

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Board of Directors

Acting Chair, John Reynolds, Firewise Community (19)
Secretary/Treasurer, Julie Ruiz, NSAQMD (20)
Don Gasser (20)
Dan Martynn, NRCS (20)
Trina Cunningham, California Indian Water Commission (20)

Chuck Bowman, Firewise Community (19)
Jim Hamblin, PC Fire Chiefs Assoc. (19)
Ryan Bauer, USFS (20)
Mike Callaghan, Firewise Community (20)

Mission Statement:

“To reduce the loss of natural and human made resources caused by wildfire through Firewise Community programs and pre-fire activities.”

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 10th, 2019 - 9:00 am.

Plumas County Planning & Building Services Conference Room
555 Main Street, Quincy, CA

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – Addition of update from the Office of Emergency Services about the PG&E power shutoff. Carson Wingfield said that the outage is affecting about 804 accounts in Plumas County. The lines are physically inspected by aircraft before re-energization. It is recommended to unplug electric devices before re-energization.
3. Approval of September Meeting Minutes – **m – T. Cunningham, s – Martynn**
4. Public Comment – Richard Stockton announced that the State Insurance Commissioner will be in Plumas County. Mr. Stockton said that he has been invited to provide feedback to the Commissioner and will share information about the work being done by the Fire Safe Council.

New Business

1. Feather River College Fuels Reduction Watershed Improvement Project Presentation – Dr. Darla DeRuiter provided an overview of work that has taken place on the Feather River College campus. In 2014, Darrell Jury wrote a Forest and Fire Management Plan for the 145 acres of forested landscape on campus. Dr. DeRuiter’s ecosystem management class has focused on implementation of the plan. The college has submitted a Firewise application. They also have a Sierra Nevada Conservancy planning grant and are working on a proposal for implementation of a Watershed Improvement Project (WIP). The efforts have been a collaborative process with the Maidu Summit Consortium, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plumas Audubon Society, Greenville Rancheria and Plumas National Forest. The goal is to train youth to be leaders in developing forest health standards.

Elizabeth Ramsey introduce the WIP project by describing the Anthropocene. She gave a broad overview of historic and current forest conditions focusing on campus vegetation that has accumulated since the 1946 fire. The WIP project is designed to: create infrastructure (trails, hose and tool caches), thin, chip, pile burn, and underburn. College classes participated in the CEQA survey process and are anticipated to contribute to trail construction. The result will be a landscape managed for black oak, with permanent recreation trails used as fireline to maintain forest values with the use of fire.

John Sheehan pointed out that the campus' water tanks could be linked to Quincy's to provide opportunity to equalize pressure among tanks for firefighting. He said that it would be a very costly endeavor.

Trina Cunningham said that in her work with the IRWM, mountain town communities have prioritized water tanks. She said that with a regional effort more funding may become available.

Claude Sanders noted that the campus shares a northern border with the Forest Service. Darrell Jury said that the Mt. Hough Ranger District has explored seeking grant funds to do work around campus.

Gary Parque pointed out that many resources for underburning were available on campus when Mike Yost had an active burn program. He suggested that changing priorities lead to the disappearance of those resources.

Kevin Danaher suggested that trails constructed on slopes should be designed as swales to keep water on site.

2. SNC Grant Proposal Resolution – John Reynolds presented resolution 2019-01 to apply to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for the Lakes Basin Forest Health Phase II project. **m – Martynn, s – Bowman**

Ayes: Reynolds, Martynn, Cunningham, Callaghan, Bowman

Noes: none

Absent: Ruiz, Hamblin, Bauer, Gasser

Old Business

1. Mapping Update – SIG and 34 North will be presenting the updated map and potential platform to the Plumas County Board of Supervisors Tuesday, Oct 15th.

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- **Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES):** Sue McCourt said that this week is National Fire Prevention Week. The focus this year is on having an escape plan. Mrs. McCourt noted that the newspaper published a list of businesses with generators. She suggested keeping this information in your vehicle so you know where gas is available. She also suggested testing your ability to open your garage door manually and parking cars outside during planned power outages or red flag warning days. Mrs. McCourt said that Plumas County now has 17 Firewise communities. The most recent is River Valley. There are plans to do an assessment next spring for a Nelson Point Firewise on La Porte Road.
- **CAL FIRE:** Chief Christopherson said that despite the burn restriction lifting, there is still fire threat. He announced that CAL FIRE grant opportunities are open and said that we can expect future grants as a result of recent bills signed by the Governor.
- **USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction:** Will Brendecke is the new Forest Silviculturist. He provided an updated about the Walker Fire saying that generally it burned hot – about 50% was stand replacing fire. About 1,000 acres burned on private lands. Mr. Brendecke is evaluating the opportunity for salvage, which needs to be complete within the year. \$750,000 of BAER (Burned Area Emergency Response) money is available to mitigate the damage. An evaluation has been done and has identified

the need for signs and culvert size increases. Mr. Brendecke is working on a proposal with the Pacific Northwest Research station and a group out of Salt Lake City to use drones to do rapid assessment mapping of fire effects on vegetation. Improvements to RAVAGE maps from satellite images will have academic and management implications.

- **Natural Resource Conservation Service:** Dan Martynn has done outreach in the Mohawk Chapman road area adjacent to the Forest Service's Haskell project. He has interest from 5-6 landowners.
- **Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District:** Melissa Klundby said that although CAL FIRE has lifted the burn ban, there is still no burning in Quincy or Portola. She said that large residential burns may require a pollution permit. She is doing outreach in Portola about storage of wood and burning of dry wood. There is curbside green waste disposal available in Portola through Intermountain Disposal.
- **Industry Representatives:** Will Brendecke asked who provides the fire risk map used by insurers and how it is updated. Chief Christopherson said it is a CAL FIRE map that shows risk for regions of the state based on fuel continuities. It was generated as a broad spectrum map for the state to make determinations about staffing and resources. He said that small areas where work has been done aren't reflected on this map. Chief Christopherson said that Cal Mapper is the program used to show grant work that is accomplished. He suggested that insurance companies could be using that information but it is up to them what information they access.

John Sheehan said that when the Fire Safe Council first initiated the Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance program, the Council attempted to engage insurance companies in supporting the program. Mr. Sheehan asked if the current circumstances in the state have changed the thinking of the industry. Richard Stockton said that companies are exiting the market, not looking at how to be proactive. He said that premiums are going to go up and that if the state Insurance Commissioner legislates more regulation, it will reduce the number of companies in the state. Mr. Stockton said that State Farm hasn't dropped anyone in California. He encouraged Firewise communities to continue to demonstrate good initiatives.

Judy Clot said that in Gold Mountain she has been mapping individual homeowners' work. The Firewise community has provided letters that have assisted homeowners in getting approval from certain insurance companies. She said that in her experience insurance companies don't have the resources to interpret the available information.

- **Tribal Representatives:** Trina Cunningham reported that she is continuing with cross cultural and tribal consultation process training with Region 5 Forest Service. She announced that the Humbug Valley transaction has been completed and that it is a land transfer event that is unprecedented. She has been working with the IC team on the Walker Fire. She reported that there was dozer line damage to cultural sites in the suppression efforts. Greenville Rancheria is rehabbing the areas with hand crews. Some ceremonial areas were completely burned. There is a tribal interest in the benefits of smoke. She said that in the process of managing fire with fire, air quality is a significant hindrance.
- **UC Cooperative Extension:** not present
- **Feather River Stewardship Coalition:** Hannah Hepner reported that she is working on a grant application for the Lakes Basin Forest Health Phase II project. The Wildlife Forest Treatment field tour in September was successful.
- **Plumas Underburn Cooperative:** Matt West said that the group is identifying potential burn sites. The UC Cooperative Extension's Prescribed Fire on Private Lands workshop is coming up. There will be a PUC meeting at noon at the Fire Safe Council office.
- **Firewise Communities:**

Graeagle – Chuck Bowman said that the insurance workshop was well attended and full of questions from homeowners. He said that some people have used the Home Ignition Zone consultations to help get insurance. He has been working with underwriters at the Hartford to illustrate the work that Firewise does.

Gold Mountain – Kathy Kogge said that the Firewise committee has had great leadership and that the community is very aware of what needs to be done. The committee is focusing on making each person self-sufficient with apps and websites to make them aware of conditions. The community held a personal evacuation day in which residents were given a half an hour window to move everything they'd want to move in an evacuation. They will be holding a second one. Judy Clot reported that chipping went great and that over 27 parcels were treated. She gave perspective on how the PG&E power shutoffs can affect communities and suggested having a way to charge electronic items.

Grizzly Ranch – John Reynolds said that chipping is taking place this week. The community has been recertified for Firewise.

Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman – Mike McCourt said that the community took advantage of the chipping program. The committee has recruited a new member. The community reported more hours than needed for recertification. The Forest Service has been preparing to burn units north of Cromberg and Sloat.

Portola – Phil Oels said that Firewise recertification is complete. There is now a weed abatement ordinance in affect. Dave Rudolph reported that work has been done at West End Park and around Memorial Hall to demonstrate fire safe standards.

Chester – Karen Lichti said that they are in the process of recertifying.

Old Highway – Sally McGowan has been working with neighbors to thin and prune vegetation on two acres behind homes. They have created several piles. She is hoping to have the area prepped for an underburn this fall. Chris Coen has the names of six insurance companies that are providing policies in the area.

Not present/no update: Almanor Pines, Mohawk Vista, Lake Almanor West, Plumas Eureka, Johnsville, Greenhorn Creek, Portola, Taylorsville, Smith Creek Ranch, Lake Almanor Country Club, Galeppi Ranch, Hamilton Branch/East Shore/Seneca, River Valley View

Potential Communities: Paxton Lodge, Feather River College, Genesee Woods, Meadow Valley, Clio

- **Tree Mortality Update:** Claude Sanders asked what work has been done in high mortality stands in the state and if fire has burned into any of them. Chief Christopherson said that there are areas around Bass Lake with 100% conifer mortality. Fire has gotten into those areas. Trees are falling which creates a lot of heat in the fires. There are blow downs in anything more than 15 mph winds. Work is being done to put fuel breaks around communities. Projects identified in the Governor's 45-day Report will be completed by the end of the year.

Mr. Sanders asked what is being done with large diameter material. Chief Christopherson said that the work is being contracted to operators with log trucks. Some of it is going to biomass, but there's a huge stockpile.

Dave Rudolph asked what can be done when trees show pitch tubes and frass. Mr. Brendecke said that pheromone bait traps are an option. The tree can be watered. But it might be too late once frass is apparent.

2. Status of Current Grants –

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: Mike McCourt reported that the program ended in August. One hundred and twelve residences were treated. The Walker Fire burned close to two residences in Red Clover estates.

Several people with insurance issues have been helped by the program. Mike was asked if the program is still based on income level. He said that when the program was funded with CAL FIRE SRA fees, the program's cost-share was waived and never reinstated.

Chipping Program: Gary Parque thanked the community volunteers for their role in the success of the program. He said that the program has expanded and that it may no longer be able to providing two rounds of chipping each year.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction Schedule – Matt West said that the Bucks Lake project should be complete by the end of the month. The Butterfly Valley machine work is underway. Hot saw treatments weren't providing the desired results so those units have been changed to grapple piling. Hand thinning in Butterfly should start next week. The Genesee/Elizabethtown/Cooridor project will start once the operator is snowed out of the Little Grass Valley project.

3. Status of Grant Budgets – Hannah Hepner pointed out that the Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance program has some funds remaining for coordination next year. However, the modification request to the Mohawk Vista Stevens project was denied. Therefore, the Senior/Disabled program does not have any grant funds for next year.

4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – The Fire Safe Council is waiting to hear from the Forest Service about the status of several Stevens proposals. Proposals to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy are due October 14th. Ms. Hepner noted that the program is her highest priority for the current CAL FIRE funding opportunity. Mike Callaghan asked that the Council play a role in project prioritization.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

October 12 – Chester Fire Open House

October 17th – The Human Element documentary screening at the Town Hall Theater, Quincy

October 18/19th – UC Cooperative Extension Prescribed Fire on Private Lands Workshop, Meadow Valley

Adjourn - Next meeting November 14th, 2019