

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 12th, 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

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| 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 – Debbie Franco has postponed attendance at the meeting.
3. Approval of February Meeting Minutes – **m – Hamblin, s – Gasser**
4. Public Comment – none
5. Board Comment – Don Gasser provided information sheets about COVID-19.

Annual Project Updates

1. Plumas County Fuels Treatment Overview

Sierra Pacific Industries – Steve DeBonis reported that there has been active fuel treatment work in all counties in which SPI manages lands. He said that there has been a long history of fuels treatments in Plumas County. In 2019 SPI:

- Treated 580 acres on the north side of Chester. Mastication work was completed in the summer and included 80 acres of the CAL FIRE project to the north of the Martin Ranch subdivision.
- Completed 80 acres in Cutler Meadows about ¼ mile from La Porte Road along the ridgeline. The treatment will eventually extend all the way to Spring Garden. It ties in with the Fire Safe Council’s mastication work in the area.

- Has done 45 acres of mastication on small parcels around Butt Lake that tie in with work the Sierra Institute is doing with Lassen National Forest on the West Shore project.
- Established 150 acres of on SPI's Dyer Mtn. Tract, located north of Old Haun Road, paralleling Highway 147, upslope of the East Shore of Lake Almanor. They will follow up with mastication in the summer of 2020.

About 830 acres in total.

In 2020 SPI plans to:

- Masticate 240 acres along Highway 36 in conjunction with Cal Trans roadside treatments, west of Chester.
- Treat another 160 acres of Cutler Meadow project.
- Complete 95 acres of mastication around the community of Greenhorn, which will tie into a Fire Safe Council project.
- Implement treatments along the west side of Old Haun Road.
- Treat 320 acres near Clio at Sierra Estates.
- Finish the west slope of the Dyer project.
- With CAL FIRE, conduct maintenance on 285 acres of a 1999 fuel break along County Road A-13.

About 1,500 acres in total.

Gary Parque commented on the park-like appearance of the treatments at Fells Flat Road. Mr. DeBonis said that under a THP treatments can take the basal area down to 50 square feet per acre. Those treatments are "shaded fuel breaks" and have been proven to work for fire suppression activities.

Don Gasser asked if these treatments are along roads or in blocks. Mr. DeBonis said that treatments are generally 150 feet on both sides of the road. Topography and parallel roads are utilized in project boundaries.

Rich Adams asked which facilities SPI is sending biomass to. Mr. DeBonis said primarily Honey Lake Power.

Trina Cunningham asked if the East Shore treatments are involved with the trail plan along the lake. Mr. DeBonis said that SPI hasn't been approached about the trail initiative along Lake Almanor.

Soper Wheeler – Paul Violett provided an email update that said Soper Wheeler will focus on collaborating to get the Spanish Ranch underburn completed. Maintenance of past fuel treatments, primarily with herbicide, has been ongoing.

Plumas National Forest – Ryan Bauer said:

- Mechanical work on the Keddie project north of Greenville is done. Pile burning is mostly done and underburning will take place over the next few years.
- The Moonlight restoration Environmental Assessment is signed and work will start. It ties into the Franks Valley project.
- Planning is taking place in the Walker Fire footprint right now. There will not be extensive salvage operations. The Forest is utilizing a Categorical Exclusion that limits the acres.
- Cradle Valley mechanical treatments are done. There will be some follow-up burning.
- Lassen County Fire Safe Council was recently awarded funds for the Thompson Peak initiative.
- There has been a little bit of treatment in the East Side underburn, which is an expansive area that covers much of the Beckwourth District. The work ties into the Fire Safe Council's Dixie Valley project. The Walker Fire's fire effects are yet to be determined in the area, it's possible that the fire has met some of the underburn objectives. The burnout operations were carried out in areas that received treatment in the '70's-'90's.

- The Mapes project is in the planning phase. The project planning area was truncated by the Walker Fire.
- Mechanical work on the Frenchman Lake Forest Health project is complete.
- The Haskell project south of Mohawk Valley is in the planning phase. It ties into the Lakes Basin project.
- One of the timber sales on the Lakes Basin project was repackaged and is awaiting award. Some of the units that came out of the timber sale were included in the Fire Safe Council's Lakes Basin project. It ties into the Plumas Eureka project.
- The Plumas Eureka project is actively being treated right now and may continue for the next three years. Once the mechanical work is done it will be followed up with underburning.
- Burning the Jackson project along the Highway 70 corridor is an objective for this spring. It ties into the Big Hill project.
- The Big Hill project was burned this winter.
- Burning of biomass decks continues on the Empire project north of the American Valley.
- Piles on the Elizabethtown project will remain through the summer.
- There are a few units left of the American Valley project that haven't gone out to contract.
- The Butterfly Twain Project is well underway. Mechanical operations may start this summer. All of the hand thinning is under contract and awaiting completion. Burning of piles continued this winter and will extend through the next one or two winters.
- The Claremont project is in the planning phase. It extends from south of Quincy all the way to the Middle Fork and west all the way to the Meadow Valley project. It is in the second year of required surveys.
- The Gibsonville project is signed and awarded but no work has started.
- Work on the Little Grass Valley project is ongoing. A second award from SNC will complete the QLG era project.
- There is clean up work in an underburn around La Porte. There was enough mortality to do a salvage sale. Pre-treatment only allows thinning to a certain level. Prescribed fire generally removes the rest that should go.
- The Challenge project is being implemented right up to the community. Work will take several more years.
- PAC treatments are being completed to fill in the matrix between treatments from the Meadow Valley project. They will be burned as weather allows. It was an area where progress should have been made this winter but conditions were too dry.
- Most of the piles on the Bucks Lake project were burned this winter.
- Long Valley, west of Round Valley, is a large landscape project that mostly burned in the Chips Fire. It is an out-year project that should have a NEPA decision this year.
- The Axeford project is outside of the WUI over the crest on the other side of the Oro-Quincy Highway. It has been a landscape project on the radar for at least a decade. It is scheduled for work in 2022.
- The French Creek project is just outside of the southern edge of the Camp Fire in the next big drainage. Portions of the old project were used to contain the Camp Fire. Additional treatments will be done to make it a more comprehensive treatment.
- Work continues on the Brush Creek DFPZ.

Ron Heinbockel asked if PAC treatments fit into fuel/DFPZ schemes. Mr. Bauer said that DFPZ "worms" following roads and ridges are a nice concept but after applying restrictions from the LRMP and other

mitigations the on-the-ground treatments have many gaps and thin spots so, in some cases these PAC treatments fill those gaps. Also, DFPZs were only phase one of the strategy described by the QLG. Going beyond phase one involves treating the matrix between the DFPZs, and some of these PAC treatments do that as well.

Mr. Heinbockel asked if salvage requires treatment to remain under 30" DBH. Mr. Bauer said, no, but snags are retained in clumps.

Dr. Gasser asked if biomass piles will be open to woodcutters. Mr. Bauer said he does not anticipate doing that at Bucks because most have approach roads that are already ripped and water barred. There is a large landing on Big Creek road that is open to woodcutters. Matt West added that all of the wood on the ground outside of Quincy on the Elizabethtown project is open to woodcutters with permits.

Natural Resource Conservation Service – Dan Martynn reported that in Plumas County last year there were 5 contracts totaling 85 acres. However, one contract was dropped so about 60 acres were treated. This year he anticipates 125 acres with 10 clients, some in the Haskell area. He uses federal projects to do outreach to neighboring private land owners. Outside of Plumas county 300 acres of mastication were accomplished in the Sattley area last year.

Plumas Eureka State Park – Rich Adams said that he is the permanently funded forester and prescribed fire manager for the Sierra District, which spans 6 counties and 17 parks. He tends to focus on a few parks at a time. Currently they are doing hazard tree removal of beetle killed trees in the campground at Plumas Eureka State Park. The first underburn was done in the park in 1996 followed by burning through the early 2000s. Mr. Adams said that a lot of work has been done on the west side of Medora Lake and that a project between Medora Lake and the eastern boundary of the park is CEQA ready. The Satellite parcel has been commercially thinned and pile burned in preparation for an underburn. There is opportunity to do a cross boundary underburn with the Forest Service's Big Hill project. He has been focusing on Johnsville community protection. A lot of work has been done on both sides of Johnsville Rd, which is the main evacuation route. There is more work along the road and the road to the campground being scoped. When the campground is full it is a community that needs protection as well. He has been considering the ski hill parking as a temporary refuge area. All project work is grant funded. The park would benefit from permanent funding solutions to get more work done. He has been successful securing CAL FIRE funds for foothill area projects. In addition he would like to develop a park-wide CEQA document for fuel work. He said there are funds available for implementation but not as many opportunities for planning.

Don Fregulia added that the prescribed fire done by the park along Red Dirt road got some negative feedback from the community, but since the work was done he feels better about the use of the road for evacuation and suppression efforts. Mr. Adams said that fire killed trees from prescribed fire are part of the program to create habitat.

Mountain Maidu – Ben Cunningham said that late last fall they got title to the Humbug property as well as two parcels this winter. He anticipates two more in late April or May. This fall they will get the cemetery parcel on the east shore. The Maidu Summit Consortium are involved in the West Shore project. There is still a lot of planning to do.

Plumas Fire Chiefs Association – Ron Heinbockel reported that CAL FIRE will have 356 engines in the state this year as well as areal equipment including air tankers and blackhawks. However, there is a shortage of pilots.

The state's inmate program will be down to 40 hand crews this year. Coronavirus may affect availability of all crews. The PFCA is pursuing grant funds to purchase equipment for OSHA compliance. Chief Heinbockel said there will be an article in the newspaper about the importance of volunteering. There are currently six fire fighters in Meadow Valley, but it is a national problem. He said that the Chiefs will be speaking to the Plumas County Board of Supervisors to make them aware of the situation.

Sierra Institute – Kyle Rodgers said that Sierra Institute has been partnering with Lassen National Forest to do planning on approximately 6,000 acres of the West Shore project. They anticipate a NEPA decision will be signed this summer. Sierra Institute has been working on private lands with SPI, Collins Pine, and in the Big Meadows community.

Plumas County Fire Safe Council – Matt West reported that the Butterfly project is being implemented with multiple masticators and a hand pile crew. The Butterfly East timber sale is expected to start soon and be completed by September. It may include biomass chipping and hauling with CCI funds. The hand thin crew is done with the Elizabethtown units just outside of Quincy. They have moved to Genesee and are working in the Ward/Walker fire area. The Bucks Lake and Wolf/Grizzly projects were completed in 2019. The Little Grass Valley project is snowed in but will resume when access allows.

Hannah Hepner said that the Fire Safe Council's community HFR projects do not show up in a significant way on county-wide maps, but that the projects get work done in critical areas around homes and infrastructure. As well, the projects are an educational opportunity that usually result in multiple phases of projects in communities where more and more landowners desire treatment.

Firewise:

Old Highway Road – Sally McGowan outlined the work that has been done in the community, culminating in a recent PUC underburn on 2.5 acres. She said it was a collaborative effort that involved the community members, an absentee landowner, Quincy VFD, the RCD and the Forest Service. It was the first start-to-finish PUC underburn. Ms. Hepner said that 60 acres of the absentee landowner's property is part of the American Valley II HFR project. Mr. Bauer added that it will tie into PNF's American Valley project.

Taylorville – Mike Yost said they have completed a community escape route and compiled a list of addresses and contact of residents who need assistance in an evacuation. Their reflective sign project is ongoing. They are in the process of developing a Wildfire Preparedness Day project. There is an area at the south end of town that has been identified for a community fuel reduction effort. It will be a collaborative effort with the charter school and the Forest Service that will take several years.

Portola – Phil Oels is awaiting equipment for the Fire Safe Council's 192 project southwest of town. He said that apathy is an ongoing problem in Portola and that outreach is a focus.

Clio – Rachael Norton said that their Firewise committee is putting out a mailer this week. They are on track for certification.

Lake Almanor Country Club – Barbara MacArthur reported that there was a 250 acre timber harvest along Clifford Drive by Collins Pine. The HOA will start roadside clearing and thinning.

Gold Mountain – Mike Callaghan said that the homeowner treatment program stalled last year. However over 280 lots, nearly 800 acres, have been treated. Forty parcels, which total 87 acres are remaining. There is a plan to create an ongoing maintenance program. Mr. Callaghan has created a slideshow with before and after photos of the Fire Safe Council's recent project. The Firewise group is in the process of updating the 2012 assessment.

Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman – Mike McCourt said that there is a lot of interest and hours are getting reported. One homeowner did about 7 acres of mastication.

Meadow Valley – Paul Mrowizynski said there will be a pod leader meeting on April 1st. They are in the process of gathering addresses and contact information for all residents. There will be a thinning workshop with PUC in April. A go-bag meeting is planned for May.

Graeagle – Chuck Bowman said that a 17 acre project is wrapping up in Whitehawk. The Moahwk Valley HFR project has about 280 acres of landowner applications, but he anticipates about 700 acres in total.

Grizzly Ranch – John Reynolds said work on a 12 acre parcel that belongs to the CSD will be finished in early summer. The next big focus will be the rights-of-way to address the many small trees. HIZ consultations have not been completed for about 3-4 years. PRC 4291 standards were written into the community's CC&Rs.

2. Approve 2020 CWPP Appendix B

Motion – Callaghan, second – Hamblin

All ayes

Fire Safe Updates

1. Status of Current Grants –

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: Mike McCourt announced that CAL FIRE is funding 3-years of the program. He said the program may resume in late summer.

Chipping Program: Gary Parque said that applications have been coming in. The program will resume in May. He anticipates being in the office starting April 1st.

2. Status of Grant Budgets – Don Gasser has started comparing project spending. He said that Dixie Valley came to about \$2,000/acre. He noted that the Plumas Collaborative Forest Health project still has a lot of unspent funds. He said that in four years salary costs have increased by 3.5 because there are additional staff and employees are no longer contracted. There has also been an increase in grant funds coming in.

4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner reiterated that the Lakes Basin project was recently funded by SNC and the Senior Disabled program was funded by CAL FIRE.

Mike Callaghan said that the Woodbridge project should be referred to as Portola South or Phase II. He noted that it was unfortunate that it wasn't funded by CAL FIRE as it would be a huge benefit to the community of Portola.

Other Updates

Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – The burn ban for American Valley lifts on March 16th. A new greenwaste memo has been issued.

Plumas Office of Emergency Services – Sue McCourt said that there are new fire alert cameras up in Meadow Valley and Sloat. May is Fire Preparedness Month. There will be a proclamation by the Board of Supervisors. The recent Firewise coordinators meeting had 45 people in attendance. The Firewise communities interactive map is complete and available on the Fire Safe Council's [website](#). AB 3074 is a Fire Prevention and Defensible Space bill introduced on February 21st. It will formalize the ember resistant zone 0-5 feet from structures. Post fire surveys from the Camp Fire showed that mulch and combustible fences attached to homes were significant contributors to structure loss. If you call 911 from a cell phone, stay on the line for at least one minute so your location can be determined.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events -

PUC How to Prepare Your Land for Fire Workshops: April 18th Smith Creek Ranch, April 25th Meadow Valley

Quarterly PUC meeting – March 19th 12pm

[all events postponed at the time of this writing]

Adjourn - Next meeting April 9th, 2020 **[cancelled at the time of this writing]**