

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 13th 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 checked="" 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 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"/> Ron Heinbockle Volunteer Fire Department (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 – Reynolds

Biomass Working Group has been removed from standing reports and Sarah Nasif will update in the PCFSC program section.

3. Approve September Meeting Minutes – **Motion – Mike Callahan, Second – Sally McGowan**

4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to: none

5. Public Comment: Gary Darling updated that Aries Biomass proposes construction of a gasification facility adjacent to Collins Pine. The facility requires 10 acres of land and significant feedstock. Collins Pine cannot supply the needed amount of feedstock and Aries will need additional sources of biomass. Aries is applying for a state grant and Letters of Support have been circulated within the Council. The facility will supply 20 new jobs and will utilize 15 - 20 trucks per day of biomass chips. The facility will create energy from excess

biomass and reduce air quality concerns. Reach out to Gary Darling for questions or if you would like to support the project.

Kevin Danaher added that biochar is often a by-product of gasification. Mr. Danaher asked if this facility will produce biochar. Mr. Darling answered yes. Biochar has a wide range of uses and the facility can become a carbon negative project.

Mike Flanigan asked if this project was similar to biochar kilns. Mr. Darling answered no.

6. Board Comment: Don Gasser congratulated Aries Biomass on their progress. He thanked Hannah Hepner and others for providing comments to the Plumas County Board of Supervisors regarding SB 6903.

New Business

Jeff Greef has been researching the process of converting biomass chips into a fibrous growing medium in the effort to reduce hazardous fuels. This fiber can be produced from pine. A company in North Carolina produces this product and it consists of 30% wood fiber and 40% peat moss. A second company in Washington state uses processed wood fiber for hydroseeding. Peat moss has been the standard for growing media for decades, but issues with the use of peat moss became apparent. The agricultural industry will need to 3x or 4x more peat moss in the future. Wood fiber could be used as a replacement. Both the US and several European companies produce wood fiber for growing purposes. Conifer chips and sap wood create the best quality wood fiber. Most fuels reduction in Plumas County would be pine and sap wood. This will be a large export for CA. California consumes 200,000 tons of peat moss per year. If 10% of CA peat moss was replaced with wood fiber, about 500 chip trucks could fill this demand. Wood fiber compares closely to peat moss for agricultural purposes and works well as substitute or supplement. 12 European companies produce wood fiber for commercial use. Specific machinery is used to break wood into fiber. There are different options of machinery to create wood fiber. Brian Jackson (North Carolina State, Horticulture) will visit CA in December to collect samples for a North Carolina State research project studying the use and production of wood fiber in western forests. The purpose of his research is to measure the viability of western pine species for wood fiber use. Brian Jackson will be speaking on the subject during his visit. Mr. Greef's suggestion is to build a pilot program producing wood fiber in Plumas County. Two companies in Chico and Tracy sell agricultural by-products and might be an outlet for the pilot program's wood fiber. Summary: peat moss needs a replacement and wood fiber is favorable in reducing hazardous fuels. California has an agricultural by-products assessment program that can determine the quality of the wood fiber.

Mr. Danaher asked what percentage of wood fiber is imported to the US. Mr. Greef answered that he did not know. Any locally sourced product will cost less and is less logistically complicated.

Don Gasser asked if Mr. Greef planned on bringing in the state or the university. Mr. Greef replied that he is still in the research phase.

Claude Sanders added that it is important to examine the cost vs. benefit of a project like this. It will take a lot of energy to run expensive machines to produce wood fiber. There is a lot of variability in western woods. Pitch content can be high. High pitch content could cause an issue.

Mr. Greef added that the heat from processing the wood can evaporate resins.

Gary Parque added that peat moss harvesting from wetlands has carbon sequestration concerns. Mr. Greef responded that wood fiber is a solution to peat moss use.

Old Business

None

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- CAL FIRE: Jonathan Pangburn shared that CAL FIRE will maintain peak staffing. Currently CAL FIRE engines are in Lassen and Modoc Counties. This will not change unless there is a significant change in precipitation or fire conditions. Burn permits are not open, but some agencies have been conducting prescribed burns with special permits. Burn permits will open soon. LE5 and LE7 projects will need CAL FIRE consideration.
- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Michael Hall shared that there was an article in Plumas News on the North Quincy Resilience Project and a public meeting will be held tonight @ 5pm in the Quincy Library. This project is 9,000 acres and focuses on HFR and forest resiliency in the north end of American Valley. RCD crew finished a 40 acre thinning project in Plumas Eureka State Park. Through the fire prevention grant with PCFSC, the RCD will bring on a larger crew for underburn preparations and defensible space projects in Plumas County. EFRT project work continues. Gary Parque is the RCD's newest director.

Mr. Gasser asked how many of the 9,000 acres are private. Mr. Hall answered none.

- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Hannah Hepner shared that the Franks Valley tour was well attended.
- Firewise Communities: Beth Rouse shared that Red Clover Creek FW completed their Community Risk Assessment. The next FW Leads meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 19th. FW reporting hours and other additional documents are due November 18th.
- Industry – Timber: Brian West shared that the Crescent Mills saw mill has been processing salvage logs in the Indian Valley area. The purpose of this mill is to supply Indian Valley with material for rebuilding. The mill is looking for additional material; it can come from private property. Some modifications have been made to the mill with parts from all over the country. The team is working on viable processes for winter operation to protect employees from the weather. The mill is open 5 days a week for wholesale purchases. It is all pine salvage, with some Doug Fir and Cedar.

Joe Smailes asked how many people work at the mill full time. Mr. West answered that the mill employs 6 people with 2 supervisors. The mill processes 2-3 full log loads a day. The mill will need substantial wood for the winter. The mill is connected with the Sierra Institute and they are always looking for grant funding. If logs are the right prices, they won't turn anything away. They can't produce finished products, but can produce posts, rough-cut lumber, etc.

Kyle Felker asked what waste the mill produces. Mr. West answered that they have not moved the waste from the mill yet. The site has a firewood processor. The crew can deliver 2 cords at a time. The demand is high and there is of interest in building materials. Thinking of creative ways to get people housed quickly.

- Industry – Insurance: Mr. Flanigan said that the insurance situation in CA is unchanged. In last 5 years, the Leavitt group has gone from 70% of writings to 50%. The Quincy Fire District’s insurance was dropped and that is not a good sign. Rate increases will not allow for a sustainable market. Firewise is being recognized with insurance companies.

Paul Mrowczynski added that some Meadow Valley residents are receiving non-renewals. Are there still companies offering coverage? Mr. Flanigan answered yes, but are not in the usual market and means less coverage. More options to come for both private and commercial. CA FAIR Plan is requesting rate increases, but is still available. The moratorium was not renewed.

Mr. Felker asked if Quincy proper is receiving cancellations. Mr. Flanigan answered that there will be a backup plan for the Quincy Fire District.

- Industry – Utilities: not present
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): not present
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District: Julie Hunter reminded the group that the City of Portola woodstove curtailment will start November 1st. Open burning is not yet open, keep an eye on the NSQAMD website. If you are planning on burning, contact Julie Hunter for a permit. Reminder that there is no burning in Portola, American and Thompson Valley. NSAQMD is having discussions on permissions for burning in the Quincy area. Thank you to PCFSC for working on seasoned firewood program. This program is for Portola residents, but will expand into Quincy. The Targeted Airshed Grant is open, go to the NSAQMD website to see more details or contact Julie Hunter.
- Plumas Corporation: Scott Corey shared that Plumas Corp finished the second project of the season, Mattley Meadows. The Thompson Project is looking good and the Yellow Creek project is ongoing. Plumas Corp is partnering with USFS to work on the Tributaries Project on the east side of the county.
- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association: not present
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES): not present
- Plumas County Planning Department: Tracey Ferguson shared that the Board of Forestry Fire Safe Regulations are still with the office of administrative law. These regulations did not go into effect as of October 1st. The effective date for these new regulations has been pushed to January 1st or possibly April 1st. Ms. Ferguson will provide a presentation on the changes to the regulations in 2023. AB 3074 Zone 0 Ember Resistant Zone legislation proposed earlier this year is unclear. Alan Thornhill added that new construction will require Zone 0 in 2023. In 2024, all buildings will be required to adhere to Zone 0. Ms. Ferguson thanked Hannah Hepner for presenting to the BOS on SB 6903. The BOS approved the revised letter on September 20th. The revised letter in the BOS meeting minutes as well as on Plumas News. A volunteer group called Team Rubicon offers disaster response services and can be a resource for Plumas communities. Mr. Mrowczynski asked if there was any news on the housing community development block grant. Ms. Ferguson answered that Plumas County applied for funding to expand the county’s wildfire recovery plan and will provide economic stimulus for Greenville businesses. PCFSC and others should expect an update in the next 3-4 months.
- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West reported that SB 926 set aside \$20 million in funds for liability insurance for CaRx Burn Bosses. Butte CAL TREX the past weekend was a success with 80 attendees. Next weekend is FEMO training and the following weekend will be firing operations. PUC is supporting Butte in

this effort. Open burning permits are not available right now, but underburn permits are available. PUC meeting will be next week. Matt announced that the new PUC Manager, Logan Krahenbuhl, will start next Thursday.

Mr. Smalles asked how long Mr. Krahenbuhl will be the PUC Manager. Ms. Hepner answered that there is currently funding for 3 years of full time employment, but it is a permanent position. Mr. Krahenbuhl will be on fire assignments for 2 weeks each year to keep up qualifications.

Mr. Mrowczynski asked if the Spanish Ranch burn was still planned for this year. Ms. Hepner answered that the USFS lands might be burned this year. Private lands will not be burned this year. Mr. Mrowczynski shared that the Spanish Ranch underburn would be a good opportunity for Meadow Valley residents to learn about burning and PUC.

- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship: not present
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy: not present
- Tree Mortality Update: Mr. Sanders reported seeing increased tree mortality within the last 30 days. Pine beetles are likely the cause. White Fir is also experiencing die-off. The Doug Fir mortality is likely due to flat head borers.

Ryan Tompkins added that last April a CAL FIRE Forest Health Specialist raised concerns to the Board of Forestry as similar triggers are being recorded compared to the massive die off in the South Sierra. CA will receive a Triple La Nina which could cause another large-scale drought. There has been unprecedented tree mortality throughout Sierra and Plumas County. Tree mortality can be expected to grow through a dry fall season. La Nina will persist through December. USFS and CAL FIRE have not shared the results of the tree mortality flight. For homeowners, beetles flew in August and it is suggested to look at living trees adjacent to dead trees. Now is the time to take down trees. Next flight will be in April or May. Look for symptoms in green trees.

Mr. Reynolds asked what signs landowners should look for. Mr. Tompkins answered that top death, pitch streams, and frass are signs of beetles.

Mr. Sanders added that there is a rough correlation between the amount of signs and the tree dying. Large numbers of pitch streams and frass can indicate death. Mr. Sanders reported seeing small to intermediate sized cedar death. These small cedars can contribute to fuel ladders surrounding large cedars.

- Tribal Representatives: Trina Cunningham shared that MSC had been working on a CAL Processed Based training last week. The training looked at processed based restoration for fuels reduction and meadow restoration. MSC is looking at fuel breaks and sediment run-off post fire. Processed based restoration is often Tribal focused and no machinery aside from chainsaws are used. MSC is looking at multiple methods of restoration. SPI and J&C purchased about half of the burned timber on MSC land amounting to a few million board feet. MSC is considering replanting with American Forest Foundation and EFRT. MSC will have a significant amount of standing dead trees in Humbug Valley. Applying for funding for Bitter Creek and Mud Creek parcels. MSC owns parcels on rim of Lake Almanor and is looking at sediment run off into the lake. Ms. Cunningham attended an After the Fire Leadership Summit in Sonoma that discussed rebuilding the human environment as well as natural landscapes. Senator Dodd was present and shared support for more prescribed fire and cultural burning. MSC is Looking at more opportunities to influence legislation. Can connect PCFSC Board with After the Fire Foundation.
- UC Cooperative Extension: Mr. Tompkins shared that the UC Cooperative Extension study on Forest Resilience caught the attention of the Board of Forestry. Mr. Tompkins followed up with a presentation.

UCCE submitted a concept proposal to the Effectiveness Monitoring Committee and were asked to submit a full proposal looking at how the Forest Practice Rules allow or do not allow organizations to meet project objectives. The reforestation strategy is in review and will be finalized. A reforestation pipeline project will develop a statewide cone and seed cooperative. In the last 5 years, 20% of PNF has burned with high severity. This is a higher rate than was predicted 6 years ago. There is a huge fuels reduction need across public and private lands in Plumas County that is not being address at scale. There is a huge need to move material that will not be useable in the next few years. Fuels reduction is the key component and the second component will be managing brush. 90 professional foresters doing reforestation attended the Forest Resilience workshop.

Mr. Sanders asked if it is easier to process burned material for a use like wood fiber. Mr. Greef answered that he does not know, but can develop a working group.

- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Mr. Bauer shared that nationally, USFS is extending the season for the Fire Management temporary workforce. We are not out of fire season. The 90 day prescribed fire review is finished and burns are now permitted. Plumas National Forest can now help partners with burning, but cannot conduct their own. USFS has until November 15th to complete the new requirements to allow burning. Plumas is in a zone that includes the Tahoe NF and the Eldorado NF. The zone exceeded fuels targets with 22,734 acres being treated. It was the only zone to exceed targets. Community Protect Projects are all under agreement and NEPA should be ready for next field season. PNF submitted a request to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation for \$34 million in funding to accomplish projects. Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation reached out to PNF specifically. Other priority is PNF Recovery projects. Agreements for the North Fork Communities Project and the Tributaries Project is in progress. Both partners for these projects are local non-profits.
- Feather River Tourism Association: not present

2. Status of PCFSC Programs

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Tommy Brenzovich shared that the program finished treatments for 198 properties this year. 22 people are signed up for next year’s program. PCFSC will likely reach a goal of 250 residences for 2023. The program will be seeing changes to increase effectiveness. Mr. Brenzovich will be turning attention to the Home Hardening Incentive Program.
- Chipping Program – Gary Parque shared that chipping finished on September 23rd with good results. Some folks signed up on the waitlist, but did not put out a pile. The crew is calling participants to make sure they find the pile. Most waitlisted people received treatment. Chipping program is funded for the next 3 years. Ms. Hepner added that the program will always have the option for a waitlist, but the numbers of spots available in the regular chipping schedule will be expanded. Kathy Kogge helped to develop language to encourage waitlisted folks to still put out a pile. Participants can cancel chipping appointments via email link or sign up page.
Kathy Kogge reminded the group that when you sign up, put a pile out. Chances are you will receive treatment.
- Public Lands Projects – Matt West shared that the Lakes Basin work is in progress with no restrictions. PCFSC is applying for funding for the QWIP project.

- Private Lands Projects – Rachel Wehrman shared that the Greenhorn project is in progress. PCFSC has selected a contractor for the Mohawk project and work will begin soon. Layout for the Eastern Plumas Project is in progress. Plumas Disadvantaged Communities is on the same schedule as Eastern Plumas. The Clear Creek Hamilton Branch VMP is in layout and will go out to contract as well. EFRT has a contractor in place.
 - County Coordination – Liam Galleher shared that the Fire Safe Home Visit program is in progress. This is good opportunity to discuss forest ecology with landowners. The “People of Plumas” project will showcase what wildfire mitigation can look like. Mr. Galleher is conducting interviews that will be published on Plumas News and PCFSC social media. Mr. Galleher is applying for grant funds to support the Plumas County Hazardous Fuel Assessment update.
 - Biomass/Firewood Facility – Sarah Nasif reported that the biomass and firewood processing facility for Plumas Corp is still in the planning stages. PCFSC finalized the specifications with Wisewood Energy. Wisewood has been helpful in finding funding sources. PCFSC has been talking with possible consumers of the firewood.
3. Status of Grant Budgets – Mr. Reynolds said that not much has changed within the last 30 days.
 4. Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities - Ms. Hepner shared that \$6 million for the Hazardous Fuel Assessment update and 2,000 acres of fuel reduction has been requested. This is a new grant program. PCFSC submitted a Plumas RAC application for a Green Waste Pilot Project. SNC proposal for QWIP implementation is due at the end of month.
Ms. Rouse shared that one application to the Feather River Tourism Association has been made for Wildfire Preparedness Month activities. Another application has been made to Coalitions and Collaboratives to fund PCFSC outreach and education, some video productions, and printing Living With Fire.
 5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events: Ms. Hepner reminded the group of the October 27th tour of the Quincy Wildfire Protection Project. This project was completed on CHY, Plumas District Hospital and private land ownership. Parking at the Mormon church parking lot. 150 acres were completed.

Adjourn - Next meeting November 10th @ 9am.