

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 8th, 2020 - 9:00 am.

Via Zoom

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 (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice Chair , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Secretary/Treasurer Don Gasser, RPF (20)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Julie Ruiz NSAQMD (20)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dan Martynn NRCS (20)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trina Cunningham (20) Watershed Research Center	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Callaghan Firewise Community (20)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Bowman Firewise Community (21)
<input type="checkbox"/> Jim Hamblin Citizen (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (20)	<input type="checkbox"/> Brad Graevs Feather River RCD (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> Richard Stockton State Farm (21)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Tompkins UCCE (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracey Ferguson Plumas County Planning (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (21)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – no changes
3. Approval of September Meeting Minutes – approved via online survey
4. Public Comment – none
5. Board Comment – Don Gasser urged all fire safe council members and staff to watch the discussions that play out in Sacramento and Washington after this fire season. The future arming of firefighting arsenals must involve local efforts like fire safe councils in order to expand scope and scale in protecting our communities.

New Business

1. North Complex Update – Jamie Gamboa, Incident Commander trainee for the California Interagency Incident Management Team (IMT) 4, said that the fire has been contained on the north and northeast sides. The west side has had good progress and containment. Some firing operations have been conducted and the fire’s edge has been brought down to Highway 70. Contingency lines are being constructed should the fire cross Highway 70. The 100 acres spot fire has been holding. The only open fire is in the northwest corner. Wind shifts yesterday pushed against uncontained line, but they fire only grew by two acres.

2. Treatment Effectiveness in the North Complex – Hannah Hepner shared photos of Fire Safe Council treatment areas along La Porte Rd that were affected by the North Complex. She said that in total 380 acres of fuel reduction treatments were done by the Fire Safe Council over ten years. In addition, NRCS, CAL FIRE, and commercial timber had all done work in the area. All but one outbuilding along La Porte Road survived the fire. The fuel treatments were credited for the success of the structure protection in the area. In some treated areas there are still green trees, in other areas the forest is completely decimated. The Fire Safe Council will be working with UC Cooperative Extension to monitor mortality rates in the treated areas.

3. Recognition Program Update – Kathy Kogge recapped the goals of the program. She will be working with Plumas News to highlight honorees and leverage the program to increase public knowledge. The Fire Safe Council will develop a certificate to be presented to the recipients at meetings. Ms. Kogge proposed that the recognition have a name, such as the “Golden Feather.” John Reynolds said that he and Ms. Kogge will draft a written plan, including a method for voting on the nominees. Once the program is developed information will go out to the public.

Old Business

None

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

CAL FIRE – Chris Christopherson said that Defensible Space Inspections are continuing through a cooperative effort with Peninsula Fire Protection District. There have been a large number of inspections around Lake Almanor and Chester. CAL FIRE is work with the Plumas County District Attorney to start issuing citations. Throughout the rest of Plumas County, inspections are done as requested. The Unit was only able to hire one Defensible Space Inspector this year. There are positions open.

Chief Christopherson shared preliminary numbers for the 19/20 FY state goals. He said that Plumas County was a significant contributor to some of the numbers. Goals for 20/21 are 30,000 acres of broadcast prescribed burning, 20,000 acres of fuel reduction, and 250,000 Defensible Space inspections. An increase in targets typically relates to an increase in grant availability.

Sue McCourt asked what message Chief Christopherson would share from a fire suppression perspective. He responded that he had an active role in the Sheep Fire suppression and was heavily involved with evacuations. It is paramount for people to be prepared any time that there is a possibility of evacuation. He reiterated: be prepared, have a plan, and leave at the first notification. Not just for the safety of the public, but also for first responders. The early activation of evacuation for the Sheep Fire was a success; it allowed resources to get into those areas and do full suppression efforts rather than assisting with evacuations. He said that fuel loading in California is more than is seen anywhere else in the United States and it is important for everyone to do what they can.

Tracey Ferguson asked if there were upcoming CAL FIRE grants for fire prevention planning. Chief Christopherson said that he hasn't seen anything yet. He said that there have been updates to fire safe regulations and that more changes are coming. There will be legislative changes as a result of these fires. Mrs. McCourt asked what the timeline is for AB 3074, which establishes an ember resistant zone in the first five feet. Chief Christopherson responded that it is a change to the public resources code that will need to go through the legislative process, which usually takes about a year. There have been no official updates from the department.

Don Gasser asked how the Unit trains the Defensible Space inspectors. Chief Christopherson said there is an internal training program. He said there is a program for Firewise members to become consultants through the NFPA. Anyone wanting to be a consultant is encouraged to take the training.

Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD) – not present

Feather River Stewardship Coalition – Ms. Hepner is collaborating with the Feather River RCD to facilitate ongoing FRSC activities. Meetings and a field tour will be scheduled for this fall/winter.

Firewise Communities – Sue McCourt commented that many Firewise communities were affected by fires this summer. She commended the work of the communities. Nelson Point Firewise will be submitting for recognition soon; they are a good case study for being prepared.

Mrs. McCourt provided updates for the following communities:

Genesee Woods is working on submitting for recognition

West Almanor is doing two days of fuel reduction along roadsides. The West Shore project will be a huge benefit for that community.

LACC is conducting an evacuation drill on November 4th. This Saturday they are holding a Firewise town hall featuring Camp Fire survivors' stories.

Tracey Ferguson said that Quincy Firewise held a meeting last week. The group has a map that breaks the community into neighborhoods. There will be captains for each neighborhood. The group is starting to document volunteer hours. Ryan Tompkins added that the size of the Quincy Firewise community represents an annual investment of \$50,000 to maintain Firewise status.

Mike Yost shared that Taylorsville has submitted its application.

Paul Mrowizynski received a California Fire Foundation grant to set up go-bags for each resident of Meadow Valley. The community is working on establishing pod leaders. There will be a community meeting to talk about a siren.

Kathy Kogge said that Gold Mountain had a Firewise meeting two weeks ago with guest speakers. One presenter talked about their personal experience evacuating from Meadow Valley. The second speaker was Larry Smith talking about use of goats for fuel reduction.

John Reynolds said that they last week of chipping created a flurry of activity, which provided a few additional hours for Firewise status.

Industry – Timber – not present

Industry – Insurance – not present

Industry – Utilities – not present

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) – no update

Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – no update

Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association – not present

Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES) – Sue McCourt said that the Sheriff has presented a reorganization of staffing to the Board of Supervisors.

Plumas County Planning Department – Tracey Ferguson announced that the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan draft is available for public review. The document is large, but the meat of the content is in the mitigation actions/strategies. The LHMP will be presented to the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and there will be a public zoom meeting on October 20th from 6-7:30pm. These meetings will be followed by a Hazard Mitigation Planning committee meeting. All comments are due by October 23rd. The goal is to get the final draft to Cal OES and FEMA by the end of the month. There is a 3-6 month review process. Comments will be received around the first of the year and it will be brought to the Board of Supervisors for formal adoption.

Plumas Underburn Cooperative – Matt West has been working on planning the TRES prescribed fire training exchange. The event starts October 24th and takes place over five weekends. The event will attempt to burn public land units, a cross-boundary project in Spanish Ranch, units at Feather River College, Heart K Ranch and other public lands. Burning will depend on weather and burn windows. Registration for the event closes October 9th.

Tree Mortality Update – Ryan Tompkins shared that it is setting up to be a La Nina year. There are drought conditions in the three-months outlook. It may impact what we see next spring.

Tribal Representatives –Trina Cunningham reported that tribal issues are ongoing. She is working to build partnerships, funding, and training for tribal crews.

UC Cooperative Extension – Ryan Tompkins' Plumas County Forest Stewardship Workshop is wrapping up this month. He thanked the group for participating in the UC Extension's fire preparedness survey. He will be presenting the results from the survey at the state Resource Conservation District conference in November.

USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction – not present

2. Status of Current Grants –

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: Mike McCourt said the program is ongoing. The late start this year and the fire season have put the program behind schedule. Most people who haven't received treatment year are pretty understanding. A lot of good work has been done so far, but there is more to be done. Having two contractors this year helped. The program will continue until fire season ends. Applications continue to come in and as more people are thinking about their need for defensible space, demand for the program will continue. On La Porte Road the fire crews were able to burn out around one of the Defensible Space client's homes and it was saved.

Chipping Program: Gary Parque thanked the communities for the work they have done to make the chipping program a success. The fire motivated people to participate. The program is now wrapped up for the year.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction: Matt West shared that the SNC Butterfly project is mostly complete. There is some remaining clean-up work that the Forest Service is undertaking. The Little Grass Valley project was impacted by the North Complex. Some mastication equipment was left on site when the operator evacuated. It survived the fire. The operator will resume work when allowed back to the site. The Limited Operating Period in Genesee have been lifted. The operator is planning on coming back soon. Franks Valley work has suspended due to the fire. TRES will hopefully have the opportunity to burn Spanish Ranch. Mr. West is working with the Forest Service to develop a prospectus for Lakes Basin.

Hannah Hepner said that the American Valley bid tour is scheduled for October 16th. The Decision Memo from the Forest Service is not expected until the end of the year. The contracted forester for the Mohawk Valley project has been conducting site visits. Outreach for the Plumas Disadvantaged Communities project (Portola, Quincy, and Chester) has been successful. A forester will be contracted for the project by the end of the year.

3. Status of Grant Budgets – Don Gasser reported that budgets are on track.

4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner mentioned that Plumas County Title III funds are not on the list of grant opportunities, but there is an open comment period that allows for proposals. Currently funds are earmarked for the Sheriff's office.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events - None

Adjourn - Next meeting November 12th, 2020