woody biomass project applications does CEC expect?
- Keep Tasks 2 and 3 separate. Others suggested clarifying and consolidating Tasks 2 and 3.
- Which forum is right place for input? ARB's LCSF process or IFWG?
- Disagreement with assumptions that forests are overstocked due to fire suppression. Concerns about lack of snags and additional impacts to snags from biomass operations.

Task 4: Identify, develop, and promote clear incentives to assist private and public landowners to maintain and increase forest carbon stocks on their lands. This would include linking disparate efforts such as reducing wildfire risks, carbon offsets, biomass utilization, funding for conservation easements, direct state funding, or regulation changes.

Jim Pena, USFS, discussed the results of several meetings agencies and stakeholders which focused on helping private landowners avoid conversion, and increase sequestration through reforestation, reducing wildfires, improving forest stands and using forest waste for bioenergy. The group concluded that there are already many assistance programs but they lack stable funding sources. Funds may come from future climate program actions, eg offset markets (voluntary and cap and trade), cap and trade market auctions, and other types of mitigation credits. While some analysis may be warranted to determine whether/how these fund sources could meet funding needs for these activities, the group decided not to take other actions without additional IFWG direction.

IFWG and Public Questions, Comments and Discussion

- Need common metrics for evaluating incentive programs

Comments on work plans were requested by December 17th. Work plans are posted on IFWG website. Additional communication will be provided through IFWG listserv. All comments will be sent to all IFWG members and posted for public.