

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Board of Directors

Chair, Mike Callaghan, Firewise Community (18)

Vice Chair, Don Gasser, Citizen (18)

Sec/Treasurer, Mike De Lasaux,

UC Cooperative Extension (18)

Chuck Bowman, Firewise Community (17)

Jim Hamblin, PC Fire Chiefs Assoc. (17)

Shane Vargas, CAL FIRE (18)

Dan Martynn, NRCS (18)

Julie Ruiz, NSAQMD (18)

Ryan Bauer, USFS (18)

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, November 9th, 2017 - 9:00 am.

Plumas County Planning & Building Services Conference Room

555 Main Street, Quincy, CA

1. Welcome & Introductions – Mike Callaghan
2. Review Agenda – no changes
3. Approve Meeting Minutes – **m – Bowman, s – Reynolds.**
4. Public Comment – none

New Business

1. Appointment of Nominating Committee for PC FSC Directors Election

There are two board members with expiring terms – Chuck Bowman and Jim Hamblin. Chief Hamblin has retired and is not likely to continue his involvement with the Fire Safe Council. Mr. Bowman will likely run again. He was asked to head the nominating committee, after the success of his recruitment efforts last year. It was noted that after Jim Hamblin’s term has ended, there will be no local fire department representation. There is currently no private industry or insurance representation either. Mike Callaghan also noted that the Council lost a Board member this year and didn’t appoint a replacement.

2. La Porte Landowner Contributions

A landowner on La Porte Road recently contacted the Fire Safe Council about assistance treating 10 acres. Due to the fact that so much of the La Porte Road Area has already been treated, and that the landowner

contribution cost center contains nearly \$36,000, the Council coordinator inquired if the funds could be used to provide assistance to this single landowner without pursuing additional acres or grant funds.

The NRCS EQIP program is an alternative option for this landowner. However, Dan Martynn said that NRCS support is not guaranteed.

There were several questions raised:

How does the property in question relate to treated areas?

How do we make this approach equitable?

Is the Council or the landowner responsible for the contracting?

If the landowner contracts independently, how do we ensure the work is done to our standards?

Are there maintenance projects in the area that should be prioritized?

The results of the discussion were:

An outreach letter to gauge interest will be sent to all landowners who have not received treatment.

Additionally, previous project participants will be contacted about their maintenance needs.

A group of landowners in an area would be a higher priority for NRCS assistance than a single landowner.

A cost share will still be required for PC FSC assistance with landowner contributions. If additional landowners choose to participate, and their property only requires maintenance, their cost share should be reduced to a rate that represents roughly 25% of the cost of treatment.

The Council would like to know the funds that exist in all landowner contribution cost centers.

3. SNC Strategic Planning Comments

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is conducting a Strategic Assessment of the needs of the Sierra Nevada Region. The organization anticipates new funding sources that might be used for future grant funding and partner endeavors. They are soliciting comments that address these questions:

What does the Sierra Nevada Region need to move forward towards its vision? What are three things I would like to see happen in the Region?

What are the problems or barrier the Region faces today? What's working and what's not?

What is the best role for the SNC in dealing with these issues? How should the SNC prioritize its resources?

What other agencies should be involved? What roles should they play?

What are priorities for investment throughout the Region?

Hannah Hepner read a prepared comment about the need for coordination support. Mike De Lasaux stipulated that Fire Safe Councils specifically should be priority organizations to receive support.

Other comments included: development of a local workforce to fulfill private and public contracts, prioritizing protection of water conveyance infrastructure areas (headwaters for the State Water Project), promoting a more aggressive approach to density reduction, supporting prescribed fire councils, facilitating CEQA compliance across large areas with existing NEPA, streamlining of shared CEQA/NEPA documents, support for industrial scale biomass, and prioritizing grant funds for projects that leverage a commercial component.

4. Potential PC FSC Role in Prescribed Fire

Don Gasser led by introducing several existing resources including the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council and a coalition of prescribed fire councils. He noted that there are “many moving parts” in prescribed fire - liability, smoke, etc. A site specific approach is where we will be most successful. Additionally, fire service and leadership support will be critical. Prescribed fire should be one tool used to perform landscape maintenance. The PC FSC has proposed a local workshop to present maintenance options.

Mike De Lasaux emphasized that the workshop will focus on all “tools” for maintenance. He noted that initial treatments were a long-term investment. Therefore, there is a level of obligation to landowners for whom the PC FSC has already provided assistance - which includes an educational component. We need to determine: 1) what the tools are (livestock, weed eating, fire) and 2) how we support landowners in their use.

Dan Winningham asked the Council to consider grapple piling as a cheaper alternative to mastication.

Claude Sanders suggested that remaining landowner contributions should support this effort. He also commented that Feather River College could potentially teach some component of it – specifically, technical application for workforce development.

Landowners from the La Porte Road projects were suggested as possible volunteers for demonstration properties. Additionally, UC’s Baker Forest property was mentioned as a potential burn location.

Ryan Bauer added that there are Fire Safe Councils who conduct prescribed burns, we can learn from their models. Plumas National Forest has a TREX agreement for Butte County. There is potential to introduce that here. PNF regularly conducts trainings and is willing to provide necessary education for those interested in burning. The Forest Service can no longer burn on private lands, but CAL FIRE has expressed willingness to step into that role. A question about CEQA requirements was raised. Mike De Lasaux said that the CAL FIRE Vegetation Management program is a resource for addressing CEQA for these sorts of projects.

Members of the committee for workshop planning are: Mike De Lasaux, Don Gasser, Ryan Bauer, Mike Callaghan, Hannah Hepner, Dan Martynn, Gary Parque, David Popp, and Shane Vargas.

Old Business – None

Updates

1. Plumas County Tree Mortality Task Force – no additional meetings will be held until there is updated flight information. Plumas County’s Tier I & II High Hazard Zone watershed designations can be viewed by selecting the relevant layers at: <http://egis.fire.ca.gov/TreeMortalityViewer/>. These are areas designated by California State government as being in greatest need of dead tree removal due to severe tree mortality levels. These areas are represented in two tiers, representing both potential direct threat to people, buildings and infrastructure from falling trees (Tier One), as well as broader fire risk and forest health considerations (Tier Two). These designations are relevant because biomass facilities are required to source 60% of fuel, in 2018, and 80% of fuel in subsequent years from high hazard zones.

2. Status of Current Grants – Hannah Hepner & Project Managers

262 – Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Next meeting is November 16th, will discuss socioeconomic monitoring and local workforce development.

275/276 – Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: 55 maintenance projects were completed with SRA fee funds this year. An additional 25 clients were treated with 2012 Stevens funds (259).

278 – Chipping Program: 80 residential locations and 2 community burn piles were chipped this year. Participants reported 400 total hours of work preparing the piles. 25% said they would have otherwise left the material on site. 63% said they would have burned it. About 1/3 of the participants were not part of an organized community effort with a single point of contact. A report was requested for distribution to the Plumas County Supervisors. No landowner donations were received. A web-based option for donations was suggested. There are some program participants still expecting invoices for the additional material chipped.

259 – Barry Creek: Project is complete with 59.4 acres (of a planned 555) treated.

East Quincy: Project is complete with 92 acres treated.

East Shore: Project is complete with 9.8 acres treated.

C-Road: Layout is underway.

260 – Hwy 70: Mastication & hand thinning is complete. Pile burning is nearly complete.

273- Dixie Valley: Layout is complete. The project area covers 74.3 acres. A draft archaeology report has been submitted to PNF and comments have been returned. Danielle Bradfield is working on the Environmental Assessment. Landowner contracts and invoices have been sent out.

277- Wolf/Grizzly: Imperial have begun thinning operations. There is a time-lapse video on Facebook.

280 - Bucks Lake: An offer has been made to the CCC for \$50,000 to treat one of the units. Contracting for the rest of the work is underway.

279 - Mohawk Vista: Layout will begin after C-Road.

281 – Gold Mountain: We will be meeting next week to help the community prioritize a treatment area.

3 & 4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – Hannah Hepner

USFS Stevens funds – submitted April 14

C Road - 90 acres, \$180,570

Grizzly Ranch – 130 acres, \$270,275

American Valley Phase II – 100 acres, \$285,970

Genesee Woods/Red Clover – 100 acres, \$178,970 (2019 Stevens funds)

Plumas RAC Title II – submitted August 11

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance Program - \$65,300: **selected for award**

PCFSC Coordination – six months, \$27,500: **selected for award**

SNC Prop 1 – submitted November 1st

Little Grass Valley Reservoir Watershed Protection Project – 480 acres, \$500,000

Butterfly Twain Fuels and Forest Health Project – 455 acres, \$500,000

CAL FIRE SRA FPF – TBD

5. Standing Reports and Discussion

- **Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES):** Sue McCourt asked to hear about CAL FIRE's involvement with the Sonoma County fires. Chief Delacour reported that he saw that everything will

burn in extreme winds, it doesn't matter what materials the structure was built with. However, in the hills, defensible space is what saved homes. In our area, compliance with PRC 4291 is better. He believes that cities are going to take enforcement more seriously in the future. Gabe Lauderdale worked in the emergency operations center. He said that the fire service quickly went from heroes to "bad guys" because people weren't allowed back into their homes right away. He echoed Chief Delacour's observations and said that we can't control the weather but we can control the environment around homes.

Mr. Sanders asked if anything emerged about the effect of eucalyptus on the Santa Rosa fires. Mr. Gasser reported that defensible space inspections found that in areas where structures were still sanding, the surrounding eucalyptus had burned.

- **CAL FIRE:** Captain Vargas introduced Aaron Johnson, one of Plumas County's defensible space inspectors. Captain Vargas said that the defensible space program is expanding to include post-fire inspections, creating a valuable data set about pre- and post-fire conditions. This year just under 1,000 inspections were completed in Plumas County in the communities of Plumas Eureka, Gold Mountain, and Whitehawk. Mr. De Lasaux asked what will happen to the inspection program when SRA funds are no longer available. Captain Vargas said that the program is covered with cap and trade funds and will likely be expanded.
- **USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction:** Ryan Bauer reported that Plumas National Forest met 120% of its fuels target – over 9,000 acres. There will be an opportunity to do a field trip to the Eureka fire. It was a 450 acre managed fire, with implementation costs of roughly \$1,300/acre.
- **Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District:** Julie Ruiz said there have been a lot of burn permits written.
- **Firewise Communities:**
 - Lake Almanor West** – not present
 - Graeagle** – Mr. Bowman has difficulty using the Firewise model because of the large-scale of the Graeagle Firewise community. He has concerns that if it was scaled down to Whitehawk, other people in the fire district would lose insurance benefits. Whitehawk is planning for another thinning project next year.
 - Gold Mountain** – Of 400 lots, only 3 lots classified as "critical" remain untreated. The Nakoma Resort has several untreated lots that they expect to see action on soon.
 - LACC** – not present
 - Grizzly Ranch** – no update
 - Plumas Eureka** – no update
 - Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman** – Has an evacuation map now. They have recorded a tremendous amount of work. The Firewise reporting has changed and a spreadsheet will be created to assist communities with tracking.
 - Gallepii** – not present
 - Portola**- not present
- **Industry Representatives** – none present
- **Tribal Representatives** - none present

6. Other Updates & Upcoming Events: none announced

Adjourned - Next meeting December 14th, 2017