

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Board of Directors

Mike Callaghan, Chair (16)
Chuck Bowman, Vice Chair (17)
Mike De Lasaux, Sec/Treasurer (16)
Don Gasser (17)
Jim Hamblin (17)
Jerry Sipe (16)
Shane Vargas (16)

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, December 8th, 2016 - 9:00 am.

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

1. Welcome, Introductions & Tribute to Dennis Doyle – Mike Callaghan
2. Review Agenda – **no changes**
3. Approve Meeting Minutes – Ryan Bauer asked that the November minutes be updated to reflect accurate requirements for Stevens funds – that the projects will benefit federal lands and that they be on private lands that are included in a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Motion to approve updated minutes – **Sanders, s- Martynn**, passed
4. Public Comments - **none**

Old Business

Nominating Committee Report for Election of 2017-19 Board of Directors – Chuck Bowman

The committee is awaiting responses from several individuals. Cary Curtis is a confirmed nominee. Ryan Bauer and Dan Martynn’s potential nomination requires supervisor approval. Mr. Bowman noted that Nevada County Fire Safe Council has broader representation on their board, including realtors and insurance representatives. Ideally he would like our Council to broaden the attendees at our meetings in order to eventually have their presence on the Board. Mr. Bowman stated that we can expand the number of Board members at any time and that the vote in January will represent an increase the number of board members as approved by the council previous to the vote for Board nominees.

New Business

None

Updates

1. Plumas County Tree Mortality Task Force

Mr. Callaghan announced the TMTF meeting following the Council meeting.

Rachael Norton asked if the TMTF meeting notes are available on the Fire Safe Council website.

Currently they are emailed to task force participants. Sue McCourt said that at the upcoming meeting the Outreach working group will address where to publish the notes.

Mr. Callaghan noted that he and Hannah Hepner made a presentation to the Plumas County Board of Supervisors earlier in the week. The presentation was brief and informational, as they've been kept aware of Plumas County's Tree Mortality Task Force efforts by Supervisor Simpson.

Claude Sanders questioned to what extent the PC FSC would be assisting people with removal of dead trees. Mr. Callaghan said the task force is not that far along yet - in the future we may be in a position to seek funds to provide assistance.

Mrs. McCourt asked Mr. Martynn if we can refer landowners to NRCS for assistance, without a local Declaration of Emergency. Mr. Martynn said that, yes, funds can be allocated for tree mortality assistance when 20% of the land to receive treatment is beetle killed, but his organization is still figuring out the details of the program. It will be taxing on the NRCS to educate landowners who are not familiar with working with USDA, as well as to create small value contracts. NRCS has not been involved in commercial removal and will not assist with preparation of THPs. Mr. Martynn hopes to work with the task force to identify high priority areas.

Mr. Callaghan announced that Mike De Lasaux has developed an app to track tree mortality.

2. Status of Current Grants – Hannah Hepner updated that one Title III grant for coordination has been expended, while the second contains roughly \$50,000. A modification to extend the end date for the Collaborative RAC funds to June 30, 2018 was approved. The Senior/Disabled Defensible Space program has \$27,331 for next year's coordination and \$29,969 for contracting. A request for a reinstatement of CA FSC funds for the program will be sent shortly. C-Road narrows burning was completed at the end of October, as was mastication of Cutler Meadows. A modification will be submitted for the Barry Creek portion of the 259 Stevens funds project – to exchange biomass treated areas for acres that won't be sent to biomass, as well as to increase the match. East Quincy is nearly finished and is awaiting Winningham's return from American Valley. The East Shore of Lake Almanor has lot assessments underway and a Cal Trans encroachment permit has been submitted for work in the right-of-way. The Hwy 70 NEPA report has been submitted. Once edits are finalized it will take about a month for scoping and approval. The American Valley project continues. About half of the mastication is done, but they have had to pull off of some areas due to wet soils. Danielle Bradfield's contract has been signed as the RPF for the Dixie Valley and Mohawk Vista projects. Wolf/Grizzly and Bucks Lake projects are awaiting collection agreements, which should be finalized in January. The Bucks Lake project just had the tenancy agreement signed and submitted to SNC. The grant agreement should be available shortly. The Gold Mountain Stevens project still requires a forester.

3. Status of Grant Applications in Progress

a. SRA Grant awardees have been announced – of \$15.75 million, \$11 million went to counties with tree mortality, leaving \$4.75 for fire prevention projects. The PC FSC’s Chipping Program was the only application awarded funds in Plumas County. Mr. Sanders stated that operators who remove hazardous trees are significantly slowed down by clean-up, while it is time sensitive to get trees on the ground. He suggested that the process should be addressed by two contractors: one for removal and one for clean-up, particularly since clean-up doesn’t involve the specialized skills and insurance that felling requires. It is already an issue faced locally with fuels reduction, but will become more impacted with an increase in mortality.

Mr. Callaghan clarified that the PC FSC program is primarily going to be a service to property owners doing the work themselves. However, there will be a set of rules and anyone following them will be able to participate. We have a model to build from that was established with a previous PG&E grant. The program will require a FSC coordinator and local community volunteer coordinators. There is a need for further outreach to other counties that have chipping programs.

Mrs. McCourt asked Chief Sean Delacour to share his experience from Butte County.

Chief Delacour said that a FSC rep lead the chipping group - operating the chipper and truck – and was followed by a crew. Firefighter crews will likely be available in March until fire season. Inmate crews may have more availability.

Mr. Callaghan noted that late summer is a more likely time for us to experience interest in the program by arriving seasonal property owners.

Kyle Felker warned against a parcel by parcel approach. Additionally, he would like to see support for local hand crews.

Mr. Callaghan emphasized that communities will need to organize locally.

Mr. De Lasaux suggested that we limit ourselves to just Firewise Communities, which would be an incentive for Firewise participation.

Mr. Callaghan followed that Firewise communities should be the first groups we engage with. At the Butte Wildfire Summit Mrs. McCourt talked to the Fire Safe Council about their chipping program. They promote the program with signs that advertise free chipping. They have three contractors throughout the county. Their program coordinator calls community leads to organize the schedule. Mrs. McCourt questioned how many contractors we have in Plumas County currently that can do the work, and asked if they will have the same insurance requirement as other contractors.

Mike McCourt said that there were also three contractors used for the PG&E funded program.

Mr. Callaghan asked what the likelihood is that they’ll be available through the summer and said that the insurance question will require some investigation.

Mr. Sanders said that this comes back to his point that hazard tree removers do not make as much money when chipping and that there may be a need for the private or public sector to fill that niche.

Chief Delacour said that in Butte County landowners were given a card with all of the information about how to participate, including how to pile up the material for chipping. He noted that fuels reduction doesn’t need to happen at the same time as the chipping.

Don Gasser asked what will happen with the chips. Most of the chips will be blown back onto the properties and, in cases where they cannot be, a truck will be used for disposal.

Mr. Callaghan asked if it will be a low cost service. Hannah believes that the grant application proposed it as a free service because the supporting funds are SRA fees. Mr. Gasser said that it may be a free chipping program, but that doesn't necessarily apply to the hauling.

Mr. Bauer suggested that a conversation with the CCCs would be a good idea. Chief Delacour said that there are fire crews in Paradise for the first time in 10 years.

b. Forest Health Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) Grants – Chief Don Gordon is currently at a public comment workshop for these grants. Mr. De Lasaux said the expertise for these types of grants exists with the Air Resources Board because applicants have to be able to show a direct and quantifiable benefit for GHG sequestration. Because there is uncertainty about the role of fuels reduction in sequestration, it is not the best program to invest Council time and effort in.

Mr. Gasser offered that SPI must have an understanding of the topic because they are getting carbon credits.

Scott Rosikiewicz said some of Lassen's timber industry has sought work with their Fire Safe Council for projects of this nature.

Mr. Callaghan determined that until other Fire Safe Councils have been successful with GHG work, it is too uncertain for us to pursue.

Mr. De Lasaux followed that we don't have that kind of project development capacity - upfront funding would be needed for project planning.

4. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance Program - Mike McCourt said the budget for the program was in this condition at this time last year and he feels positive about finding funding for next year's season.
- Feather River Stewardship Coalition - Hannah Hepner said the recent meeting centered on how the group will organize and plan going into the future. Mr. Callaghan added that the group should highlight project benefits to the public. Field trips will be a focus in the summer months and are valuable for involving individuals who will not get involved in the process.
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES) – Sue McCourt attended the Butte Wildfire Summit. Butte has many satellite Fire Safe Council groups, some of which are also Firewise communities. The Air Quality representative spoke about collaboration and a landscape approach to Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Organizers used the event as an opportunity to solicit information for CWPPs as well as survey tree mortality.
- CAL FIRE – Chief Delacour updated on the work that the SRA crews have accomplished: clearing and burn piles on the Peninsula, clearing and burning the community burn pile in Greenhorn, currently working with Plumas Eureka CSD. The crews will address the unfinished hand-thin units in American Valley next. The seasonal fire fighters will be laid off at the end of the month and will return in March.
- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction – Ryan Bauer said they burned 300-400 acres forest-wide during the short under-burning window. Pile burning is proceeding until a big snow event stops work. The program of work for the next field season should be finalized shortly. Last year the Forest struggled with awarding timber contracts on time; Mr.

Bauer expects this problem to continue due to a loss in staffing. There is currently a significant backlog of service fuels work that can be done.

Nick Bunch said the Elizabethtown project adjacent to Hwy 70 is likely getting a signature this week. His projects will be looking for further sources of funding in the summer.

- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – Julie Ruiz reminded the group that it is burn ban season. She noted that the USFS has occasionally misunderstood permit requirements and burn ban areas. There needs to be an air pollution permit for any burn, as well as communication about the planned days of burning. American and Thompson Valleys have limited burning because of the air quality issues resulting from woodstove heating. Mr. Callaghan clarified that material can be burned on the property where it originated. Mrs. Ruiz said, yes, and special conditions also exist for community burn piles. However, removing large amounts of material to another area is a problem. Residential burning is fine if not in American and Thompson Valleys. Typically anything over an acre will require approval from Air Quality, including non-residential agricultural burning.
- Firewise Communities – Sue McCourt said the Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman Firewise group had a meeting last week. They will hold their Firewise day event around Easter in conjunction with the fire department fundraiser. Their Firewise assessment is done, but they need to complete the Firewise day before their application can be submitted. C-Road will discuss Firewise participation at their January meeting.
John Reynolds said the Grizzly Ranch Firewise group is resting.
Mike Callaghan from Gold Mountain said they are very close to meeting their goals – there are only 8 lots left to be treated in order to meet their goals for 2016 – however the planned mastication will not take place until spring.
Chuck Bowman from Graeagle said that 4 dead trees are scheduled to come down and that 7 more still require approval – for a total of 105 dead trees. They submitted their Firewise renewal with a documented 1404 volunteer hours and \$40,000 of investment. There is a lot of activity in Whitehawk, but not other areas of Graeagle.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Tree Mortality App Demonstration – Mike De Lasaux introduced the tree mortality app developed by UC Cooperative Extension for the Mapping and Data Collection working group of the PC TMTF. It will be used to inform decisions based on the on-the-ground mortality situation. The USDA flights - used to inform the 102 million dead trees data - was collected in May and did not cover Plumas County, which creates a need for local input.

Steps for recording tree mortality are online. There is currently a tree mortality map, but a treatment map may be incorporated in the future. It is not yet available for public use. Questions and answers followed.

Adjourned - Next meeting January 12th, 2017