

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



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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, March 8th, 2018 - 9:00 am.

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

1. Welcome & Introductions – Don Gasser
2. Review Agenda – Mike De Lasaux asked to add discussion of proposed California legislation. It was added as a second item under new business. **m – Fletcher, s – Reynolds**
3. Approve Meeting Minutes – Don Gasser asked Mike McCourt to clarify what “treasures” he’s referring to in the Senior/Disabled Defensible Space program. Mr. McCourt said he means collectibles and debris that pose a fire hazard. **m – Callaghan, s – Ruiz**
4. Public Comment – none

New Business –

1. Land Manager Updates

Collins Pine Company – Andy Juska

Collins Pine manages 50,000 acres in Plumas County. Mr. Juska is responsible for 35,000 acres of that resource. Collins Pine’s “fuel breaks” are pursued by creation of healthy forest stands – primarily through understory thinning and biomass utilization. There has been a big effort placed in high use areas around the Lake Almanor Basin. Collins Pine focuses on tying into adjacent private timber land and forest service projects. Mr. Juska stated that we “can’t manage this land in a vacuum” and that projects are more valuable when they meaningfully relate to other projects. They also focus on fire protection access and having adequate landings. Don Gasser asked how long until maintenance is required on fuels projects. Mr. Juska said that it depends a lot on the site. Collins Pine has a 15 year maintenance schedule, but they regularly assess the landscape within that 15 year timeframe. To that point, Mike De Lasaux suggested that the Council revisit the Collins

Pine demonstration project completed at Almanor West in 2004. He also asked if Collins Pine would be willing to share spatial data. Mr. Juska said that, yes, information can be shared.

Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) – Steve DeBonis

The SPI Almanor District is approximately 205,000 acres, nearly 66,000 acres of which are located in Plumas County; the remainder is located in Lassen County. The southern district boundary extends from Twain to Clio; the SPI Tahoe District manages SPI lands south and east of Clio. The Highway 32/36 junction forms the district's western boundary, communities east of this boundary adjacent to SPI lands include Chester, Westwood and Susanville; SPI lands south and west of this location are managed by the SPI Lassen and Stirling Districts. The community of Little Valley is the northern extent of the Almanor District; SPI lands to the north of Little Valley are managed by the SPI Burney District. The SPI Almanor District has five Foresters, one Reforestation Specialist and one Patrolman on staff. (Italicized minutes updated 5/2/18) SPI started fuel breaks around the Lake Almanor Basin in 1999. Historically, they chipped fuel breaks for biomass utilization. Although there has been a recent revival in biomass facilities, they are limited by trucking contractors. Planned projects were shown on a map and will be implemented in the next few years. Their first priority is to chip it, if possible. This makes sense in areas that are close to the highway. The second option is to masticate. The final option is to underburn the areas after initial fuel removal. SPI is open to working with CAL FIRE to undertake underburns and has been in discussion with the Lassen-Modoc Unit about the possibility. In the future they are looking to expand existing fuel breaks that need additional thinning. They will continue to focus on improving visibility and safety on main line roads, which also provides fire protection. SPI also looks to work with large adjacent landowners to get more “bang for their buck.” They will be planning fuel breaks in conjunction with the Forest Service this year. They are also willing to share spatial data.

Soper Wheeler – Paul Violett

Mr. Violett highlighted various success stories of fire contained within, or held at, Soper Wheeler lands that had received fuels treatments. There are currently several areas that need the delimeter piles addressed. Now that biomass is available the material won't need to be burned. Mr. Violett discussed issues with deerbrush and black oak regrowth in areas treated less than 10 years ago. He is considering treating with herbicide, as he expects that the vegetation would respond similarly to prescribed fire as it did to mastication. However, he is a proponent of prescribed fire and has developed an underburn project for an area of Spanish Ranch that has received a whole tree thinning. It is incorporated into a CAL FIRE California Climate Investment proposal to burn across boundaries with Plumas National Forest.

Mike De Lasaux encouraged all of the industrial timberland representatives to take advantage of opportunities through the Fire Safe Council to address fuel projects.

Plumas National Forest

Beckwourth Ranger District – Marty Senter

Mr. Senter used a map to highlight the District's projects in planning. Each of the projects has multiple components including timber harvest, hand thinning, pile burning, and underburning. The project designs are at a landscape scale that allows for more effective underburning. There are 17,000 acres of underburning on the East Side project. They will start in the WUI and move out from them. After a NEPA decision is signed the first activity is mechanical thinning. The follow up underburning is more challenging due to various factors. This year the Beckwourth had its first managed fire and they intend to have more in the future. Mr. Violett asked how concerning the conditions were with the managed fire this year. Ryan Bauer said that most of the

smoke was caused by Forest Service operations and that they had several opportunities to terminate the managed fire, but felt confident in continuing. Mr. Bauer is working on a map for where managed fire can be utilized in the future.

Mr. De Lasaux asked if there is funding for the planned projects. Mr. Senter said that it is determined year by year. The District was given more funding this year. Mr. Bauer added that timber revenues will go back into supporting the project.

David Popp asked if there is public access to pre and post monitoring data. He was told that it can be requested.

Barbara MacArthur asked what the NEPA timeline is for a project. Mr. Senter said it can range from a few months for smaller projects, to 5 years for larger ones.

Mount Hough Ranger District – Nick Bunch

The Mt. Hough Ranger District has more dispersed communities, making largescale projects difficult. Additionally, if they focus entirely on one area, they are neglecting another. As a result, they have projects strategically spread out over the district. This also allows them to burn in any kind of wind, as there is a lot of variability in air quality.

Mr. Bunch added that the length of time it takes to create a NEPA document depends on how long it takes to do the surveys. If there is too much planning needed, the ability to conduct surveys gets spread too thin.

Dave Kinatader added that the Forest is getting ready to prepare a planning document for 70,000 acres of the Middle Fork. They are trying to change the way that they do business in this regard.

Mr. Bunch emphasized the value of partnerships in securing funding for implementation.

Mr. Kinatader said that they are trying to do a “clean sweep” of all of the existing Quincy Library Group planning, for which the initial timber work did not pay enough to support the service work. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has been a resource for funding to get this done. These projects have a very linear layout. Newer projects (such as Butterfly Twain) are “blobs” that include wildlife Protected Activity Centers (PACs) that were excluded in the past. Mooretown and Greenville Rancherias have been integral in implementing recent projects.

Mr. Bunch proposed a meeting with state leadership to discuss working across ownership boundaries.

Mr. De Lasaux noted that the difference between private and public land management capabilities was illuminated by the updates. Mr. Bunch followed that it is important to have participation from the community in development of the project and that public comment is critical.

Feather River District – Ryan Bauer

Most of their efforts are currently outside of Plumas County in order to address areas around communities in Butte County.

Sierra Institute – Camille Swezy

The Sierra Institute is not a landowner by they have several projects to support work that is being undertaken. SCALE is working on how to make the Good Neighbor Authority work and to establish Master Stewardship Agreements.

The South Lassen Watershed group is funded by PG&E and has several projects planned, including a CCI grant proposal for Lassen National Forest and Collins Pine land.

Sierra Institute continues to work on outlets for chips and low value material. They are redeveloping a mill site in Crescent Mills, which Sierra Institute now owns but needs to undertake site cleanup. They have SNC funding to see that through.

Their biomass heating system at the Courthouse Annex will be operational in the next few weeks.

2. Proposed California Legislation

Mike De Lasaux discussed two particular pieces of proposed legislation that should be of interest to the Fire Safe Council. [AB 2019](#) is a prescribed fire bill that has a provision for liability (section 4503). A second bill looks at how to make greenhouse gas funds available for on-the-ground work, which could have the potential to support coordination for Fire Safe Councils. There are still legislatures promoting the Secure Rural Schools Title II & III funding, but it is not guaranteed. It is important for the PCFSC to track these bills and talk with representatives.

Paul Violett followed that there are actually [five prescribed fire bills](#) that are a result of the Little Hoover Report.

Firewise Community Updates

LACC – Barbara MacArthur - The Chips Fire was the wakeup call that initiated the Firewise effort at LACC. They have made a lot of progress, with support from Sean Delaour's CAL FIRE crews who have cleared along roadways. July 7th is their annual Firewise event. The Napa County Fire Chief, Barry Biermann, and CAL FIRE Deputy Chief, Pete Munoa, will present, along with information from an insurance adjuster. All are welcome to attend. LACC has contacted two large landowners to their north to initiate a fuel reduction project.

Gold Mountain – Mike Callaghan – Gold Mountain started a fuel reduction project mandated by the HOA in 2014. Initially there were 144 compliant lots (to internally developed standards) out of 400 lots. At the end of 2017, there are now 331 compliant lots. They are extending the program an additional year, after which point the HOA will contract the work for non-compliant landowners. This year the community is implementing a Stevens fund grant to treat 116 acres, mostly on adjacent property. Mr. Callaghan commented that all subdivision should be treated for fuels reduction before they are developed. Claude Sanders asked how the community plans to maintain the treated areas. Mr. Callaghan said that he would appreciate input on that matter.

Grizzly Ranch – John Reynolds – Grizzly Ranch is a 1,000 acre development with 290 developed home sites. There are 425 acres in an undeveloped area that belongs to a single landowner. The subdivision was treated before development, but the adjacent areas were not treated. They have adopted CC&Rs that require landowners to meet fuel reduction standards. Initially the community had 28 properties assessed at high or very high hazard. After targeted outreach, 13 of the 28 were treated in the last year. Additionally, the HOA has ensured that their own lands meet the standards. Grant funds have been requested to treat some of the adjacent area. Mrs. MacArthur asked who paid for the initial assessment. In Grizzly Ranch it was the HOA. Mr. Violett clarified that Grizzly Ranch doesn't allow burning and subsequently suggested that a centralized burn pile could help with ongoing fuel reduction efforts. Julie Ruiz interjected that it is complex to permit a community burn pile. Technically vegetation can't be transported off site to be burned. Mr. De Lasaux suggested that the Council advocate with the Board of Supervisors to change these regulations.

Graeagle – Chuck Bowman – Graeagle Firewise covers the entire fire district, which includes six different communities. There are efforts taking place in all of the communities, but they are not coordinated. Valley Ranch was a big participant in the Fire Safe Council's chipping program last year. But it is Whitehawk's efforts that are used to carry the Firewise renewal requirements. Whitehawk is a 1,000 acre development. To date they have treated 224 acres. This year they are focusing on 12.6 acres around the most densely populated

part of the community. There is also an ongoing effort to make roadways safer, to identify and remove dead and dying trees, and to evaluate properties and alert landowners to actions they need to take. Mr. Bowman added that their community burn pile is burned twice a year by qualified contractors.

Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman – Mike McCourt – The community had its annual meeting last week. This year's project will be a cleanup at the fire station. They intend to demonstrate safe burning practices at the event. They are working with the County to provide better signage for emergency response. The community had a good response to the chipping program last year. Private and federal landowners around the community have been undertaking a lot of beneficial work. There are some challenges in these "wild west" areas compared to developments with HOAs.

Mohawk Vista – Not present. Has a Stevens fund grant for a fuel reduction project.

Lake Almanor West – Not present

Plumas Eureka – Not present

Portola – Phil Oels - Planning an assessment once snow allows.

Gallepii – Not present. Assessment conducted.

Chester - Not present. Planning a March assessment.

Feather River College – Also has a March assessment. Will be the second college in the nation to receive Firewise recognition.

The Pines – Not present. Has conducted an assessment, has a Firewise day scheduled for June.

Chilcoot/Vinton – In initial planning phase.

Sue McCourt encouraged adjacent landowners to make contact with Firewise communities when undertaking work in the area. She also noted that assessments have been completed for Genesee Woods and Butterfly Valley, though there is currently no leadership in those communities to follow-through with the Firewise designation. She announced that some of the requirements for Firewise recognition have changed. Additionally, on April 3rd there will be a Firewise Coordinators meeting.

Old Business

1. Community Fuel Treatment Maintenance Workshop Committee – Michael De Lasaux summarized that the committee has been meeting for three months. The two action items identified at last month's meeting have been delayed: site visits will be conducted in April to assess what the maintenance needs are along La Porte Road, and input from interested prescribed fire practitioners is currently being collected.

Updates

1. Status of Current Grants –

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: Mike McCourt – There were 75 residences treated last year. There have been about 15 additional requests for this year. Mr. Callaghan asked how new participants become aware of the program. Mr. McCourt believes it is primarily word of mouth. Mr. Bauer added that he has distributed brochures in the past. CAL FIRE also distributes them during Defensible-Space inspections.

Chipping Program: Gary Parque – there have been emails and calls with interest in the program. He believes it will expand in 2018. Mr. Reynolds re-emphasized the need for dates.

Hannah Hepner asked if there were any questions about the Hazardous Fuel Reduction Schedule. There were none.

2. Status of Grant Budgets – Hannah Hepner

Cost center 274 (Coordination) is fully expended. Additional coordination funds will come from RAC funds. The agreement for RAC funds have been signed by PCFSC.

3. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – Hannah Hepner

PG&E is offering fuel reduction grants up to \$100,000 for projects that can be completed by Oct 1st, 2018. The Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance program is a good candidate. Funds received from PG&E would allow existing RAC funds to be utilized farther into the future. Additionally, Rob Wade, representing the Plumas Unified School District, has proposed working with the Fire Safe Council to develop a “Defensible Schools” program. PG&E funds would allow for development and implementation of the program at schools in Chester, Greenville, and Quincy.

Motion to submit a request for PG&E funds for both programs – **Bauer, s- Reynolds**

USFS Stevens funds requests were submitted April 14th 2017. Mr. Bauer said that the Forest Service has not announced an award and, at this point, he doesn’t expect them to. Solicitations for 2019/20 funds will take place next month.

SNC Prop 1 were submitted November 1st 2017 for:

Little Grass Valley Reservoir Watershed Protection Project – 480 acres, \$500,000

Butterfly Twain Fuels and Forest Health Project – 455 acres, \$500,000

An award decision is expected in June.

CAL FIRE California Climate Investments (CCI) Forest Health grant concept proposal was submitted February 21st, 2018 to treat ~7,000 acres on public private lands in Plumas County. CAL FIRE received \$335 million in requests for the \$200 million available. CAL FIRE is prioritizing large collaborative projects that have completed planning documents. It was recently stated that they are also prioritizing southern and central Sierra Nevada forests. Mr. De Lasaux added that CAL FIRE Fuels Reduction funding will likely be announced soon.

4. Standing Reports and Discussion

- **Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES):** Sue McCourt – May 5th is Wildfire Community Preparedness Day. Chester Fire submitted an application for grant funds to support their project. The Fire Safe Council should make a concerted effort to promote the day, as well as the following Wildfire Preparedness Week.
- **CAL FIRE:** Quincy’s new Captain, Mark Hillskotter, was unable to attend the meeting. He sent a message that Defensible Space inspections to begin in April.
- **Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District:** Julie Ruiz – Burning in American Valley will open March 16th.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

April 3rd – Firewise Coordinators meeting: 9:00am-12:30pm at the Quincy Library Meeting Room

April 6th - Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Plumas County's biomass heating system: 11:00am at 270 County Hospital Rd, Quincy

May 5th – Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, Chester and Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman events

July 7th – LACC annual Firewise meeting: 9:30am at Fire Hall #2

Don Gasser concluded by saying that the Community Connections subcommittee will have a report at the April meeting.

Adjourned – Next meeting schedule for April 12th, 2018