

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 9th 2021 - 9:00 am.
Combination of in-person and zoom meeting
50 Church Street, Quincy CA

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 Dan Martynn, Retired (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lindsay Wood Plumas Audubon Society(22)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trina Cunningham Maidu Summit Consort. (22)	<input type="checkbox"/> Mike Callaghan Firewise Community (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Bowman Firewise Community (21)
<input type="checkbox"/> Jim Hamblin Citizen (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brad Graevs Feather River RCD (21)	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (21)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – no changes
3. Approve November Meeting Minutes – **m - Chuck Bowman, s - Don Gasser**
4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to: None
5. Public Comment - None
6. Board Comment - None

New Business

1. Election and Seating of PCFSC Board Directors – John Reynolds conducted votes for each nominee.

New directors:

Mike Flanigan – all ayes, none opposed.
Michael Hall – all ayes, none opposed.
Sally McGowan – all ayes, none opposed.
Joe Smailes – all ayes, none opposed.

Returning directors:

Kathy Kogge – all ayes, none opposed.
Chuck Bowman – all ayes, none opposed.
Ryan Tompkins – all ayes, none opposed.
Tracey Ferguson – all ayes, none opposed.
John Reynolds - all ayes, none opposed.

The executive board will be appointed next month.

2. California Fire Safe Council Conference – Beth Rouse shared that the CFSC Conference in September went well. Started with a presentation from the CEO of Perimeter Solutions, a company producing fire retardants. Next was a section on organizational outreach in communities. Most suggestions from CFSC conference organizers were “modern” forms of communicating – QR codes, social media, etc. Most of these forms of communication do not work for some of the population in Plumas County. Hardcopy letters, flyers, posters and more were suggested. Most effective form of outreach for Plumas County is utilizing Plumas News in combination with flyers, posters and Firewise. The next section focused on grants with grants specialists. Most of the information on grants was not new, but questions about the tool trailer were answered. Lastly there was a section on fire ecology and wildfire safety education in schools. PCFSC does not have a program for wildfire preparedness education in local schools – maybe something the board would like to discuss.

3. Wildfire Preparedness Day – Beth Rouse said that overall, the Wildfire Preparedness Day went well. There was no constructive feedback. The hosts said the tour was fun and engaging. The total number of visits to all locations throughout the course of the day was 79. We can assume a total of 30-35 people participated. Out of 8 locations, only one location received no visitors. One location received 20 visitors. A few requests were made to schedule another tour in May or June.

Old Business

1. PG&E Moratorium – Lindsay Wood provided an update on a petition that has been drafted. It outlines the damage PG&E has caused in California, including a list of fires started by PG&E and a map of ignitions. She summarized that 1.5 million acres of forest and 25,000 structures have burned, and 115 lives have been lost due to PG&E’s equipment. She suggested that PSREC may be able to provide safer energy for Plumas County.

Bill Jacks added that PG&E is not the root of the problem, but that gross mismanagement of forests is the real issue. Ms. Wood suggested that the problem is complex and requires addressing both issues.

Mr. Reynolds suggested that the PCFSC Board and membership vote next month on joining as a signatory.

Dan Martynn asked if PSREC has the capacity to support Plumas County’s needs.

Ryan Tompkins added that there is inter-connectivity between the two companies. Power from PSREC often comes from PG&E.

Dave Kinatader asked whether or not PG&E should be included as a part of the solution. He suggested it could be an opportunity for Plumas County to put pressure on PG&E for investments in local infrastructure and forest management.

Kevin Danaher asked if Plumas County receives revenue from PG&E for use of the Feather River.

Don Gasser answered that PG&E pays taxes to Plumas County and that Indian Falls should be included on the petition as an impacted community.

Mr. Reynolds suggested that the topic deserves more research.

2. Green waste Working Group – Hannah Hepner reported that the survey created by the Green Waste Working group has received over one hundred responses. Most residents responded that they dispose of green waste by burning. However, 58% of all respondents said that there are restrictions on open burning in their community. Most people indicated that they will not pay more than a nominal amount for disposal and will not travel more than 10 miles. Data from the survey will be presented to the Board of Supervisors. The group is looking for biomass sorting locations. A pilot model was discussed that utilizes the Quincy Waste Management transfer station.

Chief Heinbockle suggested that Gopher Hill may be a feasible location.

Tracey Ferguson asked if County Representatives have been present at these meetings. Ms. Hepner answered no, but will include any County representative that is interested.

Mr. Gasser added that SPI and Collins Pine will work with us, but do not want to take on any activities that will raise their costs.

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- CAL FIRE: Johnathan Pangburn announced that the CAL FIRE Fire Prevention grants are open and due Feb. 9th. Grant workshop on December 17th from 10-11:30 – details on website. Wildfire Resiliency Grant Program will open early 2022. CAL FIRE may be phasing out of declared fire season starting Monday, December 13th and burn permits may not be needed.

Ms. Hepner asked if the Wildfire Resiliency Grant Program was new. Mr. Pangburn answered that the program is reasonably new and is attached to the same funding that EFRT is working to secure.

Mr. Gasser asked if there were initiatives within CAL FIRE that would change the pace and scale of budget proposals. Mr. Pangburn responded that budget decisions are made at the state level, but there is push from within CAL FIRE to change the pace and scale of budget concerns.

Mr. Gasser asked if CAL FIRE will be replacing retiring employees. Mr. Pangburn answered that eventually CAL FIRE will replace those who have retired, but some CAL FIRE employees are unwilling to promote into higher positions.

Ms. Ferguson asked if the Fire Prevention grants program includes planning funds for general plan safety elements? Mr. Pangburn answered that in general, planning projects are allowed funding. CAL FIRE's intent is not to fund general plan elements.

- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Michael Hall reported that most RCD work is focused on reforestation and seedlings have been ordered. The RCD has a CalTrans mastication project scheduled along the HWY 89 corridor – the initial project was burned and they are looking for alternative areas to complete a project.

Kevin Danaher asked if there was a species breakdown for the seedlings that have been ordered. Mr. Hall responded that the RCD has ordered species depending on elevation. Species include Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir, Sugar Pine and Cedar.

- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Ms. Hepner announced that FRSC will meet on December 16th at 9:00am at the Mineral Building at the fairgrounds. [At the time that these minutes are approved the meeting has been moved to January 14th at the PUSD building]. The hope is for the meeting to be broadly attended. It will focus on post-fire recovery on public and private lands and assistance to private landowners.

Joe Smailes asked if communities are able to share their proposals for post-fire recovery plans. Ms. Hepner answered that yes, each stakeholder group will have 3 minutes to share updates and post-fire initiatives. This meeting is not intended for the public, but rather aimed towards stakeholders like Firewise communities.

- Firewise Communities: Beth Rouse reminded the group that the next FW Leads meeting will be on December 15th at 6pm via zoom.

Ms. Kogge reported that the Nakoma Community received FW Recognition.

Mr. Smailes shared that the last Fire Line Cooperators meeting went well and the USFS was responsive to FW suggestions.

- Industry – Timber: Camille Swezy reported that J&C is still undertaking salvage work and that power will be supplied to the new mill site this week.

- Industry – Insurance: None
- Industry – Utilities: None
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): None

- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District: Julie Hunt is the new prescribed fire program manager at the district. Julie Ruiz is no longer there. Ms. Hunt previously worked with Washoe County AQMD is often deployed on wildfires as an air quality specialist.

- Plumas Audubon Society: Ms. Wood reported that the Quincy Watershed Improvement Plan was approved by the CSD Board and environmental compliance documents are being prepared. The Genesee project was impacted by the Dixie Fire and PAS has been left with \$500,000 in grant funding to expend. The new plan for this project may include underburning and reforestation. The funds could be redirected to another project if they cannot expend the funds.

- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association: Chief Heinbockle reported that a meeting will be planned with Plumas Fire Chiefs, USFS and BOS to discuss funding for first responders. They plan to discuss how dispatch can better operate. They are looking to CAL FIRE to financially assist rural fire departments.

Mr. Pangburn provided that CAL FIRE has a grant program that helps to fund local FDs.

- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES): None
- Plumas County Planning Department: Ms. Ferguson updated the group on the California Board of Forestry Fire Safe Regulations 2021 rule making changes. A new draft will be out Jan. 3rd 2022 along with a comment period. Plumas OES will be connected to PCFSC soon – Dixie Fire recovery efforts have taken priority. Evacuation route planning is needed for areas in Plumas County that have one road in and one road out.

Mr. Pangburn added that the CAL FIRE Fire Prevention grant is looking for projects that involve evacuation planning.

Mike McCourt explained that the most recent evacuation maps made with the CAL FIRE funding for OES for Greenhorn and other areas were very helpful to fire fighting resources and include QR codes for digital maps.

Mr. Kinatader suggested that Butterfly Valley receive an updated evacuation map.

Brad Graevs added that he has never seen “Wildfire Escape Route” signage like you see with tsunami escape routes.

Ms. Ferguson added that these evacuation maps were made under her direction alongside Sue McCourt. Evacuation maps should be made through the County’s GIS department so the county can control and edit the maps.

- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West reported that TREX is on call for participants to burn in either Butte or Plumas County. TREX members have been burning piles with USFS. Planning for Chandler Road, Genesee and Buffalo Ranch underburns is underway. There is a PUC meeting following the PCFSC meeting in the School District meeting space.

- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship: None
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy: None

- Tree Mortality Update: Mr. Gasser reported that a stand of pines near Beskeen Lane are suffering from beetle damage.

Lindsay Wood added that research is being conducted that may help to reduce beetle attacks (fungus, sound waves).

- Tribal Representatives: Trina Cunningham reported that both the Greenville Rancheria and the Roundhouse Council Indian Education Center were lost in the Dixie Fire. MSC is working to produce a tribal evacuation plan that identifies culturally important sites including tree stands and specific species. Of the 2,800 acres MSC owns, 2,600 burned at high severity. They are looking at ways to make use of the salvage materials without chipping or masticating. Erosion is a large factor that has already damaged sacred sites and cemeteries. MSC is looking for partnerships at a higher level to perform hazard tree removal without wasting materials. They are looking at collaboration with other tribal groups to develop tribal mill sites.

- UC Cooperative Extension: Mr. Tompkins reported that through various partnerships (PCFSC, RCD, UCCE) an \$8 million plan has been made for post-fire fuels reduction and reforestation with a potential 1-2 million more from state and private resources. 1,300 acres of non-industrial private forest land have been identified. Plumas County has helped to submit an NOI for a FEMA Back 40 grant to remove hazardous dead trees from private forest land.

Mr. Smailes asked if the EFRT has a submission deadline. Mr. Tompkins answered that there is a submission deadline for the concept proposal, but not for landowners yet.

Mr. Smailes asked for a short summary of the EFRT concept proposal. Mr. Tompkins answered that this funding seeks to aid non-industrial private lands that suffered high and moderate fire damage and need hazard tree removal, site preparation and reforestation. Technical and financial assistance will be provided. For lands that suffered low to moderate severity fire, further fuels reduction may be necessary.

Mr. Hall added that there is a link on the RCD website that will direct people to a landowner assistance application (<https://www.frrcd.org/landowner-assistance.html>).

Mr. Smailes suggested that this project be heavily outreached.

Mr. Gasser asked if this project will be spread throughout the county. Mr. Tompkins answered that yes the work will be county-wide, but larger concentrations of work are preferred for greater impact.

Mr. Tompkins reported on research concerning California's Million Acre Shared Stewardship target between the USFS and CAL FIRE. Most prescribed fire is being conducted in annual grasslands/shrublands. Sierra forest environments are ranked 8th in prescribed fire treatments due to complexity. Mechanical treatments can help to reduce complexity.

Ms. Wood asked how landowners in the EFRT project will be prioritized. Mr. Hall responded that fire severity, aspect and proximity to other landowners in the project will be the determining factors for initial prioritization.

- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Mr. Kinatader updated that USFS has been burning piles at Bucks Lake, but was unable to continue due to soil fragility. Burning at Little Grass Valley has been going well. Each burn has had a few PUC/TREX members. Plumas National Forest is trying to salvage some projects that have been heavily impacted by the Dixie Fire. The Mapes project is on hold due to both the Walker and Dixie Fire. Still moving forward with the Claremont project. There is a renewed interest in the WUI and USFS will be talking about how to include these areas in the planning process.

Chief Heinbockle asked if Plumas NF will receive increased federal funding. Mr. Kinatader answered that he has not seen anything solid.

Mr. Gasser asked if there is a new District Ranger for Mt. Hough. Mr. Kinatader answered that Joe Hoffman is the new DR. Joe Hoffman was on zoom and introduced himself.

Mr. Smiles added that legislators have alluded to appropriating increased funding to the northern California region.

Mr. Kinader added that PG&E awarded PNF with \$1 million that was used to purchase equipment and fund fuels crews contracts to work forest-wide.

2. Status of Current Grants

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Mike McCourt reported that he has received more interest in the program than in previous years.

- Chipping Program: None

- HFR Project Schedule

Mr. West reported that the Little Grass Valley project is complete and will be submitting a final report at the end of the year. Lakes Basin received rain but was able to continue work throughout November.

Ms. Hepner reported that the Dixie Valley project with USFS was impacted by the Dixie Fire. The treatment had been mastication. The area of the project that burned lost a number of structures. The final report addresses the limited effectiveness of mastication only projects.

Mr. Gasser asked why the project did not perform well. Ms. Hepner responded that mastication moderated the fire behavior to an extent, however, if suppression resources are not present to take advantage of the treatment the high levels of surface fuels contribute to high impacts.

Mr. Jacks asked if there was a way to ensure that masticated units are followed up with underburning? Ms. Hepner answered that these were private lands and it is up to the landowner take advantage of resources like PUC.

Ms. Hepner reported that the Plumas Collaborative Forest Health Project was impacted by the Dixie Fire and surplus grant funds will be used for reforestation. American Valley East mastication is complete and hand thin units have not been contracted. Mohawk Valley Planning is close to completion. The Greenhorn NEPA documents are close to finished and should be submitted soon. Plumas Disadvantaged communities including Quincy, Chester and Portola is moving forward with layout. Portola has been moved to another grant because of increased interest in American Valley and Chester. The Eastern Plumas WPP agreement was signed for \$6.4 million for 3,400 acres of private land treatment from Portola to C-Rd and Clio areas with 200 different participants. PCFSC has been selected to receive the CaFSC County Coordinators grant to hire new personnel.

Chief Heinbockle asked how projects can be effective if only singular landowners take advantage. Ms. Hepner explained that research supports that the most effective way to encourage private landowners to take part in mitigation is if their neighbors have done it. Which is why Fire Safe Council projects often return in phases. Comprehensive participation is most effective when Firewise Leads outreach to community members.

Mr. Jacks asked if it would be helpful to invite landowners to witness underburning. Ms. Hepner answered that yes, it could be helpful.

Mr. Gasser asked about coordination funding for current employees. Ms. Hepner reported that staff are budgeted through the rest of the financial year. Mr. Reynolds added that Plumas Corporation as agreed to fill in the gaps between project funding.

3. Status of Grant Budgets

Mr. Reynolds reported that we have five programs with funding ending. There is \$10 million in HFR projects and \$1.4 million is being extended in areas that were impacted by the Dixie Fire.

Mr. Smalles asked if the funding is sufficient to compete with the cost labor.

Gia Martynn stated that Plumas Corporation is committed to keeping PCFSC viable.

4. Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities

Ms. Hepner stated that she has not received an update about Stevens proposals yet. Plumas RAC has been extended to February 2022. SNC will be issuing solicitations for grant proposals soon. CAL FIRE Fire Prevention grant is now open; the Chipping Program and the Lake Almanor Peninsula project take priority.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

December 16th FRSC meeting at 9:00am at the Mineral Building [Moved to January 14th at the PUSD building]
Adjourn - Next meeting January 13th, 2022