

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 12th 2022 - 9:00 am.

Combination of in-person and zoom meeting

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

Board of Directors

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

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda –Liam Gallaher will report on the CAFSC conference at the June meeting.
3. Approve April Meeting Minutes – **Motion - Kathy Kogge, Second - Claude Sanders**
4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to: None
5. Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation presented to Mike McCourt
6. Public Comment - Jeff Greef shared that there is a business that utilizes biomass waste and chips to create potting soil and compost materials. Mr. Greef will share more information upon request.
7. Board Comment: None

New Business

1. Nervino Airport Extension Letter, Signature Request – Bill Powers explained that more funding through the Federal Aviation Administration is a parallel that fits with all the efforts that are going on in Plumas County regarding wildfire. The focus is to secure funding for the Airport Land Use Commission to improve the firefighting presence in Plumas County. Meeting next Wednesday to discuss the airport expansion. Working alongside USFS to include different types of aircraft. Nervino Airport wants to make sure that pursuing this funding aligns with the PCFSC mission.

John Williamson shared that there is the ability to put an airtanker base at Nervino that would reduce the time for firefighters to respond. Different types of aircraft allow for different landing options. Nervino is a critical location for the protection of the east side of Plumas County, Lassen and North Tahoe. Aircraft is best for immediate attack. Nervino Airport is not asking for financial support, but support for the proposal to expand the airport.

Ryan Tompkins added that expanding the airport is good for community protection. He said that PCFSC could not support :“The fuels management and fire management doctrines of the U.S. Forest Service and CalFire must respond and change immediately, and actually revert to policies that have often been blamed for creating part of the problem. Those policies are initial attack and suppression of all fire starts on public lands.” Mr. Tompkins said he could support the letter if is changed to align with the organization's values.

Mr. Powers added that we are in dire forest conditions and some of the “old school” ideas surrounding fire suppression and response need to be employed due to “mega-fires”.

Kevin Danaher suggested that the concerning paragraph in the letter be deleted.

Steven Kreth suggested that the letter differentiate between summer fires and shoulder season fires. Some fire does more good than harm.

Kyle Felker suggested that the local airport commission look further into the future regarding air attack and new infrastructure. The Chester area needs protection as well. It is good to support this expansion, but we might want to look into the future.

Mr. Reynolds clarified that there are no objections to the main objectives of the letter, but some language needs to be changed. Some portions of the letter fit with the PCFSC mission, but the last paragraph will need to be changed.

Mr. Powers said that there will be changes to the draft and it will be sent to PCFSC offices for approval.

Dan Martynn added that this is a good discussion to critically examine what the council will support.

Mike Callahan asked what the barriers are to making this happen. Mr. Powers answered that the main barrier is funding. The budgets for the airports are static and stable, but not big.

Vote to sign the letter for airport expansion, with recommended changes:

Motion - Dan Martynn, Second - Kathy Kogge

Tracey Ferguson - abstain

Ryan Bauer - abstain

None opposed

2. CFMA Agreement – Ryan Bauer

Mr. Bauer discussed how the CFMA affects Plumas County. The CFMA identifies SRA land, which is private land, and FRA, which is federally managed land. In Plumas County we have three land designations, including LRA. This agreement is only for wildland fire suppression and not for structure defense. The CFMA applies the closest available resources concept for who can respond the fastest despite land designation. The closest available resources concept applies for areas that are outside of PNF. Essentially, the CFMA defines that most responses for wildfire will come from the USFS. Depending on where you are located, some protection might come from CAL FIRE. Some LRA areas can be difficult to assign responses to. USFS typically responds to LRA because they are the closest resource.

Mike Flanigan asked if local entities are billed if they order a resource. Mr. Bauer answered yes, if a specific entity orders a resource that entity is billed for the service. USFS will often go into Unified Command quickly to avoid large costs to local organizations.

Sue McCourt asked if the CFMA met already this spring to discuss land responsibilities. Mr. Bauer answered no, the last revision of the CFMA was 2 years ago and was a meeting for the state level. There is not an Annual Operating Plan yet.

Ms. McCourt asked if a CAL FIRE station will be placed in Plumas soon. Mr. Bauer answered no.

Mr. Sanders asked if the LRAs previously mentioned were under the SRA land designation. Mr. Bauer answered that the response for LRA depends on the DPA and closest available resources concept. Mr. Sanders asked if everything other than SRA is under USFS response. Mr. Bauer answered yes.

Hannah Hepner asked how the CFMA addresses prevention. Mr. Bauer answered that the CFMA dictates that agencies will work together to avoid duplicating efforts and directs on how to address emergencies that are on private land.

Ms. McCourt asked if PNF or USFS does defensible space inspections for educational purposes. Mr. Bauer responded that, yes, USFS will do DSIs if requested, but it is likely there will not be capacity to do so. Mr. Callahan commented that DSIs from USFS is a critical need. Mr. Bauer followed that if there is capacity, they can conduct DSIs. They are limited on what they can suggest to homeowners.

Dave Rudolf offered a checklist he uses to check defensible space around homes. He added that vegetation can be removed on the "eyebrows" of county right-of-ways with the clearance of Mark Cruz at Plumas County.

Steven Kreth asked if a property backs USFS land, who can be contacted to reduce fuels adjacent to homes. Mr. Bauer answered that the District Ranger can be contacted to provide approval for removing these fuels. Contact PNF if Forest Service Land encroaches on defensible space, there may be capacity available to undertake fuel reduction.

Mr. Bauer concluded that USFS engines are staffed with 5 people, instead of 3, and that there are limitations to how long USFS personnel can work. USFS cannot work 24-hour shifts. There is no fire protection at night, but additional personnel may be available.

3. USFS Claremont Project – Kyla Sabo shared that the Claremont Project is the last contiguous green stand on the Mount Hough district. The project extends from Meadow Valley to La Porte and encompasses 30,000 acres. This project is focused on WUI protection. Where USFS land borders private land, there are units within the project. The biggest change in this project is a specific Forest Plan Amendment. This means they are proposing to amend the PNF Plan to change the canopy cover retention requirement. Previously the forest plan dictated that 40% of canopy cover must be retained. 40% of canopy cover limits forest health objectives and does not give longevity to treatments. There is current research that reflects historical data that supports less than 40% canopy cover to foster a healthier forest. Some of the project has protected areas for owl and goshawk PACs. Only hand thinning is proposed in those areas. Mechanical treatment will be used elsewhere. Comment period ends May 20th with a final decision in March of next year.

Joe Smailes asked what the proposed canopy cover amendment percentage is for areas with owl PACs. Ms. Sabo responded that the treatment will stick close to 40% in areas with owl PACs and will only be hand-thinned.

Ms. Hepner asked about the prescribed fire only treatment unit. Ms. Sabo answered that the area marked for prescribed fire is the Minerva burn scar and prescribed fire is the initial treatment for this area.

Matt West asked what the upper diameter limit will be for owl PACs. Ms. Sabo answered that 30 in diameter will be maintained across the project area. For protected areas, the limit will be 12 inches DBH.

Dan Martynn asked what the canopy cover will be for areas without owl PACs. Ms. Sabo answered 20-30% canopy cover.

Mr. Kreth asked for an explanation of canopy cover. Mr. Tompkins answered that canopy cover is the proportion of the forest floor covered by the vertical projection of the tree crowns.

Mr. Kreth asked if there was strong public support for this project? Ms. Sabo said yes.

Trina Cunningham stated that MSC, in general, supports these projects and would like to see more burning and less fuels. Heavy equipment can cause damage to the understory. Some plants will thrive with disturbance and there is a likelihood that there are burial sites on any project in Plumas County. Reminder that these are ancestral lands. Through no effort of our own the Maidu people have been displaced. MSC supports this project and continues to look for more meaningful ways to engage with this project and others that protect communities. Endangered species are important, but so are cultural sites.

Mr. Felker expressed concern about project planning for green forests compared to fire damage rehab throughout PNF. Ms. Sabo weighed options between protecting what we have left and reviving what we lost. She said they are not walking away from rehab.

Mr. Felker asked what the small finger at the edge of the map is near La Porte Road. Ms. Sabo answered that this is an area that will not be treated due to hydrologic concerns.

Mr. Sanders asked if there is a market for green trees when mills are full of salvage. He also asked how brush species will be managed under the 20-30% canopy cover. Ms. Sabo answered that projects cannot be planned around timber markets. The area is hitting the two-year mark of salvage trees and the area will be open for green timber sale again. Timber sales look for how much volume per acre can be harvested. If there is excess, the material is decked and burned so at least it is out of the forest. In terms of brush succession, this is not a one and done entry, there will be a second treatment.

Mr. Sanders stated that he has not seen maintenance for over 30 years. Ms. Sabo answered that this project is the next best option. Meadow Valley was one of the first QLG projects and was not thinned heavy enough and now they have to go back and get it to desired conditions.

Mr. Sanders replied that timber sales cannot pay for the project. Ms. Sabo agreed.

Gia Martynn asked if the current EA includes maintenance. Ms. Sabo answered yes.

Joe Smailes stated that there will be a great need for federal timber. Commercial thinning is a great tool to get most of the fuel out of the forest. Near the La Porte area might be a good area to offer landowner assistance. These are the areas where we can reach the landowner. The opportunity to reach out to landowners and get them involved is an opportunity that cannot be missed.

Ms. Sabo answered that USFS is interested in partnerships.

Mr. Tompkins added that UCCE secured a SNC Forest Health grant and allocated funds for the RCD to conduct surveys and CEQA compliance as well as some funds for tribal consultation. PCFSC signed a support letter for this project 3 years ago and it is good to see this come to fruition.

Ms. Martynn asked if the Plumas Audubon Quincy WIP will be included in planning. Ms. Sabo answered yes.

~~4. California Fire Safe Council Conference – Liam Galleher~~

5. PG&E Settlement Funds for Chipping Program – Ms. Hepner shared that the PCFSC Board approved using PGE settlement funds to make up the difference for the Chipping Program this spring.

Mr. Sanders asked if there will be 2 phases. Ms. Hepner answered yes.

Ms. McCourt asked if there is a possibility for a free green waste program for the short term. Ms. Hepner answered it might be a possibility.

Mr. Reynolds answered that the PCFSC Board will be careful with how PGE funds are spent. The plan is to turn the \$5 million into \$10 million or more.

Old Business

1. [PCFSC Strategic Plan](#) - Don Gasser shared that the PCFSC Board started the process of developing a Strategic Plan a couple of months ago. He asked for approval of the plan. It is a document addressing

long term solutions. A specific goal is to grow the staff to reach all of the areas in Plumas County and to monitor activities year to year.

Mr. Callahan thanked Mr. Gasser for starting this project. He also thanked Hannah Hepner and Jim Wilcox for information on how the organization works, including tactical actions on how to complete work.

Mr. Gasser added that there may be a need for further discussion.

Ms. Ferguson provided some specific edits. She added that landowner assistance might also be a good goal to include. She asked what increasing the budget by 20% would mean annually? Mr. Gasser answered that this means the budget will need to be increased by 20% each fiscal year.

Ms. Hepner clarified that the \$5 million from PGE will not be expended in one year. The 20% is not based on the total amount of grant funding, but on the annual budget. There will be an annual budget discussion to reflect this plan at the next meeting.

Ms. Ferguson stated that a 20% increase each year may not be attainable and is aggressive.

Mr. Reynolds added that the point of this plan is to be more aggressive with our goals to encourage us to strive for a certain level of functionality.

Ms. Ferguson suggested adding a statement about succession planning for changes in leadership for chair and co-chair board roles.

Mr. Gasser added that increasing public engagement includes landowner assistance. PCFSC wants to get every citizen involved because each has a role to play in losses from wildfire.

Mr. Reynolds added that the original plan was 4-5 pages long and felt that it was not concise. The action items were added for this reason.

Vote to adopt the Strategic Plan with changes:

Motion - Mike Callahan , Second - Kathy Kogge

John Reynolds - aye

Kathy Kogge - aye

Mike Callahan -aye

Ron Heinbockle - absent

Chuck Bowman - aye

Michael Hall - aye

Don Gasser - aye

Trina Cunningham - aye

Dan Martynn - aye

Sally McGowan - absent

Ryan Tompkins - aye

Dan Martynn - aye

Ryan Bauer- aye

Tracey Ferguson - aye

Joe Smailes - aye

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Biomass Working Group: Beth Rouse shared that meetings with Plumas County Public Works will be recurring in June.

- CAL FIRE: Alan Thornhill shared that in relation to CFMA for the Prevention Bureau, USFS has agreed to take on this responsibility. The AOP dictates that USFS can conduct inspections when it relates to wildland fires. DSI Teams are up and running, will be working through Plumas County this month and continuing with other counties throughout the rest of the year.
- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Michael Hall shared that planting for PNF has finished and will move into site prep for next year. 60 acres of planting on private lands has been done in the La Porte area, this is the first planting done through EForT. The EForT program is moving forward with 3 foresters and 120 landowners signed up. The RCD is looking for board members. You must be a landowner in Plumas County to be a member of the Board. Contact Michael Hall if interested.
Gary Parque asked what the RCD was planting.
Mr. Hall answered mixed conifer with lower density is being planted.
- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Ms. Hepner updated the group that the last meeting went well. Meetings are held quarterly. Mr. Hall added that the meeting was well attended. There is a big move to do more planning in an efficient manner.
Mr. Gasser asked if FRSC is looking at the changes to the USFS WUI. Ms. Hepner answered that PCFSC is responsible for the map that is proposed to the BOS. Mr. Bauer added that there will be a significant change in terms of defense on the PNF side and that he will give an update at the end of the month.
Mr. Smiles added it would be good to have a post-Dixie Fire restoration update on all efforts with USFS.
- Firewise Communities: Ms. Rouse added that the next Firewise meeting will be June 15th. Penny Leinwander shared that on June 18th, there will be a FW meeting and presentation with Dale Knutsen. Contact Penny for more information.
Mr. Bauer shared that of all of the FW communities, none but Seneca had any significant losses in the Dixie Fire.
- Industry – Timber: Mr. Parque asked what it means for Collins Pine to “close” their forests. Mr. Smiles answered that the closure is related to reducing risk.
- Industry – Insurance: Mike Flanigan shared that there are no changes from last month. PG&E settled on \$400 per sq ft for lawsuit payouts and the settlement includes the contents of homes. The moratorium from the Insurance Commissioner will expire in July. Mr. Flanigan is fearful for the changes that may come with this. Inspections/consultations will be more necessary to keep insurance coverage. The Volunteer Tool Trailer work day did not turn out many volunteers, we need more engagement.
Mr. Bauer shared that there may be an official report for Firewise Community viability during wildfire.
Mr. Callahan shared that using Plumas News as an outreach resource is a good move.
Mr. Reynolds added that raffles, food and free items can draw people.
- Industry - Utilities – Not present
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Ben McNally updated the group that NRCS is finalizing the EQIP, and Catastrophic Fire programs for the year.
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – Not present
- Plumas Audubon Society – Not present
- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association – Not present

- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES) – Not present
- Plumas County Planning Department – Not present (left early)
- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West shared that the Genesee Woods burn is planned for Sunday and Monday in Genesee Woods. If the window is not right, it will be pushed back. This may be our last burn for this year. S-290 will be offered June 2 - 5. Enrollment is open. There is a Cal PBA event with L-280, group meeting and underburn in Santa Barbara.
- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship – Not present
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy – Not present
- Tree Mortality Update: Mr. Sanders shared that the trees are in bad shape. There is a lot of fir die-off and mortality across all species.

Mr. Bauer added that he asked Danny Cluck about the cedars. Small cedars are dying from freezing last year.

Mr. Sanders shared that cedar die-off is due to extreme temps and beetles. Danny Cluck suggested that this year we would see many trees die.

Mr. Bauer added that PNF is getting a lot of calls about dead trees and will be removing dead trees adjacent to private land.

Mr. Sanders shared that if you notice where trees are dying, density may be the cause. Thin!

- Tribal Representatives: Ms. Cunningham shared that MSC is planning for restoration on ancestral lands. They are developing a team of experts. Ms. Cunningham attended the Region 5 tribal strategic planning session, and it is exciting to have tribes included in this plan. Big Time Logging Show is June 4th at the Chester Park.
- UC Cooperative Extension: Mr. Tompkins updated the group that the Wildfire Restoration Symposium will take place tomorrow from 9am-4pm. Yana Valachovic will speak on structure loss in the Camp Fire at the Wildfire Preparedness Fair. Speaking with CAL FIRE about the FW reporting tool. Plumas and Sierra counties were able to show over 14,000 hours and over \$1.5 million in investments to both the State and the NFPA.
- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Mr. Jimenez shared that LNF was able to sign the NEPA for 5,200 acres on the West Shore of Lake Almanor. LNF is looking to re-enter and burn in older project areas. Work on post-fire damage in the Chester area is on-going. LNF is working with the Sierra Institute on these projects. Looking at all old projects within Dixie Fire and hoping to move timber out of these projects.

Ms. McCourt added that Yana Valachovic spoke at the Zone Zero workshop over zoom.

Mr. Bauer shared that the Mapes project Decision will be signed later this year. Will move forward with unburned areas as priority. The community protection projects just went out for scoping and will be broken up into 4 separate projects. Will be utilizing partnerships like the Butte County RCD and Lassen County FSC to accomplish work.

2. Status of Current Grants

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Mike McCourt updated the group that High Sierra Fire has been contracted to implement the program. Have been satisfied with work in the past. Applications are still coming in and these extras will go out to bid. The Program has 150 clients at the moment. PCFSC received \$200,000 from California Community Foundation and the S/D program will likely be spending all of the funds.

- Chipping Program – Gary Parque updated the group that the Chipping Program is funded and folks are signed up.
- HFR Project Schedule – Mr. West shared that the Lakes Basin work will begin at the end of the month.
Ms. Hepner shared that PCFSC hired Rachel Wherman as a Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project Manager. Rachel will move forward with Eastern Plumas and American Valley Projects.

3. Status of Grant Budgets – no updates

4. Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities – Mr. Bauer shared that American Valley and C-Road were both awarded Stevens funds.

Ms. Hepner shared that PCFSC is still waiting to hear about potential funding for Lake Almanor. The Watershed Research and Training Center awarded \$198,765 for PUC coordination; NSAQMD is providing \$14,000 for the Chipping Program.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Adjourn - Next meeting June 9th, 2022