

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 13th, 2020 - 9:00 am.

Plumas County Planning & Building Services Conference Room
555 Main 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

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

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – no changes
3. Approval of January Meeting Minutes – **m – Hamblin, s – Gasser**
4. Public Comment – Jason Christian introduced himself as a Plumas Corporation board member and economist. He has written a paper titled “Restoring Forest Health in the Upper Watershed of the Middle Fork of the Feather River” and sees the Fire Safe Council as a key player in taking a big-picture view of watershed infrastructure. He pointed out that there are shortages in critical infrastructure that don't allow land managers to fully consider their options. He would like to develop a technical advisory group. He pointed to the North Yuba Partnership as a model for bringing together lower elevation water customers with counties and environmental stakeholders. Don Gasser commented that the Fire Safe Council’s role is to look within Plumas County at the areas where the Council can have an impact. John Reynolds suggested that Council members review the paper and consider the Fire Safe Council’s role at a future meeting. Lynn Campbell added that she can provide information about the North Yuba project. She also said that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is holding their March Board Meeting on the 4th & 5th in Sacramento. The first day is a Watershed Improvement Summit that will address issues that Dr. Christian has raised.

Rob Gimbel announced that he will be offering defensible space consultations based on CAL FIRE’s LE100 form. He estimated the cost of consultations to be \$40 if within 10 miles of the courthouse and \$.50 per

mile outside of that range. Sue McCourt asked if he will be providing written documentation of the consultations. Mr. Gimbel said that he is still getting organized, but will get underway in about a month.

5. Board Comment – Richard Stockton noted that Roni Java was responsible for the Firewise features in last week’s newspaper. He requested more representation from the paper at Fire Safe Council meetings. Mr. Stockton also said that Mike Flannigan is interested in starting a Quincy Firewise community and pointed out that we need to overcome the perception that “if you’re not in the forest it’s not your issue.” There is a need to emphasize the importance of evacuation preparedness and home hardening.

New Business

1. Fire Safe Regulation Update – Shane Vargas introduced himself as working for CAL FIRE’s Land Use Planning for the Northern Region. He works with cities and counties to help update safety elements of the general plan, which ties into local hazard mitigation planning. Captain Vargas is also the regional Firewise coordinator. He previously worked in Plumas County as the Fire Prevention specialist. Captain Vargas outlined information about changes to the SRA Fire Safe Regulations, effective January 1, 2020, including:

- Updates to definitions
- Decrease in unobstructed vertical clearance for roads
- Quantification of driveway load support
- Increase in grade limits, with mitigations
- Decrease in unobstructed vertical clearance for gate entrances
- Inclusion of road sign standards
- Increase in minimum setbacks
- Inclusion of provisions about greenbelts

There was a question raised about who is responsible for enforcement. Captain Vargas responded that ultimately it is CAL FIRE’s responsibility to ensure compliance. The County either has to incorporate the codes verbatim or get county ordinances approved by CAL FIRE. Plumas County has approved ordinances.

The new Fire Safe Regulations will go into effect for Very High Hazard areas of the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) on July 1st, 2020.

There were questions asked about how these regulations affect buildings that are permitted but that haven’t broken ground yet and about conflicts with County zoning. In both cases Captain Vargas said that those answers would come from the County.

Captain Vargas said that there has been a lot of state legislation around prevention efforts. He described AB 2911 which addresses updates to the FRAP severity zone maps. He said that the maps will incorporate more localized wind components and that the SRA layer is projected to be released in May or June. Captain Vargas also talked about a bill that passed to update building materials for home hardening and provide grant money to homeowners for home hardening.

Captain Vargas also said that CAL FIRE has been tasked with reviewing all subdivisions with 30 homes or more that have one way in and one way out. CAL FIRE will be working with local jurisdictions on mitigations in those areas.

Chief Heinbockel expressed that he would like to see some of the State funding available to local volunteer fire departments, in addition to areal suppression and fire prevention. Ryan Bauer followed to ask if there is any discussion about expansion of CAL FIRE suppression resources to counties that don't have coverage. Captain Vargas said that would be a conversation worth having with the Unit Chief.

Captain Vargas concluded by explaining his role as the Firewise regional coordinator. In his region there are 64 Firewise communities – 21 of them are in Plumas County. He thanked Sue McCourt for her local support of the Firewise program and presented her with a CAL FIRE challenge coin.

2. Use of C-Road landowner contributions – Hannah Hepner shared that the grant-funded project at Mohawk Vista/C-Road is complete. There are \$27,175 in landowner contributions collected from the project that could be re-invested in 31 acres of additional work in C-Road. John Reynolds commented that it would be an appropriate use of the funds.

**Kath Kogge made a motion to use the funds for additional work in C-Road, s – Bowman
All ayes**

3. Use of PayPal donations – Ms. Hepner announced that the Fire Safe Council received a \$1,000 donation at the end of 2019. She asked if Council members would be interested in t-shirts. Hats were also suggested. Tracey Ferguson clarified that the merchandise would not be for sale. No alternative uses for the funds were suggested. Ms. Hepner will research costs and bring a proposal to the Council.

4. Sierra CAMP Membership – Ms. Hepner provided information about Sierra CAMP (Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership), a program of the Sierra Business Council. She read the benefits of membership:

- Become a part of local and regional organizations interested in tackling climate adaptation and mitigation efforts by:
 - Sharing information and best practices that address climate change, adaptation, and mitigation within the Sierra region, as well as across the state and the nation.
 - Identifying and vetting policy solutions.
- Engage with downstream users of Sierra ecosystem services and build urban-rural connections in support of actions to minimize climate impacts on critical statewide resources.
- Help catalyze on-the-ground climate projects.
- Use the Sierra CAMP brand on your website and materials.

Ms. Hepner also read a list of local members, which includes the City of Portola and Plumas County. Tracey Ferguson said that membership in Sierra CAMP has been a tremendous resource for information.

Trina Cunningham asked who from the Fire Safe Council could attend the meetings.

Kathy Kogge made a motion that the Plumas County Fire Safe Council become a member of Sierra CAMP, s – Cunningham

All ayes

5. Wolf/Grizzly and Bucks Lake Final Project Reporting – Matt West shared before and after photos of the recently completed projects that were funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. These were the first collaborative public lands projects of the Plumas County Fire Safe Council and Plumas National Forest. Mr. West thanked Dave Kinader for all of the work he contributed to the projects. Photos of the [Bucks Lake project](#) and [Wolf/Grizzly project](#) can be accessed online.

Chief Heinbockel asked when the piles on the Bucks project will be burned. Mr. Kinateder said that the timber sale piles still need to be released from the sale before they can be burned. The piles in the hand-thinned areas could be burned this winter. Ryan Bauer pointed out that the burn windows in that area are very narrow.

Claude Sanders asked for a cost comparison between the timber units and the service work. Mr. Kinateder said that they cost roughly the same – about \$1,000 per acre. Mr. Sanders followed-up to say that, in that case, timber harvests cannot be expected to pay for fuel reduction work. Mr. Bauer said that usually activity costs are averaged across the Forest, but that it may be possible to break out the costs for the Bucks Lake project.

Old Business

1. Mapping Update – Sue McCourt provided a preview of the County-developed Firewise community boundary map that will soon be available online. She said that the data is available as shapefiles. She pointed out some of the features of the online map.

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- **CAL FIRE** – Rob Cobb said that the Unit has hired Captain Joel Goodman, who will be assigned to Plumas County. He may be stationed in Quincy or Chester. They are actively trying to fill the Forester job. Brad Graevs asked when the VMP Coordinator will be available. Mr. Cobb said that the coordinator is available now but will be going to training again in March. He added that the unit is hiring an environmental scientist to assist with CEQA.
- **Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD)** – Brad Graevs reported that the RCD has hired a new position to start developing county-wide environmental planning.
- **Feather River Stewardship Coalition** – no update
- **Firewise Communities** – Phil Oels shared that Portola Firewise will resume meetings on the 3rd Thursday of every month at 6pm at the library.
- **Industry** – Timber – Steve Debonis said that SPI has completed a couple hundred acres of fuel break on Highway 36 west of Chester. They will be approaching CalTrans to do work in the ROW. SPI will resume work on the La Porte Road project this spring, which will be another several hundred acres. Wunningham has been contracted to start mastication work for SPI in Greenhorn. Treatment will start on the northern edge of the community and include an area west of the community.
- **Industry** – Insurance – Richard Stockton reported that non-renewals are not slowing down. It's not just homeowners who are affected, businesses and ranches have been dropped as well.
- **Industry** – Utilities – not present
- **Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)** – not present
- **Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District** – Julie Ruiz reminded everyone to ensure that it's a burn day before lighting piles. She said that conditions have contributed to burn pile escapes and that CAL FIRE has been issuing no-burn days, sometimes as late as mid-morning.
- **Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association** – Ron Heinbockel said that the Fire Chiefs meet quarterly and that their next meetings in scheduled for March 7th. He will have more to report following the meeting.

- **Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES)** – Sue McCourt said that she is planning wildfire awareness activities. If communities are interested in funding for their Wildfire Preparedness Day events, applications are due to the NFPA by the end of the month. Mrs. McCourt shared information about Federal Senate Bill 2882, sponsored by Kamala Harris, to establish a community grant program for evacuation and access for first responders, hardening of infrastructure and homes, assistance to vulnerable populations, land use planning, and community scale defensible space.
- **Plumas County Planning Department** – Tracey Ferguson reported that the Hazard Mitigation Plan update is underway. The consultant is in the risk assessment portion of the update and looking to the public to submit information about past occurrences. The next opportunity to join a meeting will be in April. Mitigation strategies will be addressed starting in May.
- **Plumas Underburn Cooperative** – Matt West said there will be burn prep workshops throughout the county, March – May. The workshops will include information about tree selection, hand line construction, etc. The first official PUC underburn may take place soon at Old Highway.
- **Tree Mortality Update** – Claude Sanders has seen an increase in white fir mortality around 4,000 feet.
- **Tribal Representatives** – Trina Cunningham provided information about the High Sierra Sheep Company, which offers sheep grazing for fuel reduction. Contact Ed Hammerich at 916-990-2049 for more information.
- **UC Cooperative Extension** – Two Home Ignition Zone training events will be held in Plumas County. On May 14th there will be a two-hour evening event at the West End Theatre in Quincy. On May 15th there will be a full-day training at the Graeagle Fire Hall.
- **USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction** – Ryan Bauer reported that last year Plumas National Forest received a large grant from PG&E. The funds will be used to purchase two masticators/grapplers for maintenance of existing fuel reduction treatments. Dozer operators will use the equipment outside of fire season. Mr. Bauer said that the Forest continues to burn piles but that conditions have gotten dry. The Mt. Hough District has focused on the Butterfly project and the Beckwourth district is burning by Frenchman Lake. They may transition to underburning on the Jackson Project between Greenhorn Ranch and Graeagle or in the Meadow Valley area.
Dave Kinatader said it has been “a banner season for fuels.” Currently there are two masticators and two hand crews operating on the Mt. Hough District.

2. Status of Current Grants –

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: no update

Chipping Program: Gary Parque said that he is working on projects in Portola and Seneca. Ms. Hepner presented the draft chipping schedule for 2020. She asked for clarification from the Council about the use of chipping program funds for special projects of Firewise communities. Assistance will continue on a first come first served basis. Mr. Parque pointed out that the program can accept donations.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction Schedule – Mr. West said that the crews working on public lands are working on the Butterfly and Elizabethtown projects. Ms. Hepner said that two private lands projects recently finished and that the Meadow Valley and Red Clover projects are currently being implemented.

3. Status of Grant Budgets – Ms. Hepner said that the Treasurer will be providing the report in the future and that he is interested in feedback about what is the most useful or relevant information to be reporting at the meetings.

4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner outlined some of the upcoming grant opportunities. She said that PUC is applying to the Coalitions and Collaboratives (COCO) Action, Implementation, and Mitigation (AIM) program to funds burn bosses for private lands underburns.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events -

Biochar Workshop – February 29th 9am-3pm 2651 Riverdance Rd, Quincy.

RSVP: Cindy Robinson 530-283-2689 or Emily Bryant 706-668-4133

Rebuilding Paradise documentary by Ron Howard will be coming to Plumas County. More details to come.

Adjourn - Next meeting March 12th, 2020