



## **Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) - Joint Powers Authority (JPA)**

### **Minutes of Regular Meeting**

**June 25, 2025, 8:30 a.m.**

**437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z, Mammoth Lakes**

Members Present: Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member Karen Schwartz, Board Member Paul McFarland

Members Absent: Chair Stephen Muchovej, Board Member John Wentworth

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#### **1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. in the Council Chamber, 437 Old Mammoth Road, Mammoth Lakes.

#### **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Kim Anaclerio led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Member Jeff Griffiths joined the meeting at 8:34 a.m.

#### **3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce (MLCC) Interim Director David Eichman provided an update on the upcoming 4th of July Parade.

#### **4. CONSENT AGENDA**

Moved by Board Member Lynda Salcido

Seconded by Board Member Paul McFarland

Approve the Consent Agenda

For (6): Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Absent (2): Chair Stephen Muchovej, and Board Member John Wentworth

Carried (6 to 0)

**4.1 Approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of April 30, 2025**

**4.2 Receive ESCOG Wildfire Coordinator Report**

**4.3 Receive Inyo Mono Broadband Coalition Coordinator Report**

**5. POLICY MATTERS**

**5.1 Receive a Presentation from Christiana Darlington, California Law Empowering Renewable Energy, regarding Opportunities for Funding to Support Biomass Utilization through JPA Led Initiatives**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala introduced California Law Empowering Renewable Energy (CLERE) Attorney Christiana Darlington.

Ms. Darlington outlined the information in the Biomass presentation.

Consultant, and Sub-contractor for CLERE, Stacy Corless provided additional information.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Whitebark Forest Resilience Program Director Janet Hatfield provided background information on biomass utilization efforts in the area, goals moving forward, and discussed the part the ESCOG could play in the biomass field in the region.

U.S. Forest Service Natural Resource Program Manager Nathan Sill spoke in support of biomass utilization and the ESCOG's participation in the process.

GC Forest Products President Greg Cook said that his company was proposing a pellet plant to go along with their firewood, timber harvest, and lumber products, and had come across several obstacles. Mr. Cook said he had been a business owner in the area for 50 years and that he thought he had knowledge to offer to the biomass process and reported that he had been working with Whitebark. He spoke to the high expense of a pellet plant and the required machinery in the field, along with the difficulty in obtaining the necessary financing, but also spoke about the job opportunities it would provide.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala, Ms. Darlington, Ms. Corless, Mr. Cook and members of the Board.

**5.2 Receive a Presentation from Nick Buckmaster, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Fisheries Supervisor regarding Golden Mussels**

This item was pulled from the agenda as the presenter was unable to attend the meeting.

**5.3 Approve Fiscal Year 2025-2026 ESCOG Budget**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report.

Inyo County County Administrative Officer (CAO) Nate Greenberg provided additional information regarding funding for the Wildfire Coordinator position.

ESCOG Legal Counsel John-Carl Vallejo provided clarification regarding an appropriate motion for approval of the budget.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala, Mr. Greenberg, Mr. Vallejo, and members of the Board.

Moved by Board Member Trina Orrill

Seconded by Board Member Karen Schwartz

Approve the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 ESCOG Budget with the caveat that the Board receive further explanation on some of the items discussed.

For (6): Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Absent (2): Chair Stephen Muchovej, and Board Member John Wentworth

Carried (6 to 0)

**5.4 Approve Modification to Collection Agreement 22-CO-11050400-003 Planning Support for the Eastern Sierra Communities and Climate Resilience Project**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

U.S. Forest Service Natural Resource Program Manager Nathan Sill provided additional information regarding a review of existing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents to see if there were any

inconsistencies with the new land management plan and looking at potential new NEPA analysis to bring more consistency to the existing plan direction. Mr. Sill said that they would also look at expanding the opportunity to perform fuels reduction and fire resilience work.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala, Mr. Sill, and members of the Board.

Moved by Board Member Paul McFarland  
Seconded by Board Member Lynda Salcido

Approve Modification to Collection Agreement 22-CO-11050400-003  
Planning Support for the Eastern Sierra Communities and Climate Resilience Project between the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments and the United States Department of Agriculture, US Forest Service Inyo National Forest.

For (6): Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Absent (2): Chair Stephen Muchovej, and Board Member John Wentworth

Carried (6 to 0)

**5.5    1) Establish Ad Hoc Committees for Consultants and Contracts for each of the Following Projects:**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala and Legal Counsel John Carl-Vallejo outlined the information in the staff report.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Josie Paruolo said that she supported the ESCOG's plan to better connect communities through a regional system, spoke in opposition of the Chipmunk project, and requested more public outreach.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala and members of the Board.

Moved by Board Member Jeff Griffiths  
Seconded by Board Member Trina Orrill

1) Establish Ad Hoc Committees for Consultants and Contracts for each of the Following Projects: a) Project Coordinator – Regional Sustainable Recreation Capacity Incubator and Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis Project. b) Strategic Planning Facilitation Services for Regional

Recreation Collaborative. c) Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis. d) Inyo Mono County Activation Plan for Advancing Agricultural and Economic Diversification.

2) Authorize the Executive Director to enter into contract with selected contractors up to the associate not-to-exceed amounts: a) Project Coordinator – Regional Sustainable Recreation Capacity Incubator and Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis Project; not-to-exceed \$100,000. b) Strategic Planning Facilitation Services for Regional Recreation Collaborative; not-to-exceed \$130,000. c) Chipmunk Canyon Existing Conditions Analysis; not-to-exceed \$160,000. d) Inyo Mono County Activation Plan for Advancing Agricultural and Economic Diversification; not-to-exceed \$100,000.

For (6): Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Absent (2): Chair Stephen Muchovej, and Board Member John Wentworth

Carried (6 to 0)

## **5.6 Update on Regional Wildfire Coordinator Activities**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala introduced the item and reported that she had attended several wildfire-related meetings recently.

Regional Wildfire Coordinator Kristen Pfeiler outlined the information in the Wildfire Update presentation.

Cal Fire Unit Environmental Scientist Carol Snow announced that the previously postponed Wildfire Prevention Grants had just been announced today in the amount of \$135M in Proposition 4 funds and said applications were due on August 6, 2025.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala, Ms. Pfeiler, Ms. Snow, and members of the Board.

## **5.7 Executive Director Update Report**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala and members of the Board.

**6. BOARD MEMBER/AGENCY REPORTS**

Board Member Jeff Griffiths provided an update on AT&T's position as the carrier of last resort and said that it appeared there would be some protections for our most remote communities and that the Bill was moving forward.

Vice Chair Chris Bubser reported that the Town of Mammoth Lakes had submitted a letter to Congressman Kevin Kiley and their Senators and had used information from the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the California Jobs First Program to do so, and thanked the group for that helpful information.

**7. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no future agenda items requested.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m. to the next regular meeting schedule to be held on August 27, 2025.

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Angela Plaisted  
Administrative Coordinator