

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 10th 2022 - 9:00 am.

Combination of in-person and zoom meeting

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 (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice Chair , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Secretary/Treasurer Mike Flanigan, Insurance (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Hall, FRRCD (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sally McGowan, Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joe Smailes, Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Bowman, Firewise Community (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Tompkins, UCCE (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracey Ferguson, Plumas County Planning (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trina Cunningham, Maidu Summit Consort. (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Callaghan, Firewise Community (22)	<input type="checkbox"/> Dan Martynn, Retired (22)
<input type="checkbox"/> Lindsay Wood Plumas Audubon Society (22)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – Reynolds: CMFA presentation moved to April meeting
3. Approve January Meeting Minutes – **Motion – Don Gasser, Second – Kathy Kogge**
4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition: none
5. Public Comment -

Chief Mark Rotlisberger informed the group that questions about Defensible Space Inspections can be directed to him or Captain Alan Thornhill.

Chief Adam Mattos offered to inform the group on CFMA information in place of Ryan Bauer.

Kevin Danaher proposed that the Council have a planned response to escalating conflict between Russia and Ukraine. He was asked to bring an actionable proposal for consideration.

6. Board Comment – Michael Hall updated the group on the details of becoming a special district. PCFSC could receive taxpayer funds by becoming a special district, but it is unlikely PCFSC would actually receive these funds. The FRRCD does not receive any taxpayer funding despite being special district. PCFSC would lose 501(c)(3) status and would not benefit from taxes.

John Sheehan commented that any public district has the same IRS status as a 501(c)(3). The RCD has the same capability to secure funding as PCFSC does, but special district status would not bring in any additional funding and would essentially require more work for less reward.

Don Gasser reminded the group that the PCFSC Directors will meet one week from today at the FSC offices at 9am. Mr. Gasser informed the group about proposed legislation from Congressman McClintock and Representative LaMalfa detailing how USFS should respond to wildfire. This legislation states that fires must be out or contained within 24 hours of initial detection. This letter ignores the long-term effects of wildfire or no wildfire on the landscape. The letter advocates for more suppression efforts, but does not advocate for forest health or prescribed fire. The letter calls to suspend forest management for this year and “the option for managed fire must be taken off the table for this year”. It is important that fire practitioners speak with USFS and government officials to advocate for prescribed fire.

Chief Ron Heinbockle added that USFS crews fight fire as best they can.

Dave Kinader added that not all of this letter is negative. USFS is trying to get a drone to use proactively.

Hannah Hepner added that this piece of legislation is calling for the cessation of managed fire. It would not affect prescribed fire. It would put an end to naturally ignited fires to be managed as a resource benefit.

Mr. Smailes said that according to “Confronting the Wildfire Crisis”, prescribed fire is essential to preventing catastrophic wildfire. More capacity for wildfire suppression is good, but prescribed fire will be embraced more in the future.

Chief Mattos shared that this letter came directly out of the Caldor fire and was written by LaMalfa and McClintock to Randy Moore (USFS) asking for consideration of full suppression efforts.

Jason Ackely asked if the funds being allotted to these suppression efforts will supplement forest management and fuels reduction. He suggested that CAL FIRE needs to understand our area, our terrain and turn to managing lands prior to wildfire. We need less firefighting and more land management.

Chief Rotlisberger added that there is a standard training for firefighters and often crews are trained throughout the summer with any opportunity that is at hand.

John Sheehan added that we need to continue to tell our elected officials what to do.

New Business

1. Aries Biomass Gasification – Gary Darling shared that the tremendous amount of biomass that has accumulated in Plumas County could be used to generate energy and reduce fuel loads. Gasification is the technology we use and could be used to reduce fuel loads pre and post-fire in Plumas County.

Joseph Regnery shared that Aries Clean Technologies presents a forest management and use solution. This technology uses bioenergy/biomass (wildfire fuels, burn residues, other woody biomass) and “cooks” the material so that 90% of the input material is turned into gas and heat. The other 10% of input material results in biochar. Mr. Regnery explained how the process flows, how gasification works, and how heat is used for power. The waste can be made into carbon products or other value-added products. This system can run on urban and forest biomass, but does not run on treated woods. Gasification greatly reduces the amount of

pollution emissions compared to open burning or wood-fired boilers. This technology can take about 65 tons of material per day and generates 1 MW of net power. When used efficiently, gasification can create a carbon neutral platform and eventually becomes a carbon negative platform when using EV trucking. Gasification produces biochar which can be used in compost as soil supplement, building materials, activated carbon for environmental remediation, and many other value-added products. Contact: joseph.regnery@ariescleantech.com

Mr. Darling summarized that gasification produces clean energy, reduces fuel loads, and creates jobs. They are looking for a location in Plumas County.

Mr. Renery added that the standard project is 6 gasifiers that produce about 5-6 MW of energy, 450 tons per day of material is required, and creates roughly 80 tons of biocarbon product.

Mr. Sheehan asked how much the Tennessee facility cost to build.

Mr. Regnery answered the Tennessee facility was a \$75 million investment and is commercially economic. Smaller scale operations are not economic.

Jason Moghaddas asked if the facility could be expanded.

Mr. Regnery answered yes, but with 3 initial gasifiers. The economics are difficult with less than 3 gasifiers and all depends on the volume of material available. The facility requires 3-5 acres for the physical layout of the plant.

Trina Cunningham added that MSC is currently looking at pyrolysis on a smaller scale for small timber. They would like to see a comparison of feasibilities as they explore options. She asked how many people this facility would employ and how many people would it take to operate.

Mr. Regnery answered that the facility would employ approximately 16-20 FTE not including trucking/transport. Both pyrolysis and gasification are advanced chemical conversion processes – pyrolysis using external heat and gasification using internal heat. Gasification can be used at a larger scale and pyrolysis can be on a smaller scale. Economics are difficult at smaller scales. The units can operate on all forms of material - chips, bark, etc.

Trina Cunningham continued that MSC is looking for a quick solution to treating a lot of ground and to help small property owners. MSC is looking for a secondary market for value-added products. It is important for cultural purposes to return nutrients to the system they were taken from.

Mr. Regnery added that biocarbon can be used for fertilizer and carbon sequestration. The carbon is in stable form after gasification.

Georgia Reid asked if sin gas goes into engines or ORC units?

Mr. Regnery answered that sin gas goes into a thermal oxidizer which creates the exhaust gas heat which goes into an ORC unit. Sin gas can be a problem in engines. This system must be as robust a possible to offer a sound solution to forest management.

Ms. Reid asked how many operating hours have been logged and what is the life expectancy of the units?

Mr. Regnery answered that the Tennessee facility has been operating since 2016 and units last 20 years.

Sally McGowan asked if there was an issue with transportation.

Gary Darling answered that current projects are using electric trucks instead of diesel.

Kyle Felker added that electric trucks are a good idea and there is a huge need to reduce fuel costs. Keep us informed.

Kevin Danaher suggested FRC as a location.

2. CFMA presentation – Chief Mattos explained that CFMA stands for California Fire Management Agreement and is a 75-page document that serves as a mutual aid agreement between CALFIRE and forest management entities. The CFMA includes SRA (private lands), FRA (public lands) and DPA (direct protection area). Neither CAL FIRE or USFS has enough capacity to fully manage wildfire. In this area, USFS assumes responsibility for SRA as there is not a CAL FIRE presence here. DPAs are reviewed annually. The CFMA also includes the closest forces concept which means the closest forces respond to incidents despite jurisdiction or land responsibility. Other responders, like helicopters, are assistance by hire. Plumas has the most SRA under federal DPA. CAL FIRE does not have a unit in Plumas for this reason. CAL FIRE would like to provide more service in this community.

Mr. Gasser asked where can we see this map of the DPA.

Chief Mattos answered that these maps can be found on the CAL FIRE website. Even the zones created for the Dixie Fire are established using the CFMA.

Tom Cooley asked if LRAs are included.

Chief Mattos answered that LRAs are not included in the CFMA. If an LRA is adjacent to DPA, CAL FIRE will assist if there is a threat to SRA.

Chief Heinbockle added that the biggest issue local Fire Departments face is the way they are ordered.

Chief Mattos answered that local FDs are not ordered by the CFMA, but CAL EOS is ordered by the CFAA.

Chief Heinbockle asked how local FDs are paid for incidents.

Chief Mattos answered that the CFMA should determine this and it is usually determined by how the FD was ordered.

Ms. Hepner distinguished that prevention is still the responsibility of CAL FIRE.

Chief Rotlisberger answered that they conduct prevention jointly and is addressed in the CFMA. Through the agreement, different cooperators can delegate different prevention activities.

Tracey Ferguson said now that the fire safe regulations apply to the very high severity zones in the LRA, does that also include suppression in those areas of the LRA.

Chief Rotlisberger answered that the LRA is completely separate.

Gary Parque updated the group that Dave Murray from Plumas Eureka State Park received grant funding to build a FD at the state park.

3. Approve CWPP Project List – Reynolds

Mr. Callaghan asked what purpose this list serves.

Mr. Reynolds answered that it is a list of all the projects included in the CWPP.

Ms. Hepner added that this is an annually updated list for state funded projects in the CWPP.

Board vote: Motion – Mike Callahan, Second – Don Gasser

None opposed.

4. Resolution 2022-03: Authorization to apply to contract CAL FIRE VMP implementation - Reynolds

Ms. Hepner explained that CAL FIRE has offered \$200,000 to PCFSC for contracting on their behalf on a VMP project on SPI property on the Lake Almanor Peninsula. PCFSC still needs to apply even if it will be a direct award. This project is specifically for the use of fire after fuel reduction.

Board Vote:

John Reynolds – aye

Kathy Kogge – aye

Michael Hall – aye

Salle McGowan – aye

Joe Smailes – aye

Chuck Bowman – aye

Tracey Ferguson – aye

Trina Cunningham – aye

Mike Callahan – aye

Done Gasser – aye

Absent - Ryan Tompkins, Mike Flanigan, Dan Martynn, Ryan Bauer, Lindsay Wood

5. Seneca Firewise Action Plan – Joe Smailes has presented the Seneca Firewise Action Plan to the Plumas County BOS and reached out to Dahle and LaMalfa regarding local efforts to combat wildfire. Seneca was at great risk and suffered damage during the Dixie Fire. It is important to reach out to lawmakers. It can be difficult to come to consensus. Mr. Smailes expressed his opinion that prescribed fire will be most useful in prevention. Firewise wants to be accepted as a stakeholder at the planning table. The Seneca Community asks for Seneca Road that loops by Canyon Dam next to Highway 89 be made into a DFPZ. They feel that this area is their ingress/egress access. This is the right land management strategy that will trigger other fuels reduction practices. They have proposed hard deadlines because it is likely to have a greater chance for success. They are asking for a WUI Task Force. Seneca does not feel this could be successful without CAL FIRE/USFS support. They are looking for agencies to engage at the highest level possible. The biggest step is to be invited at the planning table.

Mr. Sheehan asked how FW communities can intersect with the USFS in multi-year projects.

Mr. Smailes answered that it is best to approach USFS with a specific need. The Rich Fire DFPZ was effective and could be a framework.

Mr. Gasser asked how long that road segment is and how they propose treating it.

Mr. Smailes answered 12 miles and it will benefit many communities.

Old Business

1. 2022 PCFSC Goals – Tabled to April meeting

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Green Waste Working Group: Beth Rouse updated the group that Beth and Sally McGowan have met with Sean Graham from Plumas County Public Works Department. The Green Waste Working Group has made a good connection with the county. Public Works is looking into air curtain burners as a solution to green waste. Mr. Gasser expressed that the air curtain burner used 5 years ago by the county was not a success.
- CAL FIRE: Chief Rotlisberger reported that 4 DSI inspectors have been hired. These new hires will undergo 4 weeks of training and will be in Lassen, Modoc, and Plumas counties. The DSIs will have a predetermined area to work in. CAL FIRE is still looking to fill a permanent position for DSI. The goal is to have each home in the SRA inspected within 3 years.

Sally McGowan asked if there was a possibility in working more directly Firewise communities. This might be a practical way to connect with residents and look at communities as a whole.

Chief Rotlisberger answered that DSIs will be conducted within a target area, will address individual homes, and will not be random.

Sally McGowan asked how we can we partner to address the needs of specific communities and educate communities on a larger scale.

Chief Rotlisberger answered that educational opportunities would have to consider the availability of personnel.

Mr. Callaghan added that it will be helpful to have a permanent position.

- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Michael Hall reported that Firestorm will be burning piles next week. FRRCD is applying for additional funding for PUC. On May 23rd the RCD will launch an FRC hand crew to thin Plumas Eureka State Park.
- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Mr. Smailes asked when the next FRSC meeting will be. Ms. Hepner added that FRSC will meet quarterly.
- Firewise Communities: Ms. Rouse reported that FW Leads will meet Wednesday, March 16th @ 6pm via zoom.
- Industry – Timber: Not present
- Industry – Insurance: Not present
- Industry – Utilities: Not present

- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Ben McNally reported that EQUIP applications are due April 1st.
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District: Julie Hunter updated the group that today is not a burn day. Make sure to visit our website to check on burn status. Non-residential burns still require a permit for more than one acre. March 16th is open burning for residential areas and Thompson Valley. Burn permits are still needed for burns larger than one acre. The green waste program begins soon in Portola for this year.
- Plumas Audubon Society: Not present
- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association: See CFMA discussion
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES): Not present
- Plumas County Planning Department: Ms. Ferguson reported that the CA Board of Forestry is still working on the rule making process and has collected several comments from cities and counties throughout California. The CA BOF wants to adopt these rules and have them in place by July 1st 2022 or October 1st 2022. Big picture concept is to allow emergency services to enter the county. Plumas County Planning is working on some legislation that would tag Plumas County as having fire safe rules and regulations in order to be acknowledged as a firesafe county.
- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West shared that TREX starts on March 25th. There are 80 total participants signed up. A Basic 32 class is scheduled for this weekend and next. Looking to schedule two more Basic 32 courses in the spring. PUC participation is increasing. There will be a PUC meeting @ the FSC offices today.
- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship: Not present
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy: Not present
- Tree Mortality Update: None
- Tribal Representatives: Ms. Cunningham expressed appreciation for information sharing. MSC co-submitted an NOI to FEMA for process-based restoration (similar concept to beaver dam analogs) to utilize dead trees on MSC property. MSC will be hiring one part time position through EForT.
- UC Cooperative Extension: Not present
- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Mr. Kinatader shared that mastication is underway at Butterfly Valley. USFS will present on the Claremont to Meadow Valley project at the next PCFSC meeting. MAPES project will be changed to focus on the WUI. Thanks to the RCD and SNC for submitting for planning to complete work around the Mt. Hough RD, South Park Area, FRC, Oakland Camp, and Spanish Creek. Mr. Kinatader has been sitting in on Plumas Leadership meetings and incoming funds will be divided into emergency response, infrastructure and WUI areas. USFS is leaning on partners to move forward with these projects.

Mr. Smailes asked if there any multi-agency task forces being formed?

Mr. Kinatader answered that there is a disconnect between the districts, but there are task forces forming.

- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship: Not Present
- Feather River Tourism Association: Karen Kleven shared that FRTA is looking for ways to include wildfire on the website. FRTA is hiring for a marketing manager and information is available online.

2. Status of Current Grants

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Mike McCourt: None
- Chipping Program – Gary Parque: None
- HFR Project Schedule: Mr. West shared that pile burning has been happening in Butterfly Valley.
- Status of Grants Budgets: None (out of time)
- Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities – None (out of time)

3. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Forest Fire Look Out Association meets monthly, contact Jeff Greef for more information.

Adjourn - Next meeting April 14th @ 9am.