

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)
Cary Curtis, Firewise Community (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, February 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 – **Mr. Bowman asked to strike item 2 under new business**
3. Approve Meeting Minutes – m– **Sanders**, s- **Oels**, passed
4. Public Comments –

Bob MacArthur, Lake Almanor County Club Firewise, would like the fire districts to be involved in discussion of the chipping program.

George Terhune stated that he has written a letter to the authors of an article in the San Francisco Chronicle titled Firefighting is too costly: Innovation is needed now. Mr. Terhune believes that focus should be placed on restructuring biomass in the forest, not on technological advancements in firefighting. He also shared his opinion regarding the use of aviation in fire suppression.

New Business

1. Final Report of Nominating Committee - Chuck Bowman

Four current board members have expiring terms. Jerry Sipe is the only member who has declined to be re-instated.

With this election the Council will be increasing the number of board members from seven to ten.

More broad representation on the board will hopefully translate to more public visibility of the Council.

Motion to accept all seven candidates as nominees - Mike Callaghan, second - Don Gasser.

2. Revision in Number of PC FSC Directors

3. Board of Directors Elections

Cary Curtis – m- Callaghan, s – Reynolds, passed
Dan Martynn – m- Gasser, s – S. McCourt, passed
Julie Ruiz – m – S. McCourt, s – Oels, passed
Ryan Bauer – m - Callaghan, s – Sanders, passed
Mike De Lasaux – m - Callaghan, s – Reynolds, passed
Shane Vargas – m - Callaghan, s- M. McCourt, passed
Mike Callaghan – m – S. McCourt, m – Sanders, passed

4. Election of Board Officers for 2017

Chair: Mike Callaghan - m – Bowman, s – Vargas, passed
Vice Chair – Don Gasser – m – Callaghan, s – Hamblin, passed
Secretary/Treasurer – no candidates willing to self-nominate. Mike De Lasaux nominated in his absence. M – Callaghan, s – Gasser, passed

5. Review of Council Goals for 2017

- Implement and amend as necessary the Plumas County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP);

Sue McCourt – The hazardous fuel assessment and strategy component is over 10 years old and there have been a lot of fuels treatments since then.

Ryan Bauer – The Federal designations for “Communities at Risk” is incomplete for Plumas County.

Ryan Tompkins – The next 3 goals are interrelated and at the heart of what the Fire Safe Council is known for. They are all relevant to bring into the New Year – regardless of tactical decisions.

- Increase public knowledge and awareness of hazards associated with wildland fire and inform the public about efforts that can be made to reduce their vulnerability to wildland fire;

Mr. Sanders – public awareness is being incorporated into the efforts of the Tree Mortality Task Force.

Mr. Martynn - field trips, with press, are important for engagement. The Council can also cheaply share information via the website.

Mr. Gasser – the new website has gone a long way to address this goal.

Mr. Bowman asked if the Council should publish a “Living With Fire” tabloid this year; it hasn’t been done since 2014. Mr. Martynn asked what the cost would be to the Council. The newspaper solicits advertising and the remainder of the cost is shared between various sponsoring organizations.

Mrs. McCourt said that new photos will be needed and suggested that we schedule publication with Wildfire Preparedness Week, the first week of May.

Mr. Gasser suggested that the chipping program be advertised in it.

Mr. Callaghan asked how Council members prioritized publication of a tabloid:

Very important - 12

Somewhat important - 7

Not important - 0

- Increase community-based involvement in fuels reduction and facilitate the development of additional Firewise Communities in Plumas County;

Mr. Bauer – The Feather River Stewardship Coalition has resulted in an injection of community involvement. PNF will be starting revision of forest management plan; collaboration will be an important element.

Mr. Callaghan – Plumas County’s 7 (going on 8) Firewise communities indicate success.

- Identify, develop and implement community hazardous fuel reduction projects;
Continues to be appropriate.

- Develop a strategy to provide for sustainable and renewable project funding and reduce the Council's dependence on grant funding;

Mr. Bowman stated that this goal is crucial. There was support expressed for soliciting donations. Mr. Callaghan suggested that the tabloid is an opportunity for making that request to the community.

- Support green fuels utilization and community chipping options for all communities in the County. Definitely a major goal this year.

Current goals will be maintained.

Old Business

1. Reconfirm Resolution 2017-01: Cal Fire SRA Grant Agreement on Community Chipping Program: Unanimously supported by verbal vote.

2. Plumas County Community Chipping Program Pre-Planning:

The Executive Board has decided to expand the responsibilities of Mike McCourt to include coordination of the Chipping Program.

Will the program charge landowners for participation?

Captain Vargas – There should be no cost to State Responsibility Area (SRA) fee payers, as it is an SRA funded program. It should be consistent with the way SRA funds were allocated for the Senior/Disabled program.

John Reynolds – Offering the program free of charge is an incentive for the work to be done, which is the majority of the work. Let’s see how much participation we can generate – then scale back if needed.

Mr. Sanders – Willing landowners don’t start projects because they don’t know what to do with the material. If it’s successful, it will generate further funding.

Mr. Bauer – If we want to include the Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) of Quincy, Portola, and Chester, we can ask them to make a financial contribution to the program.

Will vacant lots adjacent to SRA fee payers be eligible?

Mr. Reynolds – For the goals of the program to be successful, we need to treat adjacent lands.

Mr. McCourt. The PG&E funded program treated vacant lots.

Captain Vargas – At minimum, treat vacant lots for defensible space for adjacent homeowners; this is the number one complaint during CAL FIRE inspections.

Mr. Callaghan – “Free to homeowners in most cases.” Allows some leeway. Opposed to a large-lot landowner taking advantage of the program.

Mr. Martynn - Let’s make participation as easy and flexible as possible. Once neighbors see a successful project, the program will gain traction.

What rules will the program need?

Some will be dependent on the community. The contractor will have some say over what the rules are.

Mr. Bowman - Surrounding counties have programs we can learn from.

Mr. Gasser asked if we will chip, but not haul. Mr. Reynolds - Will need to be variable depending on the community’s needs. Mr. Sanders – If the contractor has a chipper, they likely have a truck.

Mr. Sanders - We’re going to have a lot of beetle kill. Will the program be capable of dealing with lots where they’ve removed large trees?

Mr. Callaghan – The program will address material that can be chipped arising from fire reduction efforts.

Mr. Martynn – Ideal to keep it flexible and allow coordinators to develop the details.

Tom Ortez – We’ll find out in the first year what we’re going to face. Let us make decisions locally.

Mr. Callaghan – The timeline needs adjustment. Julie Ruiz – The timeline should reflect that October is the month when burning is permissible.

Chipping Program committee formed: John Reynolds, Claude Sanders, Dan Martynn, Shane Vargas, Mike Callaghan, and Tom Ortez.

Will meet to review materials developed by Mike McCourt and Hannah Hepner before the March PC FSC meetings.

Updates

1. Plumas County Tree Mortality Task Force – meeting today from 1:00-2:30pm.

2. Status of Current Grants – Hannah Hepner

Bid proposals have been received for archaeological work for four existing Stevens funded projects. All of the bids are beyond the project budget allotments. The possibility of securing additional USFS funds will be explored. The proposal from the lowest bidder (Dudek) was missing some requested materials. The only other bidder within financial possibility (PAR) has a local satellite office. The other two bidders (WSA and Browning) are beyond the Council’s budget capacity. Mr. Bauer suggested that the Council award a contract for just the East Shore project, which has the most pressing deadline. Mr. Felker expressed how the change in archaeological requirements has impacted projects on the ground.

259 – Barry Creek: Work has begun in Area A – which will be burned rather than sent to cogen.

Modification #4 has been submitted requesting approval of the change. The forester, Danielle Bradfield, has concerns that the wet weather will limit completion of the project – the grant expires in September.

East Quincy: 2/3 done. Awaiting return of Winningham.

East Shore: Parcel assessments have been completed. There are only 9.8 acres of viable treatment area – which we plan to have hand thinned by CAL FIRE SRA crews. To round out the project, we would like to treat across landownerships between Hwy 147 and the BNSF RR – the two most likely ignition sources. A Cal Trans encroachment permit has been issued for work along Hwy 147. We will tour the project with BNSF RR reps in early March – they are willing to participate in their ROW. PG&E is currently evaluating the feasibility of treating their lands that exist in-between.

260 – Hwy 70: Landowner agreements have all been signed. The Decision Memo is awaiting a signature. The forester, Sara Taddo Jones, is working on the prospectus for the operator bids and should be done next week.

271 – American Valley: The deadline is rapidly approaching. The project is currently 93% done, however the last 10 acres will need to dry out before mastication can be completed. There will be some piles that need burning after the expiration date – hopefully we will be able to contract CAL FIRE SRA crews to do that.

273- Dixie Valley: A modification has been requested extending the grant expiration for an additional year. Ideally we will be able to start fuels reduction work this year, but the remote, high-elevation location will mean a delayed start for the archaeological surveys.

277- Wolf/Grizzly: All agreements have been signed. Contracts are under development at PNF.

278 – Chipping Program: Signed agreement has been returned to CAL FIRE. Waiting to receive the executed copy.

279- Mohawk Vista & 280 – Gold Mountain: Waiting on grant agreements from PNF.

280- Bucks Lake: Grant agreement with SNC signed Jan 3rd. Needs the collection agreement between PC FSC and PNF.

3. Status of Grant Opportunities

a. Butte RAC accepting proposals. The Senior/Disabled Program is a good candidate for the Plumas RAC, once it is established.

b. PG&E Giving Locally program has no deadline. More information about parameters is needed before we can develop a proposal.

c. NFPA Wildfire Community Preparedness Day \$500 - due March 3

4. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance Program – Mike McCourt – the remainder of the SRA grant is all that is left for this year’s program.
- Feather River Stewardship Coalition – Hannah Hepner – next meeting will be March 2nd.
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES) – Sue McCourt – OES is in the process of conducting a storm damage assessment for FEMA assistance. Landowners may be able to seek assistance. There will be a meeting of all Plumas County Firewise communities on March 14th. Rachael Norton is coordinating formation of the C-Road Firewise community. There is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) conference in Reno, March 18th-23rd.
- CAL FIRE – Captain Shane Vargas – In the process of hiring defensible space inspectors. Will transition to a digital based format for the LE100. State Water Board adopted an emergency water conservation regulation to amend and extend last year’s regulation, which means SRA crews will be able to resume fuels work. Projects should be pre-planned and shovel ready for crews. Captain

Vargas has been nominated to the Fire Safe Development Workgroup, which focuses on 4291 and 4290 issues.

- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction – Ryan Bauer - there was some pile burning prior to recent storms. A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy review is coming up. USFS has been approved to hire fire positions. Ryan Tompkins – Appreciates Cradle Valley and Mohawk Vista input from PC FSC and FRSC. More projects to have on the radar for comments: Frenchman Forest Health Project (working on NEPA this year), Lakes Basin (working on NEPA), Plumas Eureka, Genessee Valley. Many PNF projects have tracked well with FSC private property projects.
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – Julie Ruiz - Changed out 100 stoves in the Portola area. There have been some improvements in air quality, but it's difficult to quantify what is due directly to the program. Quincy and Chester are well below federal standards and it's looking good across the county.
- Firewise Communities – Mike Callaghan – Gold Mountain is wrapping up their project. Seven landowners missed the deadline for action. Barbara MacArthur – LACC Firewise has been contributing regularly to the community's newsletter. Chuck Bowman – working on engagement with Graeagle communities outside of Whitehawk. 102 trees have been taken down in Whitehawk. The community is undertaking a drone aerial survey. No more dead trees can be seen from the ground.

5. No other updates or upcoming events

Adjourned - Next meeting March 9th, 2017