

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 2022 - 9:00 am.

Combination of in-person and zoom meeting

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

Board of Directors

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair , John Reynolds Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice Chair , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Secretary/Treasurer Mike Flanigan, Insurance (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Hall, FRRCD (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sally McGowan, Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joe Smailes, Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Bowman, Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Tompkins, UCCE (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracey Ferguson, Plumas County Planning (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trina Cunningham, Maidu Summit Consort. (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Callahan, Firewise Community (22)	<input type="checkbox"/> Dan Martynn, Retired (22)
<input type="checkbox"/> Lindsay Wood Plumas Audubon Society (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – Additions to New Business item 3: Review Annual Goals
3. Approve June Meeting Minutes – **m – Kathy Kogge, S – Mike Callaghan**
4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to:
 - Greg Kinne
5. Public Comment - None
6. Board Comment: Don Gasser suggested the PCFSC Board meet to develop a 5 year strategic plan. He said a strategy is needed for the lack of CAL FIRE involvement in Plumas County, a strategy for green waste materials, and how to use incoming funds to protect citizens. He asked for volunteers from the board to put together a strategic plan for Plumas County. Chief Ron Heinbockel volunteered to be a part of the strategic planning group.

Ryan Bauer reported that PNF is coordinating with CAL FIRE for DPA adjustments between USFS and CAL FIRE. He voiced support for a strategic plan. Mr. Gasser agreed that PNF involvement will help to make PCFSC more effective.

Ryan Tompkins supported the Board of Directors gathering to create a strategic plan and suggested meetings outside of monthly meetings to discuss how to support PCFSC staff, operations and mission.

Mike Callaghan commented on the ongoing land swap agreement between USFS and CAL FIRE concerning both Plumas and Sierra counties. He suggested rebuilding the Fire Safe Council's relationship with CAL FIRE. Overlaying the whole problem, CAL FIRE is having administrative issues with staffing.

Sally McGowan added that PCFSC needs a stronger relationship with the County, Waste Management, SPI etc. to come up with a plan for green waste.

Don Gasser said that when PCFSC develops an overarching strategic plan, it could be passed on to the BOS for action.

Mr. Reynolds asked if there needs to be Board only meetings or if there should be a committee focused on the issue. Mr. Gasser volunteered to email the PCFSC Board to see who wants to be involved.

New Business

1. Board Officers nominations

Kathy Kogge nominated John Reynolds as PCFSC Chair – **all ayes, none opposed.**

Mr. Reynolds nominated Kathy Kogge as Vice Chair – **all ayes, none opposed.**

Mr. Reynolds nominated Mike Flanigan for Secretary/treasurer – **all ayes, none opposed.**

2. Sierra CAMP Membership Renewal: Hannah Hepner explained that Sierra CAMP is an organization that provides information on grant funding and engagement with meetings/education/advocacy specific to the Sierra Nevada region in regards to climate change. Membership may be a good resource for Board members. The cost is \$125 per year.

Ms. McGowan voiced support for this membership.

Mr. Reynolds added that this membership is not huge investment and can be helpful

Vote to continue membership – **all ayes, 1 opposed.**

3. Annual Goals Review:

- Implement and amend as necessary the Plumas County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP);
- Increase public knowledge and awareness of hazards associated with wildland fire and inform the public about efforts that can be made to reduce their vulnerability to wildland fire;
- Increase community-based involvement in fuels reduction and facilitate the development of additional Firewise Communities in Plumas County;
- Identify, develop and implement community hazardous fuel reduction projects;

- Develop a strategy to provide for sustainable and renewable project funding and reduce the Council's dependence on grant funding;
- Support green fuels utilization and community chipping options for all communities in the County;
- Assist local fire departments in meeting their mission and goals.

Mr. Callaghan added that a statement of support should be included for PUC and the use of fire.

Mr. Gasser asked if the CWPP is on the website. Ms. Hepner answered yes.

Mr. Reynolds asked if we want to add CAL FIRE issues to the mission. We can work on this language and provide it at the next meeting.

Mr. Tompkins suggested that the goals should be broad and encompassing to include all partnerships.

Ms. Ferguson added that the development of the strategic plan should be a goal. An edit to the last bullet should include "and others" to make it inclusive to our partners.

Mr. Bauer added that our goal for sustainable funding should be modified and included in the PCFSC 5-year strategic plan.

Trina Cunningham added that in terms of inclusivity, MSC would like to be supportive and involved in PCFSC's mission and goals specific to the use of fire and underburning. MSC's goal has always been to return to pre-European conditions through the use of fire.

Mr. Reynolds volunteers to organize this feedback to present at the next meeting.

Old Business

1. PGE Moratorium - Mr. Reynolds explained that this moratorium has been developed by Lindsay Wood in the effort to remove PG&E from operating in Plumas County.

Jeff Greef asked if there was a plan for a replacement of PGE? Mr. Reynolds answered that there is no specific plan.

Comments received:

- Rather than trying to remove PG&E, PCFSC should put pressure on the utility company to support our county through forest health management, biomass infrastructure, fuels reductions, equipment improvement and more.
- The problem is not exclusive to PG&E, but includes other factors like forest conditions.

Ms. Hepner shared comments from a conversation with David Hollister, District Attorney:

- Criminal charges against PG&E for the start of the Dixie Fire are proceeding.

- Addressing infrastructure is a focus of the legal actions.
- Plumas County wants to see PG&E make significant investments in PCFSC/other local non-profits.
- Hollister is working with 6 other DAs to follow through with charges against PG&E.

Mr. Callahan read an article on Butte county's involvement in the PG&E criminal case lawsuit regarding the Camp Fire. Butte County's situation with PG&E might shed some light on what can be done in terms of the Dixie Fire.

Ms. McGowan expressed her belief that David Hollister and Mike Ramsey (with Butte County) will do everything they can to hold PG&E accountable.

Mr. Bauer prefaced that the following comments are personal. One of the biggest hurdles in Plumas County is the struggling biomass market. Comments have been made to the California Energies Commission that PG&E's punishment should be to purchase and install alternative power specific to biomass infrastructure. If we can increase the ability to process small timber, we have a better chance.

Ron Heinbockel also prefaced that the following comments are personal. PG&E ROW works well and there is always a chance for a tree to fall on a line due to extremely rugged land. It would be most beneficial to direct energy towards biomass infrastructure.

Kyle Felker quoted PCFSC's mission statement and stated that supporting this petition might not fit in with the mission of PCFSC. From his observations of P&GE ROWs, work is being done well. PG&E work is driven by laws and requirements. Taking action can be difficult for PG&E as they are quite regulated. A lot of times, private landowners do not want trees removed.

Ms. Cunningham voiced that she cannot make a vote without MSC support. She suggested working with PG&E to create secondary energy sources.

Roll-call vote to determine if PCFSC signs the moratorium:

John Reynolds votes **nay**.

Kathy Kogge votes **nay**.

Dona Gasser votes **nay**.

Mike Callahan votes **nay**.

Chuck Bowman votes **nay**.

Sally McGowan votes **nay**.

Michael Hall votes **nay**.

Joe Smailes votes **nay**.

Ryan Tompkins votes **nay**.

Absent: Lindsay Wood, Mike Flanigan, Dan Martynn

Abstain: Ryan Bauer, Trina Cunningham, Tracey Ferguson

Ms. Kogge thanked Lindsay for bringing this to the attention of the PCFSC. Out of 13 ignitions, 9 were caused by tree fall. PG&E should make investments in underground power lines. She asked if PCFSC should suggest to the county that future communities install power underground.

Mr. Reynolds responded that this is already a requirement for new communities. As the PCFSC works through a strategic plan, some support can be assigned towards that. Any individual is welcome to sign the petition, but the PCFSC Board will not participate.

Mr. Tompkins appreciated Lindsay bringing this issue to light, and even if we voted no, it doesn't mean that issue is not important and couldn't be supported in other ways.

2. Greenwaste Working Group: Beth Rouse let the Council know that the Green Waste Working Group will prepare a report of the information gathered so far for the Board to act on. A lead is needed for the Green Waste committee, preferably a Board member. Report to come in February.

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- CAL FIRE: Joel Goldman reported that CAL FIRE will be hiring four seasonal Defensible Space Inspectors with one permanent. They should be hired soon and will be working for up to 9 months. A lot of the Plumas County issues are within CAL FIRE are above the local jurisdiction.

Mr. Reynolds voiced that the individuals working for CAL FIRE are not the issue, the issues lie in the executive decisions made at the State level.

Chief Heinbockel asked if inspectors can cite for negligence. Mr. Goldman stated that three inspections must take place before a citation is made.

- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Michael Hall reports that the EForT project is making progress and will hopefully be contacting landowners and putting together a 2022 work plan by February/March of this year. Currently the FRRCD is looking for operators for the Mohawk Valley and Plumas Eureka Projects.

Mr. Reynolds asked if the EForT project is for private lands. Mr. Hall answered yes; private non-industrial lands.

- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Ms. Hepner reminded the group that FRSC will be meeting January 14th at 9am in the School District Office meeting space. The meeting will include post fire project updates, agency updates and input from stakeholders.

- Firewise Communities: Ms. Rouse reminded the group that the next FW meeting will be Wednesday, January 19th at 6pm.

Mr. Reynolds reported that the Tool Trailer has arrived and there is potential for a ribbon cutting event to introduce this resource to the community. PCFSC would like to work with Quincy FW to put this event together and invite media.

Mr. Smailes reports that Seneca Firewise is putting together a post-fire recovery plan to present at the FRSC meeting.

Penny Leinwander updated the group on a meeting that occurred with the LACC and PG&E. LACC is hoping to have P&GE look at evacuation routes as well as install underground power lines. LACC is working with Plumas County Sheriff to develop AM radio emergency broadcasts.

- Industry – Timber: Not present
- Industry – Insurance: Not present
- Industry – Utilities: Not present
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Not present

- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District: Julie Hunter reported that she participated in the TREX planning meeting and is happy to be involved.

- Plumas Audubon Society: Not present

- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association: Chief Heinbockel reported that a Fire Chiefs meeting is to come. The Board of Supervisors will be included.

Mr. Callahan asked if local FDs are receiving support from CAL FIRE. Chief Heinbockle answered that he hopes to see more support in the future.

Mr. Reynolds added that part of PCFSC's mission is to support our Local FDs.

- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES): Not present

- Plumas County Planning Department: Ms. Ferguson suggested that Dan Blair is a good contact for PG&E. The comment period for the California Fire Safe Regulations is open. Comments are due on Jan. 19th. Ms. Ferguson will bring a comment letter from the BOS to the California Board of Forestry. This is based on the revisions to the rule making. Good changes have been made to these regulations, especially concerning roads. Check out the BOS meeting on Jan. 18th or CAL FIRE's website to see these changes. These new regulations will be made July 1st, 2022.

Mr. Bauer suggested a need for a tougher standard for slash disposal in community defense zones. He asked if this covered in the current round of regulation changes. Ms. Ferguson answered no.

- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West reported that the TREX IMT meetings have resumed. Dates have been set for the end of March/early April. There are currently 80 people on call for the Butte TREX event. Currently in a dry trend and might see a shift beginning in February. Winter underburns might be possible. Contact Matt if you would like to underburn on your property. There is a PUC meeting at noon after the PCFSC meeting.

Mr. Callaghan suggested contacting Rick Foster for an underburn opportunity.

- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship: None
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy: Kirsty Hoffman reported that funding for post-fire recovery projects is underway. \$25 million is available this season and \$25 million will be available this summer. Looking for projects with a strong watershed component.
- Tree Mortality Update: Claude Sanders reported that there is more tree mortality than expected for this time of year - across all species. The drought is not over despite the recent snow. There is a lot of juvenile cedar mortality and lots of tree uprooting. The continued drought might be affecting tree root structure. If you have dead trees, try to get rid of them as soon as you can.

Mr. Smailes shared that there is a significant pine mortality in Butte County.

Mr. Felker agreed that there is mortality across all species and is likely related to drought. Top die off is common and may be beetle related. Dead trees on county land may affect private property.

Mr. Gasser added that removing trees may not be the solution as money cannot be made from hazard trees.

Mr. Felker added that once a tree is on the ground, a landowner still needs to get rid of the wood. Getting rid of the trees is not the solution and a method to chip or dispose of the material is needed.

Mr. Bauer shared a map that indicated Plumas County is still in a drought.

- Tribal Representatives: Ms. Cunningham reported that MSC is coming up with a plan for post-fire recovery. There is a lot of dozer damage on MSC property and they are looking for ways to restore dozer damage. There are pockets of dead trees that they are looking to find solutions for as well. The soil is soft and equipment cannot be used at the moment; will have to wait until summer for the soil to dry out. They are trying to find use for dead trees on their property. They are looking at how to partner at a larger scale. MSC is talking with Mooretown Rancheria and other tribes on how to form a stronger inter-tribal coalition. Approximately 75-80% of homelands have been burned within the last 10 years affecting sacred sites, trail systems, cemeteries and current communities. MSC is willing to partner with LACC Firewise and support how they can. The plan is to reopen camping in Tasmam Koyom while keeping campers safe from hazard trees.
- UC Cooperative Extension: Mr. Tompkins suggested that MSC reach out to Danny Cluck at Forest Health for information on tree mortality. The pine mortality that was mentioned before is Western Pine Beetle damage from last summer, but is expressing itself now. UCCE recently had a study accepted that defines specific metrics used to measure forest resilience. The paper offers a concept that suggests forests are at a

much higher density than they should be. When this is published, Mr. Tompkins will share it with the Fire Safe Council. UCCE is working with the State to write a reforestation strategy with a focus on fuels reduction that will justify work in Plumas County. Mr. Tompkins encouraged Plumas County partners to develop reforestation strategies now so that projects are ready for funding. There is a Forest Stewardship workshop planned for Lassen/Modoc. UCCE is developing a Forest Restoration Symposium and will collaborate with partners. Tentative dates are scheduled for May 13th-14th that will be paired with the May Wildfire Preparedness Day. The group that pushed the Vendado Declaration through is working with Governor Brown to develop a website to allow others to sign on if they agree with a state-wide forest health strategy.

- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Mr. Bauer said developments from the infrastructure bill have been slow and nothing major has changed yet. PNF's Program of Work should be approved today and does not include an increase in funding, but the Forest is prepared with projects should funding be provided. Fuels and Fire are seeing an increase in staffing with unlimited permanent seasonal hiring. They are poised for input on "workforce of the future" with significant increases to fuel, fire, public information and timber programs. The Program of Work includes a focus on WUI projects with the unburned WUI as the highest priority. Communities are still at high risk. The Regional Office is still moving forward with hazard tree planning efforts which looks at infrastructure, communities and private property. They are finalizing the post-fire restoration strategy after hazard tree removal. Piles at LGV and Bucks Lake are being burned.

Kristin Winford added that there will be more clarity this afternoon once the Program of Work is approved. She will give a presentation at the FRSC meeting tomorrow. "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." All partnerships are making progress and working together makes our work stronger.

Mr. Gasser asked if there was an update on the further definition of the WUI. Ms. Hepner answered that PCFSC has been asked to redefine the WUI and map it. Matt West is leading this project with Ryan Bauer. Proposed changes will be taken to the BOS for approval.

Ms. Hepner added that originally the WUI was just a specified distance from communities and is outlined in the CWPP. It was then redefined to include significant features on the landscape and evacuation routes.

Mr. Bauer reaffirmed that the WUI is defined by the Plumas County BOS. PNF further defines the WUI at the project level. WUI definition is a collaboration between BOS, USFS and PCFSC.

2. Status of Current Grants

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Mike McCourt: No update
- Chipping Program – Mr. Parque predicts lots of work to be done for this coming summer. Lots of material is down after the storm. Ms. Hepner added that the Chipping Program is not funded. Without funding, there will likely only be a Phase 2 this year.

Mr. Sanders asked why the Chipping Program was not funded. Ms. Hepner answered that with competitive grant funding our own proposals often compete with each other. This is an ongoing challenge.

Mr. Bauer asked if there was a number (defined dollar amount) that would help keep the program afloat?

Mr. Tompkins asked if there was a good idea of what the cost was per participating household in the chipping program? Could there be a cost-share program? Are people willing to pay for this service?

Ms. Hepner answered that the chipping contract for 300 locations in 2021 was about \$90,000.

Mr. Callahan added that this is not the first Chipping program to be defunded. For other programs in different counties, there was not a decrease in participation if a cost-share or full-service charge replaced the program.

Mr. Hepner added that folks who responded to the greenwaste survey answered that the average responder was willing to pay \$10 in order to dispose of greenwaste. The free program incentivizes people to participate.

Mr. Reynolds added that we may not have the capacity to charge for chipping. Ms. Hepner agreed that it would be an administrative burden, but it is possible.

Mr. Parque added that it is unusual that chipping is not funded when there is such a dire need for disposal. Burning is not an option for all communities.

- HFR Project Schedule: Mr. West updated the group that the public lands projects are snowed out. The LGV project is complete and the final report will be done next month. The Lakes Basin project completed a bit of work in November and is now snowed out. There are no plans to burn in Lakes Basin until next year.

Ms. Hepner updated the group that operations are on holds due to weather conditions. Planning documents are in the works and others have been submitted. 288 Plumas Collaborative has been submitted for extension and modification due to the Dixie Fire. Quincy Wildfire Protection has a complete unit.

3. Status of Grant Budgets: Mr. Reynolds shared that cost center 2002 has a typo and will be corrected. Two grants were cleared from the list from last month. There are \$10 million in open grants.

4. Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner shared that the SNC has open grant programs. PCFSC will submit a proposal for Lake Almanor/Hamilton Branch planning and a CAL FIRE Fire Prevention Grant proposal that will include the Senior/Disabled, Community Chipping and other activities. The CAL FIRE Forest Health grant is also open, but PCFSC will not be submitting a proposal.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events: None

Adjourn - Next meeting February 10th at 9am.