



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

Minutes of Regular Meeting

October 22, 2025, 8:30 a.m.

437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z, Mammoth Lakes

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

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**

Board Member Jeff Griffiths led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Board Member John Wentworth joined the meeting at 8:34 a.m.

There were no comments given at this time.

4. **CONSENT AGENDA**

Moved by Board Member Lynda Salcido

Seconded by Vice Chair Chris Bubser

Approve the Consent Agenda

For (8): Chair Stephen Muchovej, Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Carried (8 to 0)

- 4.1 **Approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 27, 2025**
- 4.2 **Receive Inyo Mono Broadband Coordinator Report**
- 4.3 **Budget Modification Request for the Inyo Mono Broadband Coalition**
- 4.4 **Receive ESCOG Wildfire Coordinator Report**
- 4.5 **Approve Moving the December ESCOG Meeting Date to December 11, 2025**

5. **POLICY MATTERS**

5.1 **Introduce Ken Etzel, ESCOG Regional Recreation Coordinator**

ESCOG Regional Recreation Coordinator Ken Etzel introduced himself and provided background information about his career and education.

There was discussion between Mr. Etzel and members of the Board.

5.2 **Receive a Presentation on the Sierra Jobs First Collaborative Post-California Jobs First Transition Process**

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report and the Sierra Jobs First Transition Future Process Overview.

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

5.3 **Authorization to Execute Documents and Agreements to Accept and Implement the \$4.6 M Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG)**

Board Member John Wentworth left the meeting at 8:51 a.m.

ESCOG Wildfire Coordinator Kristen Pfeiler and Mono County Wildfire Mitigation Coordinator Wendi Grasseschi outlined the information in the staff report and Community Wildfire Defense Grant presentation.

Board Member John Wentworth returned to the meeting at 9:22 a.m.

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

Moved by Vice Chair Chris Bubser

Seconded by Board Member Jeff Griffiths

Authorize the Executive Director to:

- Sign and submit all necessary documents required by the U.S. Forest Service to formally accept the Community Wildfire Defense Grant award in the amount of \$4,689,827.

- Execute sub-award agreements with Inyo and Mono Counties for implementation of county-specific program components; and
- Enter into contracts with partner agencies, consultants, and vendors as needed to initiate the Eastern Sierra Communities Wildfire Defense Program in accordance with the approved grant scope and budget.

For (8): Chair Stephen Muchovej, Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Carried (8 to 0)

5.4 Confirm ESCOG's interest in supporting regional biomass utilization development as part of ESCOG's Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report and Introduced California Law Empowering Renewable Energy (CLERE) Attorney Christiana Darlington.

Ms. Darlington outlined the information in the Biomass presentation.

Consultant Stacy Corless provided additional information.

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

CONSENSUS: There was consensus from the Board that they were interested in supporting regional Biomass utilization development as part of the ESCOG's Sustainable Recreation and Ecosystem Management Program and staff was given direction to continue participation in Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance (ESWA).

5.5 Authorize Executive Director to Submit Application for Sierra Nevada Conservancy Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Funds

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Bishop Area Climbers Coalition President Michael Collins provided additional information related to the project and grant.

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

Moved by Board Member Paul McFarland

Seconded by Board Member John Wentworth

Authorize Executive Director to Submit Application for Sierra Nevada Conservancy Tourism and Sustainable Recreation Prop 68 Funds.

For (8): Chair Stephen Muchovej, Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Carried (8 to 0)

5.6 Executive Director Update Report

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report. Ms. Kabala announced that Mono County Director of Finance Janet Dutcher had retired and that Leslie Chapman was acting as the Interim Director of Finance.

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

6. BOARD MEMBER/AGENCY REPORTS

Vice Chair Chris Bubser reported that the Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML) held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Access Apartments and provided history about the property. Ms. Bubser said that the Town dedicated the park at the Community Recreation Center (CRC) and spoke about its beauty and functionality.

Board Member Karen Schwartz announced that Pam Foster had been appointed as the new City Administrator for the City of Bishop.

Board Member Jeff Griffiths reported that Inyo County was in need of a County Administrative Officer (CAO). Mr. Griffiths said that the former Inyo County CAO and Project Management Department had played an integral part in supporting ESCOG and said that he had worked with Elaine to ensure that that support was maintained.

Board Member John Wentworth reported that he had been attending the Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance meetings in a non-profit capacity and was serving on the Projects Committee helping to build a Geographic Information System (GIS) product. Mr. Wentworth reported that MLT was involved in a Destination Stewardship Development process and may reach out to ESCOG members for feedback. He spoke about the effect the government shutdown had on our region and said that he had been attending the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership (ESSRP) meetings and encouraged the others to attend as well. He announced that the TOML Town Council would entertain a resolution to support public lands at an upcoming meeting and said that Mammoth Mountain had paused their major redevelopment project at the Main Lodge.

There was discussion among members of the Board.

7. **REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There was discussion among members of the Board. A future meeting agenda will include the following items: further discussion on the biomass project, an update from the Eastern Sierra Wildlife Alliance, and an update on the Whitebark Institute.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled to be held on December 11, 2025.

Angela Plaisted
Administrative Coordinator