

**Draft Minutes**  
**Arana Gulch Adaptive Management Working Group Meeting**

**12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. on April 18, 2023**

**MEETING**

Working Group Members present:

Travis Beck, City of SC Dept. of Parks and Recreation  
Blake Woessner, City of SC Dept. of Parks and Recreation  
Kathy Lyons, Biotic Resources Group  
Alison Stanton, Botanist  
Bill Davilla, EcoSystems West  
Mark Ogonowski, US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Teresa Locatelli, Rancher  
Sylvie Childress, UCSC Greenhouses

AMWG Members Absent:

Grey Hayes, CA Native Plant Society  
Suzanne Schettler, CA Native Plant Society  
Todd Lemein, US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Devii Rao, USDA  
Serena Stumpf, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Lauren Garske-Garcia, CA Coastal Commission

The meeting was held at Arana Gulch (12:30 – 2:00), then was reconvened at the Santa Cruz Bible Church coffee room (2:00 to 3:30). Travis Beck facilitated the meeting, representing the City of Santa Cruz Department of Parks and Recreation.

**Field meeting**

**Site Tour, Updates and Discussion.** Travis opened the field meeting with a walk to Area A and the tarplant outplanting sites.

1. Field Observation of 2022 and 2023 Outplanting Plots. The group viewed the recent 2023 out planted plots. Over 900 SCT and 400 grass plugs were planted in Area A on February 16/17. SCT were planted in the 2022 macroplots where there was low survival on the 2022 SCT outplantings. Wood chip and straw mulch was used. Plants were very robust, given the high rainfall year.
2. Observations of SCT seedlings in 2021 and 2022 Plots. SCT seedlings were observed in some of the 2021 plots, while no SCT seedlings were observed in the 2022 plots. There was group discussion on why the poor plant recruitment, such as seed/soil connection, soil compaction, seed viability, presence of wood chips, and/or seed predation.

3. Prairie Loop Trail. Group viewed erosion on the Prairie Loop Trail. Jean Brocklebank and Michael Lewis (public attendees) expressed concern on the trail bed erosion and volunteer trails created. Blake reported that trail repair work is scheduled for this summer.
4. Shaded Fuel Break. Travis reported that the Fire Department would like to do shaded fuel break work along the Prairie Loop Trail (30-foot wide swath into woodland). The group inquired as to the purpose and extent of vegetation removal.

### **Meeting at SC Bible Church**

**Welcome and Meeting Objectives.** Travis opened the meeting.

The minutes from the November 2, 2022 meeting were reviewed and approved. Meeting objectives are to receive information from Tim Shields on the Shaded Fuel Break Work, discuss site management, UCSC greenhouse study results, and possible implementation of fertilization/mowing methods.

1. Summary of Field Observations. Bill presented surprise on the lack of SCT seedlings from the 2022 outplantings. There was group discussion on seed viability and long-term recruitment and long-term maintenance.
2. Shaded Fuel Break Project. Tim Shield, Deputy Fire Marshall presented his plan for fuel management, which is a one-year grant. The goal would be to eliminate ladder fuels. 99% of ignitions in open space areas is from homeless encampments; opening up the area would be less suitable for encampments and project could reduce invasive plant species that can contribute to fire. The City is developing a Wildfire Resiliency and Forest Health Plan. At Arana Gulch, two areas are of priority. Area A is in the northern portion of the open space where there is homeless encampment activity. Area B is a linear strip along the trails, wherein dead oak limbs and understory would be removed. There was group discussion on the value of the treatment and concern on invasive weeds establishing after the work. There were questions on follow-up monitoring; Tim indicated the funding was for one year and does not include monitoring or year 2 invasive plant control.
3. SCT management Actions for Remainder of 2023. There was agreement in continuing grazing in the N part of Area A, Area C and Area D for 2023. The S end of Area A will be mowed; Blake reported that the rotary mower with the Kubota tractor can mow at 6". It was agreed that use of the flail mower, at a mow height of 2-3" was too low, especially since the SCT seedling are at that height now. Alison will monitor the grassland in Area A prior to mowing. Mark suggested weeding of the SCT plots, including those with the F1 and F2 populations (2021 plots). Sylvie indicated her interns would be available for some weeding of the 2021 plots. She also suggested collecting seed in the fall and

checking seed viability by sending samples to the Oregon Seed Lab. The group also discussed opening up the Area C SCT cattle exclosure to cattle once the SCT has gone to seed. This could be a pilot look at using cattle to press seed into soil and/or vector seed.

**Public Comments**

See above, comments received during field session.

**Next Meeting:** Not determined.