

Eel River Recovery Project Workshop – Forest Health = Salmon Health



Held at the Round Valley Indian Health Center, Covelo, California on 10/14/17
Minutes by Pat Higgins with assistance from Bruce Hilbach-Barger

Revised October 25, 2017

Eel River Recovery Project Workshop – Forest Health = Salmon Health
Round Valley Indian Health Center, Covelo, California
October 14, 2017
Minutes by Pat Higgins

Attendees: Reuben Becella, Ernie Merrifield, Ron Lincoln Sr., Jim Russ, John Elgin, Tracy Elgin, Dan Carpenter, Nate Hickey, Michael McKaskle, Abel Willow, John Haschak, Jeff Hedin, Bruce Hilbach-Barger, Pat Higgins, Chuck McFaden, Rosamund Crowder, Earlene Gleisner, Virginia Chichester, Robbie Wyer, Linda Perkins, Bill Heil

Background: The Eel River Recovery Project sponsored its third Round Valley Salmon Awareness Festival in Covelo, California, including a forest health workshop on October 14, 2017 focusing on the east side Eel River basin and the North Fork Eel River in particular. As with all ERRP projects, the meeting was driven by local interests and aimed to craft a solution to current forest health problems for the benefit of biodiversity, improved hydrology and reduction of catastrophic fire risk. The meeting started at 10:30 AM at the Round Valley Tribal Health Center conference room and ran until 3 P.M.



Workshop attendees

Introductions: The meeting structure was informal and started with introductions around the room.

Bruce Hilbach-Barger: Bruce facilitated the meeting and welcomed everyone. He is a Round Valley resident and plans to spend the rest of his life there, although he was originally from Ohio. He is active in the ERRP Wilderness Committee that deals with forest health issues and is a contractor to the RVIT on forestry issues, particularly the feasibility and desirability of creating a biomass co-generation plant to take advantage of wood waste associated with forest health treatments. He would share more later.

Patrick Higgins: Pat welcomed people on behalf of ERRP, which he serves as Managing Director. ERRP was formed in 2011 and works to assist and empower communities in the Eel River basin to work together to restore the amazing river ecosystem. In assembling an electronic Eel River Library during a grant, he found Thomas Keter's paper on the North Fork Eel River watershed forests that showed a dramatic decline in grasslands and oak woodlands. When he met the Elgin brothers at Keter's June 2017 talk in Garberville, he recognized them as capable of implementing forest health projects and also well-grounded in their understanding of the problem. A missing link was a scientific validation of the Elgin brothers approach to forest health and the resources for implementation. This is a big problem in RVIT ancestral territories. Ranger Frank Aebly was unable to make the workshop due to the fire situation, but said that the Mendocino National Forest (MNF) was open to partnerships and that forest health problems were forest wide, not just in the North Fork Eel sub-basin. The task today is to seek agreement on landscape conditions and forest health, to seek a path forward to implement forest health, and to ally to the degree possible to speed action.

John Elgin: Invited as a forest health expert from the North Fork Eel River, John imparted that he and his brother Tracy are of Wintu and Wylacki ancestry. His people were known as the ridge runners and never went onto reservations – the ones who never came in. John noted that because of his ancestry that he is able to consult with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and other entities on archaeology and sites of historic Native American use. He has assisted some of his Native neighbors when sites on public land were threatened by traveling to Eureka to meet with Six Rivers National Forest (SRNF) on their behalf. He said it is difficult for native voices to be heard but extremely important that they are listened to. John's family has seven generations of memory. He and Tracy have walked everywhere in the North Fork Eel River watershed since they were young and they have seen a dramatic change in the landscape and terrestrial and aquatic life. Fish, birds, water, elk, oak forests and meadows are just a fraction of what they were 80 years ago. This amounts to a massacre of an ecosystem. That said, simple projects could pay big dividends in recovering fish, water quantity and forest health. He used an example where he and Tracy had done thinning around headwater springs of the Van Duzen and increased annual water supply by 7.2 million gallons. John and Tracy lead tours into the hills of the North Fork for Native Americans and for others, including to some sacred sites. They feel like everyone needs to learn so we can accelerate change. John and Tracy have formed their own non-profit corporation - Lassic Band of Wylacki-Wintoon Family Group Inc. that can contract with the USFS and they have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Six Rivers National Forest (SRNF). They have picked up 10,000 pounds of garbage and even removed dead cars, often at their own expense – these are things the USFS should be doing. John also expressed strong condemnation of Native Americans placing chicken wire fences across the North Fork Eel River and leaving them in place. He said he and his family do not fish because there aren't enough fish in his home stream. John closed by saying that he was ready to help in any way.

Rosamund Crowder – Lives in Willits and was active in Friends of Eel River and Willits Environmental Center and is currently active with Indigenous Environmental Action and was actively in support of Standing Rock protest.

Robin Leler: Living in Willits, Robin sees herself as a “city girl” but has now been awakened to the amazing beauty of the whole Eel River and its cultural diversity. She is the ERRP Willits Volunteer Coordinator and will be working in schools with a grant from the Rose Foundation through the Friends of Outlet Creek. Robin is really excited about the prospect of teaching Willits students about the amazing Eel River ecosystem instead of the Amazon or Antarctica. She helped coordinated the school elements of the 2017 Salmon Awareness Festival and felt honored and blessed to be part of it.



Ron Lincoln Sr. talks to John and Tracy Elgin before the workshop under the oak trees outside the RVIHC.



ERRP Board members Michael McKaskle and Ernie Merrifield, Ginny Chichester, Ron Lincoln Sr, Linda Perkins, Tracy Elgin and ERRP Willits Coordinator Robin Leler.

Tracy Elgin – Tracy started by saying he would keep his remarks brief because how much information John provided, but also shared his history that is unique. He was a young logger when the Northwest Forest Plan was being formulated by President Bill Clinton in 1992 to solve problems related to the northern spotted owl and dwindling salmon populations. Tracy was in adamant opposition to the NWFP because knew that forests were a long way from their normal range of variability and needed management. This was not a popular position at the time and he was often the lone speaker representing this position at meetings including at UC Berkeley. He said his positions made him some enemies, but he also made friends as he traveled. He echoed John's statements about the changes in forests of the North Fork Eel River, with his home watershed having gone from 60% oak woodland that provided food for the animals because of the richness of their acorns. Today the same area is 80% coniferous forest as they have over-topped the oaks, which has also lead to diminished water yield. Tracy and John started their non-profit 35 years ago because nothing was happening on forest. They have done a lot but is seeking collaboration so they can do more.

Earlene Gleisner: A retired nurse living in Willits, Earlene said she had a strong affinity to Native American culture and has actively worked on numerous causes for non-profits and networks. She wants see harmony between cultures and respect for Native American Culture.

Kirk Lumpkin – Kirk is retired from a career with the Ecology Center in Palo Alto and has been living near Willits in the Outlet Creek watershed for the last several years. He is active in the Friends of Outlet Creek and recently joined the Board of the Willits Environmental Center. He has been working with ERRP on getting people out to their home streams so they better relate to them and take time to care for them.

Jeff Hedin – He currently resides in McCoy Creek, a tributary of the South Fork Eel River near Piercy in northern Mendocino County. He noted that McCoy Creek has headwaters in the Red Mt Wilderness managed by BLM and that he has been working actively as ERRP Wilderness Committee Co-Chair to foster stewardship of this area but also improve access using volunteer labor. Jeff's ancestors were from Scandinavia and Iceland. They began leaving left Sweden and Norway over religious issues. Born and raised in Marin, Jeff developed a love of nature. Jeff has been recognized by the Redwood Forest Foundation where he volunteers, and is also active in the Institute for Sustainable Forestry.

Chuck McFadin – Chuck was the Covelo District Ranger for the Mendocino National Forest from 1977-1992. He resides in Covelo with his wife Glenda, but they both joined the Peace Corp after his retirement. Chuck knows Middle Fork and its forest conditions very well.

Bill Heil – Bill lives in Albion with his wife Linda Perkins, but is originally from Alabama – “very white” – he noted and also Albion is white. Said he was very glad to be in Round Valley to learn more about local issues. Living on the coast, he didn’t know much about Native Americans except that there was a Reservation in Round Valley where lots of trouble happened. He became very aware of Native American culture from attending the Marine Life Protection Act meetings where the Yurok Tribe and other coastal Indians made a lasting impression on the MLPA panel. Bill thought that Indians gained respect through engagement and all stake-holders recognized their interests, which forced the State to recognize them. He is a founding member of the Redwood Forest Foundation and wants more involvement with Native American people by allowing traditional gathering.

Linda Perkins – Linda has lived in Albion with her husband Bill for more than 40 years, but she grew up in Louisiana, where the forests were mangrove swamp. She always loved nature and began reviewing timber harvests for the Sierra Club, when she moved to Mendocino County and has been active in the Sierra Club for years. After fighting bad timber harvests by Louisiana Pacific and Georgia Pacific on the Mendocino Coast, Linda joined others in helping form the Redwood Forest Foundation, Inc. to buy these companies out and to establish a community forest model emphasizing forest health. It took 20 years longer than they thought it would, but RFFI now owns 140,000 acres and has helped expand the Sinkyone Inter-Tribal Wilderness and State Park

Robbie Wyre – Robbie said his ancestors had been in America for a while and some were part of the Donner Party. Robbie moved to Covelo in 1971 and loved it, but failed to make a living, so had to move away. Returning in 1976, he established a retail lumber business. He said that he always tended to approach problems in a practical way. He wasn’t too happy about the state of logging then but thought that maybe the way he purchased wood products would have an influence on making sure there was a better market for sustainable wood. Robbie then got into the cattle business because he like to eat beef, could make a buck and work to improve sustainability of grazing practices. He has been dis-invited to meetings of the American Cattleman’s Association where there is resistance to change. Robbie got a permit to mine gravel in nearby creeks and said he improved conditions and had ideas on how gravel extraction could be made more compatible with restoration. He encouraged the community to get involved to improve things – kind of along the lines of “If you don’t vote – you can’t complain”. He also noted that roads on public lands necessary to fight and manage fire were being shut. Robbie suggested that the same routes that need to be maintained for fire access could also serve as routes for rugged recreational enthusiasts.

Ronald Lincoln Sr. – Although he has some European ancestry, Ron identifies as Native American and was raised in Round Valley. He walked extensively in the North Fork in his youth where his people were from. The North Fork in those days would produce enough food for the family for months in just a few days (52 steelhead in 3 days). It was a way of life going back to time immemorial – plenty of fish to eat. Ron got an education and became an engineer and moved to Los Angeles. He then got a forest degree, but found work in law enforcement. He worked in Washington DC on the Boldt Decision that reinforced Indian Tribal Treaty Fishing Rights.



Bill Heil, Pat Higgins, Linda Perkins and retired Covelo Ranger Chuck McFaden in the morning before the start of workshop.



RVIT Tribal Council President James Russ talks about the Tribes engagement on dam relicensing as part of his closing remarks.

When Ron studied local history, he needed to really reach deep for forgiveness. He knew too much and it haunted him. Ron's ancestors turned over their guns and then were slaughtered. He was a young man when the government tried to flood the RVIT Reservation. He agreed with John Elgin on use of chicken wire fences to harvest salmon and steelhead and said they should be made illegal on the Reservation. Being more and more fenced out of traditional gathering areas – barbed wire fences – broken tradition. Going over to revive acorn harvest – always leave some for the animals. On Council two times. Humor is important. Ron Sr. could not help the community because he could not forgive. After hard work, he was able to forgive early settlers that massacred his ancestors, and it has given him much more energy to help the community. He said that small groups of people like the one convened for the workshop can be powerful, if their ideas resonate.

Ginny Chichester – 1979 moved to Covelo – wants to learn – wants to be one with Wilderness – tries to help others be good stewards – very rare for her to attend meetings. Tries to keep people honest. Wants to see people be responsible and wants traditional access – but also wants rules and respect.

Reuben Ferrer – Reuben is an RVIT member of Karuk and Yuki ancestry. It is not about race or human differences, it is about working for the salmon. It is our obligation to speak for them – they are defenseless. Politics at the federal and Tribal level tends to create power struggles and factions. We need to work together. Reuben had just watched the 1980's film *Eel Life of a Threatened River* – and they were talking about the same problems then. A recent UC Davis study said the salmon have 50 years to live, it may be quicker.

Ernie Merrifield – Ernie began by acknowledging the power of the group present with numerous powerful minds. He went to Reservation schools and learned history well. Ernie agreed with President Barack Obama, when he convened tribal leaders and said that Native American should have the chance to define themselves and a more proper name would be First Americans. He said he was $\frac{3}{4}$ Wylacki and $\frac{1}{4}$ Viking. Columbus was just a slave trader – like lots of others. The Vikings may have come across the country or Europeans could have also crossed the ice/land bridge from Russia. There are many different connections before Columbus from more northern climes. A Hopi shaman had very the most profound influence on Ernie. The shaman's culture revered home and were very connected to their place, and

even loved and cherished it. But they traveled, like the Australian Walk About – Hopi had similar tradition. They walked and explored all with the intent to conserve and restore Mother Earth. The shaman said stay in rhythm with nature and you'll be healthy – eat foods provided by Nature. We need to heed his advice and change consciousness. The European invaders said they came to America for freedom, but that didn't equate to freedom for First Americans. There is a huge cultural flaw in that they perceive everything as a commodity and all the Earth's resources are there for the taking, which has led to the imperialist/capitalist system. It is time for local people to take control of their resource base, but to do so in harmony. He urged everyone to pay attention and to watch out for schemes that are not in harmony with nature. If you do not agree – protest – resist. Ernie opposed the Viet Nam War, recognizing that it was actually about oil deposits there. Dig deep in our hearts and minds and souls – why are we here? Visualize – verbalize – realize – When-ever we see the same thing and speak with one voice, we can make change.

Dan Carpenter – Originally from Modoc County in eastern California, Dan now resides in southern Humboldt County near Miranda on the South Fork Eel River. He volunteers for ERRP in helping assess Salmon Creek near where he lives and brought produce from the Tooby Park Community Farm in Garberville to the Salmon Awareness Festival.

Nate Hickey – Friend of Dan's from Alturas. Likes Humboldt County and ERRP and is here to learn.

Michael McKaskle – Michael lives in southern Humboldt County in Redway and serves on the ERRP Board of Directors and helped line up 45 pounds of Copper River sockeye salmon from Tim Metz for the Salmon Awareness Festival. He was appointed to the Redway Community Services District 9 years and has been elected twice, and has found it empowering. He has served as Chair of his Board and now also is Chair of the Redwood Economic Development Commission. He urged people to run for local office and commit to public service.

James Russ – James is a life-long resident of Round Valley and his father was on the RVIT Council and served as Chair. James serves as the head of the Council today, but his title is now Council President. He had a career as a fire fighter and was a member of a Hot Shot crew for many years because work outside called to him, he needed to be “out in the woods”. He said the RVIT Natural Resources Division establishment more than 30 years ago was important because the Tribe must be looking at management of all resources. Traditional knowledge could also be useful in coping with increasing fire risk. Natives knew about “burning out” to reduce fuel loads and James wondered if back fires were being used enough to fight the Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino fires that still burned at the time of the workshop. Fire is a living thing and it is part of nature. He had relatives evacuated and has full sympathy with current fire victims. James didn't visualize being involved in RVIT politics, but his career arc changed as he taught school and became the Administrator at RVIHC. He acknowledged others in the room who had served on the Council: Ernie Merrifield, Reuben Becella and Ron Lincoln Sr.

As the Council President, James welcomed visitors from Willits and friends from the mountains. Too often the Native American community only comes together to honor their dead and times of greatest communion are the funerals. He said it was very good that people were assembled to work on the extremely important issue of forest health. James pointed out that the topic was a source of controversy, as evidenced by strong community reaction to the potential RVIT biomass project that Bruce Hilbach-Barger has been studying for the Tribe. A lot of people spoke against it, possibly out of

fear, skepticism or due to lack of information. He hoped that the group could make its objectives clear to build trust. What is your recommended path to forest health? Is it feasible?

He said he was impressed with the discussion so far, but encouraged the group to be public about its proceedings, actions and intended actions. Don't work in isolation or it will foster mis-trust. In the case of the biomass plant, response to public comment may reduce the size of the plant, which may be a good thing, so public involvement can be positive. James noted that RVIT was now fully engaged in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on the issue of the relicensing of the Potter Valley Project that blocks salmon access to their historic range and to the ancestral territories of Tribal members. RVIT has a history of 15 years of involvement and was fully vested as a stake holder, including being fully engaged with PG&E, Potter Valley interests and the Sonoma County Water Agency. We must stay on top of issues and be in on front end, not back end, of decision making processes. Tribal solidarity is important around the issue of getting our ancestral territories back to their natural state.

Discussion (Before Lunch): Non-facilitated discussion followed introductions.

Pat Higgins noted that ERRP does not get engaged in polarizing issues such as the Potter Valley Project relicensing so that it could be a bridge organization and maximize its potential to bring resources to the community in a solutions mode. He also noted that Reuben Becella's observation about recent studies showing a pattern of decline towards extinction of California Pacific salmon stocks. In fact, ERRP has found the fall Chinook salmon population in the tens of thousands since 2012, a similar level of abundance to the 1950s. Eels and steelhead are also showing resilience.

Tracy Elgin – Things are way out of balance. His home territory is on fire for the 8th time in his lifetime and it needs forest health work – thinning from below to take small trees that “over-stock” forests – preventing Douglas fir from taking over meadows and over-topping oak forests so needed for food by the animals – to prevent fir from encroaching on springs and diminishing stream flow. Tracy has worked under permit in USFS and BLM Wilderness Areas because he is Native American and can work in otherwise restricted areas. He assisted SRNF on a project near Black Lassic in a Wilderness Area that also has protected botanical species. Sudden oak death syndrome (SOD) was running rampant through the hardwoods, but SRNF was reluctant to intervene. Tracy noted that this “pristine” area they were trying to protect has prior mining and logging activity, including an old saw mill. There are impediments to managing Wilderness Areas that make he and John not favor further expansion and the USFS and BLM have to show more flexibility in managing these areas. Half the North Fork basin is designated Wilderness, but it has huge forest health problems.

John Elgin continued on the topic of restrictive management of federal lands. He used the Lassics lupine as an example, a plant in the headwaters of the Van Duzen River and there are only 30 specimens known in the World. Even Native Americans couldn't go in for traditional gathering. Progress has been made, however, and SRNF has allowed indigenous use and management of this specially designated Botanical Area. Indians can help re-establish ESA listed species. Wilderness Areas can be over-protected. Fuels are building up and they can go up like a bomb – 400-600 degrees – can go up to 1000 F degrees F. Sterilizes – USFS problems in the North Fork and nearby have major problems that need to be worked in as soon as possible. Special Natural Areas may also need management.

Pat Higgins pointed out that there is no trust when it comes to management of federal lands. Large institutional environmental groups treat forest health measures as “just another excuse to get the cut

out” and tend to stop virtually all management activities on federal lands. They are inherently opposed to the notion of managing Wilderness Areas – because Nature perfects itself when left alone. The evidence is clear in the North Fork and nearby areas that man working with Nature could improve upon its productivity. That traditional ecological knowledge of how to maintain and restore grasslands and oak woodlands is still with us and needs to be applied.

Bruce Hilbach-Barger noted that he had helped the Cahto Tribe to build a better relationship to the BLM Arcata Office and said that partnerships are possible and important. ERRP had been drawn into a project on Cahto Peak to repair damage caused by fire suppression activities related to the Wilderness Lodge Fire of 2014. Bulldozers cleared a fire line along a ridge and also cleared areas in the headwaters of Elder Creek to the west. Part of the fire break was in the Cahto Peak Wilderness Area compartment, but management was allowed to prevent the fire spread to Laytonville. The dozers made a mess and ERRP brought volunteers to clean up. During planning meeting in the field prior to the erosion control activities, it became apparent that the ridge was a natural location for a shaded fuel break. In fact, the Cahto Tribe traditionally managed the area with fire and the ridge route is a historic trail location. BLM is considering giving the trail historical land mark status. Bruce said that the best thing that happened is that the Cahto Tribe and BLM have a direct line of communication. ERRP is deferential to Cahto Tribe interest in terms of whether a recreational trail is established along this route, but the organization favors development of recreational infrastructure to better connect people with the Eel River watershed.

Ron Lincoln Sr said that he had learned a lot during the morning’s discussion. To effect change, we must know the cause of problems and then we have to agree on solutions. We need to build trust and act soon. There is a high potential cost if we do nothing. Consciousness raising to achieve unity is needed now.

Pat Higgins mentioned that the Lassic Band of Wylacki-Winton Family Group Inc. could play a lead role through grant acquisition to plan forest health activities in the North Fork Eel River watershed and maybe even take it into the implementation phase. Beyond that, there are USFS and RVIT potential partnerships. While ERRP has had a favorable impression of Congress Huffman’s shaping Wilderness legislation, because it has strong forest health and recreational elements that overlap with our mission and goals. However, the issues raised about lack of ability to manage Wilderness Areas needs to be considered more fully. In the meantime, ERRP would like to provide more community education as recommended by Ron Lincoln Sr. to raise consciousness. Towards that end, we will seek a grant to pay for expenses for North Fork Eel River expert Thomas Keter to speak in Covelo and Willits in spring. The Karuk Tribe in the Middle Klamath basin have initiated co-management activities with the USFS involving re-establishing fire as a landscape management tool and bringing folks from there to Covelo and Willits is also planned.

Bruce Hilbach-Barger talked about the need to building alliances based on clearly stated principals. He noted that folks from the Redwood Forest Foundation were here and possible allies. His networking on behalf of RVIT for the biomass project also has linked he and the Tribe up to another circle of allies. He characterized the established environmental groups as insular and lacking in flexibility. They really are only interested in expanding Wilderness Area real estate as the symbol of their accomplishments. They lack any understanding of traditional ecological knowledge or the need to restore harmony. Huffman’s staff listens to the Yurok Tribe and would be receptive to RVIT or other Tribal interests with regard to his

legislation. His strategy is to propose management actions that have as high degree of public support as possible because that consensus will mean huge credibility with his fellow Congress members.

Reuben Becella said that the group would need to have goals and objectives clearly defined if it wants to successfully engage the RVIT Council. There are lots of issues, so presenting organized arguments is important. It is important to get them on-board because organized Tribes have more cache political clout. The key is shared goals – consensus – commonality. Reuben always wants to be involved. He said the group needed to create the openings for people to channel their energy in ways that can help.

LUNCH BREAK

Discussion (After Lunch)

Bruce Hilbach-Barger started afternoon discussions by seeking consensus for support of Huffman's draft Wilderness legislation. There were immediate strong reservations because of the problems with lack of management flexibility as discussed in the morning. John Elgin said that there was a need for specific language allowing pilot projects in restricted areas.

Bruce said that conservation groups had modest expectations for expanding Wilderness and are willing to settle for small areas within Huffman's District. Someone raised the issue of re-programming money allocated for fighting fires and instead programmatically switching it to forest health in or adjacent to Wilderness.

Tracy Elgin said that Trinity County had been an easy target for expanding Wilderness because there were so few people there to object and the county is 80% federal lands. There is also no cognizance of Native needs. Under Huffman's proposal, North Fork Wilderness will be expanded when the "let it be" policy of non-management isn't working now on already designated lands.

Jeff Hedin said it was time to get away from managing just forest and to begin to fully grasp the need to also manage for landscape diversity like bogs and native grasses. The lack of trust is leading to gridlock with the USFS being stopped from replanting native's species by environmental groups. This dynamic is non-productive, but likely hard to change and is a big part of the reason we can't get there from here.

Pat Higgins noted that focusing on Wilderness Areas had deflected attention from potential projects with fewer hurdles. Much of the North Fork in SRNF ownership not managed as Wilderness and the forest is likely open to partnership on these lands and social license for those activities are more likely to be granted. He mentioned that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has funded pilot projects for the Karuk Tribe and more recently implementation. The Elgin brother's non-profit could be the recipient of such funds. Planning could include scientists Thomas Keter and forest health consultants from BBW, who work with the RVIT. The pilot project would be to identify problems and opportunities, including recommendations for forest health treatment on public lands, outside Wilderness.

Ron Lincoln Sr. warned that we must break the cycle of looking at the forest as a commodity and a cash cow. We have to restore landscape health.

John Elgin said that there was some risk to action and that anyone moving forward to restore forest and landscape health will have to continue to prove things all along the way –

Reuben Becellas said that the language of any agreement or any grant need to assure the broadest language for protection. Our people used to live in these other areas. Our sacred sites are there – we still live to protect them. The government has set up a system to classify Indians but we should not let them tell us who we are. It is important to support Tribal neighbors, whether they are recognized Tribes or not. He said to remember that all dialog is good and provides a foundation for trust.

Ron Lincoln Sr. asked when was legislation likely and the answer was not for at least a year. Ron noted that legislation should help humans too – not just the animals and the forest. Indians need to be recognized as part of the landscape and their traditions allowed.

Jeff Hedin has been working with geologist lately who made the observation that every plant is a geo-engineering miracle – holding soil – holding moisture. He helped change Jeff's framework of understanding. We need to pay attention to the health of the entire watershed. Human communities always have an effect.

Ron Lincoln Sr. observed that the RVIT Reservation extended into Trinity County and wondered if the Tribe should not use that fact to weigh in more there.

Bruce Hilbach-Barger said it took him a while to assimilate information from the morning but it occurred to him that Native American's may already have the right to manage within Wilderness. Not so much struggling to establish management but to exercise rights already granted. *John Elgin* agreed and said that needed more exploration as action could come more quickly if there isn't a need for changing policy.

Reuben Becella noted that it was important to move to protect Tribal sacred sites, if nothing prohibits such actions and solidarity between Tribes could be important in promoting action.

Jeff Hedin noted that Indians were maintaining trails since time immemorial and that these passage ways deserve recognition and protection. *Tracy Elgin* responded that he already has this data on CD, not just for the North Fork but for the entire east-side Eel River basin. He said there were numerous other Tribal groups that wanted to see these areas protected.

Dan Carpenter noted that travel corridors often went well beyond normal territory boundaries, so really the whole landscape is crisscrossed with them, which means Native American rights should be recognized in the whole area.

John Elgin noted that Native Americans don't all get along with one another. Each Indian had to survive and figure out how to cope themselves, which isolated people and made coordination and support difficult. Within Indian society, there was a sort of cast system and his elders would sometimes refer to Digger Indians. Struggles between the Tribes down through history left a lot of deep seated enmity. Now Indians have to be careful about having sacred sites protected or the USFS will put a fence around it and put out signs and then it gets looted.

Bill Heil noted that division is natural state for humans, but we must remember that nobody owns Nature.

Reuben Becella noted that some things Tribes don't fight about and working on those issues brings power (i.e. dam removal).

John Elgin said the most important thing was to stay involved. Even if cooperation is difficult with one entity staying involved and from different angles build alliances. How can we share information – how can we expand support?

James Russ closed out the afternoon's discussion. He brought out a large area map created by the Sonoma County Water Agency and talked about what a revelation it was to him to see things represented on a map. He is going to use the poster in community meetings and talked about how maybe we should have a similar conceptual forest health map.

Joking about building alliances in Indian Country, James quipped: "If we can work with the Sonoma County Water Agency, we can work with anyone." He challenged the group to stress commonalities in interest when approaching the RVIT. The Council needs to really look at what is going on. Not everything is in Harmony and we need to face that. These are big ticket items and they were elected to deal with them. Jim then handed out an article by journalist Glen Martin – Keepers of the Oaks, which Pat Higgins offered to scan and share with the whole group. The RVIT is open to working with people who are working on the land and who have commonality, defined common interests. We need to focus on things we can do now. RVIT is open to partnerships. – Reuben got on agenda – you are elected – you have a duty to look at big ticket issues.

Pat Higgins said that he would put out minutes of the meeting, highlighting options for action and would circulate to those in attendance or who had expressed prior interest in forest health issue.

John Elgin said he is open to taking people into the North Fork and surrounding areas and everyone is welcome. He needs at least 48 hours notice (707 572-0202).

MEETING END 3 PM

POTENTIAL ACTION ITEMS

- 1) ERRP will shoot for Rose Foundation small grant to continue public education on forest health in Covelo and Willits, with featured speakers likely to be retired SRNF archaeologist Tom Keter, Frank Lake from the Karuk Tribe, and Bill Wilkinson a principal in BBW Associates. Time will be made available at these presentations to gather more public input and minutes of meetings will be produced.
- 2) Lassic Band of Wylacki-Winton Family Group Inc. may apply to National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to do planning based on traditional ecological knowledge and cutting edge forestry science to create a detailed restoration plan for forests on SRNF within the North Fork Eel River watershed. Sub-contractors could include SRNF retired archaeologist Thomas Keter and BBW Associates as well as the Elgin brothers and other people with appropriate knowledge and skills.
- 3) Work with Congress Huffman on Wilderness legislation with the specific intent of changing the content to reflect the need to manage forest health inside and outside of Wilderness through application of forest health measures based on traditional ecological knowledge. The bill should also foster co-management between the USFS and Tribes and provide resources to fund RVIT/MNF activities on ancestral territories.

- 4) Approach RVIT Council with background information and to ask for strategic alliances in the short term, and to make them aware of the potential benefits of RVIT from participation in the long term.