

# Cutting Green Tape Roundtable

January 6, 2020  
10:00am–3:00pm  
Putah Creek Lodge, Davis CA

## Meeting Goals

1. Introduce Cutting the Green Tape as one of Secretary Crowfoot's four pillars and build shared vision for this effort.
2. Establish approach to advance this vision, including broad process and timeline.
3. Establish goals and conditions for collaboration that will result in transformational yet feasible recommendations by Earth Day to achieve permitting efficiencies and other improvements.

## Opening Remarks: Why are we here, why now?

- Describe vision for CGT Initiative
- Why now is a critical time and opportunity
- High level outcomes from December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting

## Secretary Wade Crowfoot (CA Natural Resources Agency)

Happy New Year! Huge thanks to everyone for attending. It's a big deal to take a whole day in our world and we will make the most of it. In California there is a world of abundance. 100 million acres, 1100 miles of coastline, the nation's highest and lowest points, and the greatest plant diversity. We are fortunate to have our work-life focused on protecting and restoring all of that. But we need to up our game. We need to achieve our objectives more effectively and more quickly. We are allies working towards the same goals. We need to up our urgency and ambition.

There are three unprecedented challenges for California:

- Climate change. It is already impacting California. We lost 3% of landmass in wildfires over the last few years. We face historic drought, flooding, and sea-level rise. We cannot protect this landscape if we keep doing things in the future as we have done in the past.
- Biodiversity loss. We have the richest biodiversity in the country.
- Access and equity: Most of us get to see salmon spawning and migrating birds, but many Californians do not get to experience and appreciate the natural riches of CA.

We have a team that wants to make change. There are people now in positions of authority, in this room, in the agency and across agencies that want to get things done. Governor Newsom's environmental values are our values and he is passionate about government effectiveness. How can we do our jobs better to deliver the outcomes we want to deliver? We are lucky to be in this position and moment to make this change.

Process:

In 2019, I met with the California Landscape Stewardship Network (CLSN), a "coalition of the willing" who are doing landscape-level restoration, who are focused on doing it better. After reviewing their

white paper with some potential solutions to overcoming hurdles, I knew we could get some traction. We set a goal by Earth Day, April 22, to bring together big thinkers on how we improve our process for restoration in the state and help our partners deliver projects more strategically with higher quality, more quickly, and more cost effectively. Our target is to have a very clear, cogent white paper by earth day that has actions we're committed to taking to improve environmental restoration over the coming months and years.

We began with a small meeting on December 18, 2019. The meeting was a check to see if this is actually a priority for groups inside and outside of government. The answer was yes, there is a big thirst for it. And also, to start shape the conversation we're having today. "I know I want to do this, but I don't know how to do this. That is why we are all here today."

We will hold this roundtable and at least 2 more roundtables with a lot of iterative work in between prior to Earth Day. We can then stand up as partners in government and present this white paper to the administration.

#### Key Points:

- This effort is anchored in the Natural Resources Agency, but this is an interagency effort.
- We recognize the need to build capacity in departments and agencies to facilitate this process. We are working on augmenting capacity which you will hear more about when the governor introduces his proposed budget.
- This is not solely about permit streamlining. Permitting streamlining is a means to an end. It is about improving the quality and quantity of restoration getting done. This is not an attack on regulations. It's about being strategic to accomplish more restoration in many different ways.
- We are building off a lot of good work that has already been done to get more restoration work on the ground. For example, Sustainable Conservation's work on programmatic permitting and CDFW's work on streamlining grant administration. This initiative is not intended to interrupt work being done, but rather build upon the work already done.
- To make this transformation is going to be a journey, culture change, and mindset shift...which means people have to be brought along.
- We want the white paper to frame parameters of the longer-term journey, including things that are not actionable now, but can be identified with some clarity and taken on long-term. We appreciate suggestions.

#### Secretary Karen Ross (CA Department of Agriculture)

California is the #1 Agriculture state and we grow the most nutrient-dense and healthy food in America. I see so many farmers who want to do more restoration than they do today. Farmers are willing and eager to come together to do this restoration work –but funding and permitting can be a turnoff. Farmers know the land very well, and they want to be part of the solutions. We can help them do this better, faster, and more effectively. Good, sustainable farming practices can help us with climate and wildlife resilience. I want a road map that we can start the day after Earth Day with real implementation actions."

#### Director Chuck Bonham (CA Department of Fish and Wildlife)

The spirit of today is about finding the approach to something different than business as usual. I have empathy and sympathy for engaging with government from previous life experience. I am asking non-government organizations to open up your minds for what it's like on the government side of the aisle. To break the "business as usual" paradigm we need to understand each other's perspectives to design it a better way.

Want to know what's different this time? We have Secretary Crowfoot, Secretary Ross, and Governor Newsom, to get it done. You're invited to a moment in time, we can break the "business as usual".

Attendee Comments:

- We need federal government involved such as USFWS, NMFS, and BOR to navigate tough issues in a collaborative way. Hoping that subsequent roundtables will have federal agencies engaged.
- We have a rare opportunity to break the narrative that CA's high environmental standards are roadblocks. We can set a new model, demonstrate that we can have high environmental standards and have efficient permitting that produces high quality and high quantity of projects. This can serve as model/roadmap for federal government and future administrations. The other rare opportunity is we have a super majority in State Legislature with Governor that is supportive. Let's take full advantage of the rare opportunity and incredible moment.

### **The California Landscape Stewardship Network (CLSN)**

Kellyx Nelson (San Mateo Resource Conservation District and CA Landscape Stewardship Network (CLSN))

In 2016, six landscape-level networks came together to start to think about overcoming barriers to accomplish landscape-scale restoration. One of the greatest barriers are regulations intended to protect the environment. Thus was born the working group on regulatory effectiveness. There are now 29 networks and 40% of the geography of CA is covered as part of the CLSN.

One of the first things the working group accomplished was a white paper, linked at the end of these notes, to highlight bright spots in this work: where are they, how to augment, where are there gaps?

We met with Secretary Crowfoot to share four recommendations that came out of the working group and white paper. These recommendations were not exhaustive as we are still learning. Today is about starting the deep dive to understand what we can accomplish together.

### **Identifying Shared Values (Full Room Exercise)**

- **What could be achieved if this group brings new solutions to removing barriers?**

Shawn Johnson (University of Montana and CA Landscape Stewardship Network)

- Why now? We have new people in the room, a lot energy and excitement, it is up to our voices to build this conversation. Together, what are the guiding principles?
- 3 main thoughts:
  - Substance- thinking about big picture changes and ideas and the reasons why to do restoration work.

- Process- how to think about bridge building and take advantage of diversity in room to work across boundaries and silos?
- People - culture drives all these changes. How do we work in a way that fosters/supports restoration changes? A lot of people not in the room (yet), so need to think about how to be inclusive in what we develop.

### **Drawing Upon Expertise in the Group**

- **Discussion about inspiration, opportunities, pitfalls, lessons learned, how to advance the initiative.**

### Activity: Guiding Questions:

- What inspires you?
- What opportunities do you see?
- What pitfalls do you see?
- What lessons have you learned?
- How do you connect to this initiative?

### Potential Opportunities

- Framing in terms of disaster resilience, etc. that helps bring more people in.
- Sharing funding can allow more flexibility
- Programmatic permitting seems to be mission-driven and is a critical opportunity. Example: Caltrans and CDFW staff are colocated and working together.
- Consolidated process – Strategic Growth Council has 7 agencies working together – agree on guidelines to align funding and outcomes – align with landscape so that puzzle fits together.
- More coordinated future bonding
- Take risks together in the same space. Same concept of scrubbing duplicity, getting people on the same board, one mental same space – connected to a set of conservation objectives. Example NRCS/RCD shared office space.
- Measuring success.
- Trust – and building trust – is a key element of the success of local restoration practitioners. While there are many examples, having effective RCDs and Land Trusts in a given geography to convene the work helps build trust.
- Collaborative models like One Tam, BRITT also help build trust (but require funding to support/incentivize)
- Incentives help agencies to push forward with restoration projects:
  - Executive focus: For example, the drought led to focused teams within CDFW that were driven by their executive leadership to show progress and advanced project approvals for stream restoration, off-stream watering, etc. Eco Restore is another example of a program that provided significant executive focus to advance a set of projects through the permitting process.
- Regional Capacity building – such as DOC’s forest restoration collaboratives and watershed coordinators create opportunities to identify geographical gaps in capacity that can be supported to advance restoration work by building trust and advancing a pipeline of projects.
- Investing in permitting expertise – state scientists/ESs – that can help advance projects through the permitting process.
- Conservancies can provide an important regional framework for aligning interests from the government side.
- Administration can re-shape the signal that’s being sent to restoration practitioners and

agencies.

- Improve accountability of agencies to expedite permits
- Administration/agency can help manage the risk associated with restoration projects.
- Need to create distinctions between projects that benefit the environment and development projects (this can go both ways). Flood control and multi-benefit projects are also significant.
- Create opportunities for up-front planning processes to identify regional resource goals (i.e., what would qualify as a good project worthy of expedited permitting.)
- Improve coordination of grant programs
- Need to identify what we don't want – and reverse engineer to make sure that we don't inadvertently drive towards bad outcomes.
- Internal efficiencies can be an easy solution
- Align better with current science (i.e. sea level rise projections)
- Early coordination of the right permitting agencies and other stakeholders
- Prioritize projects that meet certain criteria
- Tools that allow for forward thinking
- When a landowner that wants to do major restoration succeeds, others will follow. The compounding effect will be amazing.
- Examples of success:
  - Recent California Vegetation Treatment Plan Programmatic EIR allows for accelerated CEQA review (3 months vs. 2 years) for fire mitigation and forest restoration.
  - David Guy reactivating floodplains: Recognized benefits to salmon which led to widespread landscape benefits (air quality, water quality, etc.) beyond just salmon! Great model for restoration.

### Potential Pitfalls

- Risk
  - Perceived risk vs. real risk – need to better share information and scientific knowledge
  - Risk is different for different communities – need to be cognizant (landowner might see it differently than other users).
  - Uncertainty with science
  - Litigation and agencies risk-averse
  - The use and application of best available science creates legal vulnerability in CEQA process.
  
- Developing Common Goals
  - Need commitment across agencies, but also inside agencies. Need to deal with outliers and get a shared vision.
  - Value judgement on what is good and what is bad. Non-government organizations community can lock in on what is “good” and it is in contrast to what regulatory agencies think is “good”.
  - Multiple benefits is always going to be a balance. It makes hard choices
  - Regional Conservation Goals- great thing, but can be a pitfall depending on who is involved. Needs to be owned by a wide variety of players. How do you create the goals, while also really allowing local economic interest and community interest to be involved?
  - Landscape-scale restoration means bigger area, more stakeholders and more complex.

- Resources
  - It is always an issue. Need staffing.
  - No general fund for adequate staffing
  
- Expertise
  - Uneven distribution of expertise and trusted restoration practitioners across the landscapes.
  - There is no one-size fits all – RCDs can be great (have great authorities and a critical niche), but there is an uneven distribution of technical and resource capacity between/amongst the population of RCDs across the state. Same can be said for Land Trusts.
  - Conflict resolution resources and skills are minimal
  
- Systems and Structures
  - Structure within agencies does not clearly identify who is making decisions or have the right level of accountability
  - Systemic obstacles with CEQA etc. that will need a legislative change
  - Misunderstanding and lack of clarity around requirements
  - Caution around creating new entities/structure. How do we create more functional alignment first? Example: CDFW and RWQCB...make a box that connects or better aligns organizations.
  - There is a relationship between conservation and disadvantaged communities, social justice and social equity. It is important to effectively reach out to communities impacted by environmental justice. Conservation is seen as an elitist thing, that needs to change.

### Lessons Learned

- Get stakeholders involved early
- Build cross-agency teams
- Build trust. It takes time but there are so many benefits
- Understand that it takes time
- Listen.
- Funders will support collaboration

### **Impact and Feasibility**

- Map and discuss specific opportunities on impact and feasibility graph.
- Identify which actions the roundtables will focus on exploring or advancing.

### Agency Culture Change

- Executive Order from Governor Newsom that would prioritize agencies to have impact on agency culture.
- Interesting what a difference one person can make: Solidify the good culture of the “good” person when they leave.

- If we do not address root issues, then future efforts will have problems.

### Create Accountability

- We often find that we are not aligned at high levels when trying to do this work. Need accountable leadership to solve barriers that arise.
- Accountability is important. Focus on adaptive management to make sure methods are working. It allows more risk in planning, if plan can be changed to meet success criteria.
- There is a difference between regional and project monitoring. Need monitoring on a landscape-level to see how the pieces work together.
  - How do we share this information?
  - What is the method?
  - Need to think of bioregions – operationalize their function so they can respond to the needs of landscape.
- Increase accountability among agencies and between
- Executive Task force to resolve disputes between agencies.
- Create an Accountability structure.
- Interagency MOUs
- Create a MOU amongst the agencies as a potential “fallback” or support to an EO, being very specific about what the MOU enables

### Dedicate Resources and Funding

- Need dedicated funding for restoration agency staff (planning, engineering, and other staff) that is not fee driven.
- Optimize state funding with local scale.
- Link funding and permitting (e.g., FRGP)
- Funding for restoration is tied to 3 species. Need to expand our scope of species – change our culture around funding.
- How to help high value things get done more efficiently? Drawing that link between permit and funding. Build connective paths.

### Create Efficiencies

- Dedicated divisions/branches of agencies for restoration (funding, permitting, stewarding, participate in interagency teams).
- Legislation for one permitting process that results in all approvals – Who oversees? Resources? Cal EPA?
- Programmatic permit pathway for broader initiatives. Example: Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for Vegetation Treatment Plan
- Move to online application processing as much as possible.
- Improve the RCIS and NCCP process to incentivize broader application.
  - Wade Crowfoot: Perception by locals- they do not create enough benefit for the time or make sure these processes are working.
- Improve mitigation pathways to develop high performance restoration projects.
- Use regional entities as incubators of projects at local level to accelerate restoration at regional level. How to institutionalize efforts?
- Provide guidance on permit authority for consistency across and within agencies.

- Permitting ambassador programs– eg. RCD could fill this role.
- Agency strike teams for eco regions and focused on restoration.
- Create attractive onramps for private landowners. Make it easier on private land.
- Challenge all of us to be more customer service-oriented, making it easier for the public to navigate us.

### Regulatory Change

- Exemption in CA Coastal Act for vegetation management fuel load reduction. E.g., currently vegetation management projects in the Coastal Zone are avoided because it triggers a Coastal Development Permit. The Coastal Act has exemptions for timber harvest. Why not for vegetation management?
- Applying/interpreting existing water code and CDFG code that recognizes changes in water storage from summer to winter.
- Legislation to change fully protected species status to allow take.
- CEQA wasn't built for restoration: How to create an alternate project pathway?
  - E.g., Categorical exemption for regulatory agencies to approve projects that help environment but excepts "construction" projects. Is it possible to change that?
- Put legislative proposals in a separate category – maybe not even showing up in the white paper (since legislators would want the opportunity to have first "dibbs" on the idea and concept).

### Project Implementation

- Combining funding for multi-benefit projects (flood control and water).
- Framework to prioritize large landscape restoration (e.g. regional greenprints)
- Testing "0-stage: restoration. Start at the top of watershed and let system restore naturally.

### Addressing Risk

- Recognize liability and have the state take on this to absolve risk to approve large scale projects.
- Risk can often be resolved with monitoring with dedicated funding. Possibly something initiated from the State.

### Improve monitoring and metrics

- Establish administrative goals and metrics for targets- way to telegraph a goal.
- Need state-level commitment
  - Monitoring- coordinated and integrated monitoring programs- not permit dependent and can be obstacle. Want landscape level. on this. Effectiveness monitoring to help with adaptive management.
- Need to establish quantifiable metrics of the value proposition – such as "increasing efficiencies can reduce project costs by 1/3 and increase yield by 40%". Sustainable Conservation has generated some metrics that can be evaluated – and potentially adapted for this purpose.
- Need to articulate the economic benefits of this effort. Increasing economic development opportunities through project implementation, other?





### Increase and incentivize work at the landscape-level

- Optimize connectivity and tie to regional priorities.
- Criteria-based permitting: Prioritize higher quality and/or larger scale
- Certified regulatory program for landscape-scale projects that are performance based, combined performance and regulatory certainty.

### Expertise

- Train permitting staff to go through the permitting process as an applicant.

### **Others that need to be included:**

Tribes

Equity-Oriented groups

Federal Agencies (esp ACOE/USFS)

Funders (Hewlett?)

CEQA stakeholders (CBD, Sierra Club, PCL)

Local Government (CSAC, Counties, COGs, Bay Area Council)

Legislative Staff

State Water Board/Regional Boards

CDFW District staff

Southern California Stakeholders (Inland Empire RCD, Santa Monica Conservancy)

Private landowners

### **Roadmap and Next Steps**

- **Identify next steps toward white paper in April and beyond.**
- **Identify specific actions for 2/12 meeting.**

Sharon Farrell (Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and CA Landscape Stewardship Network)

The next working session will take information and drill down more deeply and be more tactical. We will come back in April to review. Please let us know if you there are others we should reach out to for future roundtables.

We will be asking for volunteers to help write the white paper. This will be a co-creation. The CA Landscape Stewardship Network team will be putting together a draft for feedback and are happy to have anyone engaged. The drafting process will be swift and focused to identify actionable recommendations.

### **Closing Remarks & Reflections**

Secretary Wade Crowfoot (CA Natural Resources Agency)

April is around the corner, so please stay engaged! Reach out to Kellyx and Sharon to give us feedback about process and content.

The governor wants connectivity back to the government doing its job better. Multiple benefits focus; how can restoration projects also help with clean water, wildfire fuel reduction, clean water, homelessness and vice versa? There will be millions of mitigation dollars spent from transportation projects, we want to make sure this can be spent efficiently on restoration projects. For example, the fuel break outside of Colfax provides milkweed for butterflies.

Political capital is needed to take this as far as we can, as quickly as we can. We need you help to build ideas and to build a coalition of supporters as we get closer to Earth Day.

Director Chuck Bonham (CA Department Fish and Wildlife)

There is a lot of collective experience in this room...over 1,000 years. Find that physical project in the landscape you want to change for the better. If we can do something to make that happen better, let's do it! Why wouldn't we want to do that and fix the landscape as our mark? We can totally do this. Follow the leadership in this room. Let's get it done!

For comments not shared today or thoughts afterward contact the following:

- Kellyx Nelson - [Kellyx@sanmateorcd.org](mailto:Kellyx@sanmateorcd.org)
- Sharon Farrell - [SFarrell@ParksConservancy.org](mailto:SFarrell@ParksConservancy.org)

California Landscape Stewardship Network's white paper, *Shifting the Regulatory Paradigm Toward Bold Immediate Action for a Resilient California*:  
[http://calandscapestewardshipnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/FINAL\\_shifting\\_the\\_paradigm\\_white%20paper\\_2019\\_03\\_01\\_0.pdf](http://calandscapestewardshipnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/FINAL_shifting_the_paradigm_white%20paper_2019_03_01_0.pdf)

## Cutting the Green Tape

### Appendix 1: Attendees

January 6, 2020

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization/Agency</b>
Amy Hutzell	CA Coastal Conservancy
Amanda Martin	CA Natural Resources Agency
Armando Quintero	CA Water Commission
Bruce Saito	CA Conservation Corp
Campbell Ingram	Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy
Chad Dibble	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Chris Beale	Resources Law Group
Chuck Bonham	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Darcie Goodman Collins	League to Save Lake Tahoe/CA Landscape Stewardship Network
David Guy	Northern CA Water Association
David Runner	CA Council of Land Trusts
Elissa Konove	Caltrans
Erik Buehmann	San Francisco Bay Conservation & Development Commission
Erika Lovejoy	Sustainable Conservation
Genevieve Taylor	Ag Innovations
Jack Ainsworth	CA Coastal Commission
Jay Chamberlin	State Parks/CA Landscape Stewardship Network
Jay Ziegler	The Nature Conservancy
Jeff Volberg	CA Waterfowl Association
Jenn Eckerle	Ocean Protection Council
Jennifer Neville	Metropolitan Water District
Jeremy Ketchum	CA Department of Transportation
Jessica Law	Delta Stewardship Council
Jessica Morse	CA Natural Resources Agency
Jim Robins	Alnus Ecological
Joanne Marchetta	Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
Julie Alvis	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Julie Turrini	Resources Legacy Fund
Kaeli'I Bright	Department of Conservation
Karen Ross	CA Department of Food and Agriculture
Kellyx Nelson	San Mateo RCD/CA Landscape Stewardship Network
Kevin Huntng	CA Natural Resource Agency
Kevin Shaffer	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Kevin Wright	Marin County Parks/CA Landscape Stewardship Network
Kim Caringer	Tahoe Regional Planning Agency/CA Landscape Stewardship Network
Louise Bedsworth	Strategic Growth Council
Matt Clifford	Trout Unlimited

Patrick Wright	Tahoe Conservancy
Rebecca Fris	Wildlife Conservation Board
Sara Polgar	San Mateo RCD/ CA Landscape Stewardship Network
Sharon Farrell	Golden Gate Parks Conservancy/ CA Landscape Stewardship Network
Shawn Johnson	University of Montana/ CA Landscape Stewardship Network
Wade Crowfoot	CA Natural Resources Agency