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Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 12th, 2023 - 9:00 am.

50 Church Street, Quincy

Board of Directors

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair , John Reynolds Firewise (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice Chair , Kathy Kogge Firewise (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Secretary/Treasurer Mike Flanigan, Insurance (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joe Smailes Firewise (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Callaghan Firewise (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trina Cunningham Maidu Summit Consort. (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Bowman Firewise (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Tompkins UCCE (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sally McGowan Firewise (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Hall Feather River RCD (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracey Ferguson Plumas County Planning (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Dan Martynn Retired (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)

Mission Statement: "To reduce the loss of natural resources and human values caused by wildfire through Firewise community programs and pre-fire activities."

9:00am Board Meeting

Roll Call – Quorum Established

New Business

1. FY 22/23 Annual Budget Review and Approval – Hannah Hepner said that the budget was approved by the Plumas Corp Board in July 2022. She walked through the elements of the current annual budget. Personnel expenses account for \$431,000. Travel, media and public relations, and office supplies have separate budget categories. All contracted work is included under "miscellaneous professional services." The 10% Plumas Corp charges for administration is included under general administration. Scott Corey added that the materials section of the budget includes field equipment like flagging, pipes, posts, etc. – this is not equipment that will likely be utilized two or more times. John Reynolds added that the budget is projected. Mike Callaghan asked for clarification on the section titled "billed grant revenue". Ms. Hepner clarified that this figure is what PCFSC expected to bill for this fiscal year.

Board Vote to approve Annual Budget:

Motion: Mike Callaghan
Second: Ron Heinbockle
 John Reynolds – aye
 Kathy Kogge – aye
 Dona Gasser – aye
 Trina Cunningham – aye
 Joe Smailes – aye
 Mike Flanigan – aye

Chuck Bowman – aye
 Ryan Tompkins – aye
 Sally McGowan – aye
 Michael Hall – aye
 Tracey Ferguson – aye
 Ryan Bauer – aye
 Dan Martynn – not present

Consent Agenda

1. November Financials

John Reynolds explained that there are three documents the Board is reviewing for approval: November financials, which includes administration, operations, and personnel, the Budget vs. Actual, and the July-November subcontractor expenses. The period covered is July-November to account for the time that has already passed in the fiscal year. However, future documents will be for the most recent month of financials.

Joe Smailes asked what the term “unbilled” means. Ms. Hepner explained that these are invoices from contractors that still need to be billed to our grantors. Mr. Corey confirmed that this is correct. [Note: additional clarification will be provided in the future, as this is not a complete definition.]

Mr. Reynolds explained that PCFSC operates on accrued income vs. cash income.

Mr. Smailes asked what the typical turn around is for unbilled expenses. Mr. Corey replied that the turnaround varies for each invoice and grantor. There is often a lag in receipt of payments.

Mr. Heinbockle commented that liability was not included under operations. Ms. Hepner explained that the reason \$0 is listed under operations for liability is because Plumas Corp covers PCFSC insurance needs.

Mr. Reynolds added that PCFSC’s budget is a portion of Plumas Corp’s budget.

Mr. Reynolds asked the group if there were any questions about the contractor report. (No questions)

2. Status of Grant Budgets - Mr. Reynolds went over new grants and explained that there were no major changes.

3. Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities – No significant change

Mike Callaghan suggested a more detailed discussion of ongoing projects. Ms. Hepner responded that staff updates will include project details.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

Motion: Mike Flanigan

Second: Joe Smailes

John Reynolds – aye

Kathy Kogge - aye

Ron Heinbockle – aye

Don Gasser – aye

Trina Cunningham - aye

Chuck Bowman – aye

Ryan Tompkins – aye

Sally McGowan – aye

Michael Hall – aye

Tracey Ferguson – aye

Ryan Bauer – aye

Dan Martynn – not present

Program Updates

1. Biomass/Firewood Processing Initiative

Goals: Support PCFSC Programs and Outcomes

- Utilize non-merchantable material from HFR projects
- Create opportunity for residential green waste collection

Support Countywide/Partner Programs and Outcomes

- Utilize non-merchantable material from post-fire restoration projects
- Provide kiln-dried firewood to county residents and the NSAQMD program

Co-Benefits

- Establish a pilot project for additional facilities across the county
- Provide heat/electricity for processing operations and the Plumas Corp office building

Goal: Utilize non-merchantable material from HFR projects

Issue:

- The PCFSC has very limited opportunities for removing material from projects due to limited infrastructure and an overabundance of material.
- Currently the material remains on-site as surface fuel, or is piled and burned at high cost and complexity.
- Mastication has variable outcomes depending on a number of factors (fuel load, presence of suppression resources, conditions at the time of fire) but is the default treatment due to affordability and the lack of alternatives.

Alternate/Additional Options:

- Proposed Aries biomass facility in Chester
 - Will accept significant amounts of material
 - Majority of their demand will be provided by private timber and the Forest Service
 - Will be feasible primarily around the Almanor region
 - Timeline for operations is unknown
- Existing CTL Forest Management biomass facility in Loyalton facility
 - Has yet to become a feasible option for PCFSC projects
- J&C Mill in Crescent Mills
 - Yet to accept material from projects other than Indian Valley private/residential post-fire restoration
- Existing Courthouse Annex wood heat facility in Quincy
 - Volume of annual material needed is easily overwhelmed
 - Limited chip storage options
 - Material currently being provided by J&C mill

Proposed Project Design

Key Features:

- Firewood processor can produce 2,000-3,500 cords of wood annually from non-merchantable material (< 14"DBH)
- Boiler can accept woodchips from HFR projects and chipping program

Mr. Smailes asked how the 2,000-3,500 cords of wood figure was decided on. Ms. Hepner answered that this figure is based on the capacity of the firewood processing unit.

Mr. Tompkins added that PNF would sell 8,000 to 11,000 cords of woodcutting permits per year. The largest amount came from the eastern side of the PNF. Ms. Hepner asked if that figure included commercial firewood. Mr. Tompkins answered yes.

Mr. Heinbockle asked what the projected timeline for this project was and if it would operate year-round. Ms. Hepner answered that it would be a year-round operation. The timeline depends on a number of factors but could begin within the year.

Mr. Smailes added that wood burning may have restrictions in the future.

Mr. Gasser asked how long the kiln will take to dry a single load of firewood. Ms. Hepner said she would follow up on these questions.

Goal: Create opportunity for residential green waste collection

Issue:

- Plumas County residents have very limited opportunities for removing leaves and pine needles from their properties
- Currently the most common disposal method is pile burning
- 65% of biomass survey respondents said burning is prohibited or restricted in their community
- Pile burning impacts air quality, restricting opportunities for broadcast burning
- The majority of residents are willing/able to pay less than \$50/year to dispose of their green waste and will travel no more than 10 miles

Alternate Options:

- Biomass Working Group Report
 - Relies heavily on County action

Proposed Project Design

Key Features:

- Boiler (Phase 1) and Gasifier (Phase 2) can efficiently burn residential green waste material when mixed with chips
- Plumas Corp has the space for a public collection day and agreed to allow for green waste collection on site, which limits transport and venue costs

Goal: Utilize non-merchantable material from post-fire restoration projects

Issue:

- All of the same challenges impacting HFR projects
- Post-fire material is only viable as a mill product for a very limited time

Alternate Options:

- Same as for HFR projects
- Viable options will be available in the future, but there is a great need currently

Proposed Project Design

Key Features:

- Firewood processor can continue to utilize post-fire material after it is no longer mill-able.

Goal: Provide kiln-dried firewood for the NSAQMD program

Issue:

- In 2015 the Greater Portola Area was designated as a federal PM2.5 nonattainment area. In addition, it was designated for three consecutive years by the Environmental Protection Agency as one of the top five most polluted areas in the nation relative to the annual PM2.5 standard.
- One of the major sources contributing to the exceedances of the health standard throughout Plumas County is the burning of unseasoned wood
- There is a lack of adequate firewood infrastructure in Plumas County, leading wood-stove owners to utilize the more readily accessible unseasoned wood
- The use of prescribed fire in the American/Thompson Valleys from November through March is dependent on permissible air quality

Alternate Options:

- The NSAQMD has not been able to find another partner/firewood processor to provide wood for their program

Proposed Project Design

Key Features:

- Biomass boiler provides heat for the kilns
- Processed firewood is stored in a pole barn shelter
- NSAQMD has three years of grant funding to pay for firewood for Portola residents
- USDA funding available for “firewood banks”

Co-benefit: Establish a pilot project for additional facilities across the county

Issue:

- Existing infrastructure is extremely inadequate for current and long-term residential and forest management needs

Benefit:

- Just as the Courthouse Annex wood heat facility has been a demonstration and learning opportunity for the PCFSC project, the proposed project will be a pilot for other similar initiatives
- The services are accessible without long-term exclusive contracts and the benefit of the products is maintained locally
- The facilities have a small capacity, but with many across the county the benefit is multiplied

Co-benefit: Provide heat/electricity for processing operations and the Plumas Corp office building

Issue:

- The firewood processing equipment will be electric rather than diesel fueled
- The Plumas Corp building is expensive to heat and operate

Benefit:

- The gasifier will generate electricity that will be used to run all of the firewood processing equipment, including the loaders, etc.
- The boiler and gasifier will generate process heat that will be used to heat the kilns and can optionally be used to heat the building
- The gasifier has the potential to provide backup power for the building

Phase 1: \$2,093,701

Includes:

- Mechanical, Electrical, Structural Engineering
- Site Prep and Excavation
- Concrete Slab and Pole Barn
- Biomass Boiler
- Thermal Storage Tank
- Firewood Processor (with conveyors and tumbler)
- Shed Enclosure
- Electrical Contractor
- General Contractor
- Personnel

USDA Infrastructure and Wood Innovations Grant

- Submitted December 20, 2022
- \$1 million request limit + \$1,093,701 match from PCFSC
- Will pursue state grant funds to implement Phase 2 and use as match for Phase 1
- If not available/unsuccessful, PG&E funds may be needed to fully implement Phase 1
- Received Letters of Support from Plumas County BOS, City of Portola, PNF, NSAQMD, UCCE, Firewise, and Plumas Corp
- Award announcements anticipated in January

Phase 2: Cost TBD

- Gasifier
- Solar panels
- Third kiln
- Delivery truck(s)
- ??? (Will be provided in final feasibility report)

Concerns:

- Noise

- Storage
- Staffing
- Supply
- Revenue
- Longevity
- Ownership
- Operating Costs

Ryan Bauer commented that Plumas County is likely to go into non-attainment. It would be wise to speak with NSAQMD about permitting. Ms. Hepner replied that she would follow up with NSAQMD. Mr. Smalles commented that operating costs and revenue both contribute to project feasibility and it is recommended that Wisewood put together a report.

Ms. Ferguson added that Plumas County may have a permitting process that will require a site development review.

Mr. Heinbockle asked if all 2,000 - 3,500 cords of wood would be sold.

Ms. Hepner answered that initially, the wood would be distributed to the NSAQMD for the seasoned firewood program. PCFSC is interested in developing a Senior and Disabled Assistance program for firewood delivery. The intention is not to compete with commercial firewood processors, but to fill a needed gap.

Mr. Tompkins asked what the timeline for the project was. Ms. Hepner answered that phase one could be complete this year.

Mr. Tompkins asked if the material from HFR projects would meet inventory and feedstock needs.

Ms. Hepner answered that material has not been quantified, approximations have been used for the development of this project.

Mr. Flanigan asked what nonattainment means. Mr. Bauer answered that it means air quality has worsened and there could be restrictions on burning and federal funding. This is based on public health standards.

~~2. Hazardous Fuels Assessment Update~~

Adjourn

Next meeting: February 9th at 9:00am