



Battle Creek Alliance

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Russell Henly
Assistant Secretary of Forest Resources Management
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Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent via email to: AB1492Program.Comments@resources.ca.gov

Comments regarding the AB 1492 draft working group charters

Dear Dr. Henly,

Imagine for a moment that you live in an alternate reality where every committee that has the power to affect or make decisions is staffed by people who in this reality are called “environmentalists” or “tree huggers” or “the public”.

How would you feel in that alternate reality? Would you believe you were being fairly represented? Would you be content that agency and industry representatives had no vote?

Unfortunately for the environmental community, we do not live in that alternate reality. We live in your reality, where we are consistently, repetitively excluded from the seats of power by the ruling practice of cronyism. We are only allowed 3 minutes to speak, or alternatively to write comments that are either never read or are dismissed easily since we have no representation.

Battle Creek Alliance (BCA) has been involved with the Battle Creek Watershed Working Group. Its charter includes this paragraph: *“Because the Working Group signatory members strive to achieve balance between the public agency and non-public entity representation, at no time shall the public agency signatory members or the number of non-public entity signatory members total more than one additional member than the other group.”* Our research shows that striving for balance in working groups is standard operating procedure, yet the AB 1492 charters neither discuss, nor demonstrate, any balance. In April of 2014, representatives of BCA, Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch, Central Coast Forest Watch, CBD, Sierra Club, EPIC, and CNPS met with you to express these concerns. Apparently these concerns were not heeded, because nothing changed.

The lists of members of the AB 1492 Effectiveness Monitoring Committee (EMC), Leadership Team, and 4 working groups that you sent to me show 73 positions. Those 73 positions are filled by 42 people. Of those 42 people, it appears that only 9 are non-agency people (21%), and those 9 are all on the EMC. Of those 9, 4 are timber industry employees and 1 is from the forester's association (56% of the 9). There is 1 person from the Nature Conservancy (TNC) on the EMC (11% of the EMC, 2% of the total 42). Is this one person supposed to represent environmental interests? Because our experience of TNC is that they work on land easements and buying land. Representatives of their Chico office told me in a meeting that they do not get involved in anything TNC considers "controversial" such as the THP process, or protecting watersheds, and plant/animal/bird species. Where are the representatives of the groups who actually work on these issues? Where are the independent scientists who are not affiliated with the agencies or industry? Justin Augustine of CBD (625,000 members) and myself both applied to be on the EMC, yet neither of us were contacted to even discuss it, or informed of the choices which were made.

Additional Figures:

There are 4 working groups, which consist of 30 positions. They are staffed completely by 23 agency people, 16 of whom (70%) are in multiple groups.

Of the total 42 people, 10 are Cal Fire staff (24%).

Those 10 Cal Fire staff members cover 21 positions, or 29% of the 73 positions. Cal Fire already has a large amount of influence because of its position as lead agency in the THP process, and has consistently refused to adequately address cumulative impacts to the environment. The AB 1492 groups are supposed to implement the legislative intent of AB 1492, which includes higher levels of environmental protections. This will not be possible when Cal Fire is allowed such undue influence in the AB 1492 committee and group process.

As a member of the gender which is 51% of the United States population, it is also necessary to point out that of the 42 people on your committee, team, and working groups, only 5 are women (12%).

In summary, the drafts of the charters and the composition of the staff do nothing but continue the failed policies of the past. Instead of supporting and enhancing the requirements of Article 9.5 of AB 1492, these actions serve to undermine and derail current and past legislation for environmental protection. Once again, the environment loses when agency-industry cronyism prevails and equitable representation is ignored. Staffing these committees so Cal Fire is almost one-third of the membership, maintains the stranglehold they have long been allowed to have on the decision-making process.

You can dismiss and ignore people like myself, as you have done, but scientists the world over are speaking of the dangers of the path we are on. The way you have set up the power structure of these committees and groups only serve to keep us on the same path. We would like an explanation of why you think continuing on the same path that is failing, is the useful and ethical choice to make.

Marilyn Woodhouse

Cc:

Bob Wieckowski, Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Quality

Kealii Bright, Deputy Secretary, CNR

Bill Condon, CDFW

Nick Kunz, State Water Resources Control Board