

# Plumas County Fire Safe Council



## Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup> 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"/> <b>Chair</b> , John Reynolds Firewise Community (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Vice Chair</b> , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Secretary/Treasurer</b> Mike Flanigan, Insurance (23)	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Tompkins, UCCE (23)
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dan Martynn, Retired (22)
<input type="checkbox"/> Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – CMFA presentation by Ryan Bauer reinstated for May meeting.
3. Approve January Meeting Minutes – **Motion - Sally McGowan, Second - Mike Callahan**
4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to: Richard Stockton

Don Gasser noted that Richard Stockton has been involved in Fire Safe activities for longer than 2019. Trina Cunningham added that Richard is a great asset to our community, especially when insurance is so difficult to navigate at this time.

5. Public Comment - none

5. Board Comment – Trina Cunningham congratulated the Fire Safe Council for receiving \$5 million in settlement funds from the recent PG&E Dixie Fire lawsuit.

Hannah Hepner explained that the Plumas County District Attorney, and DAs from other affected counties, concluded the settlement with PG&E over the Dixie Fire. Some of the settlement funds will be payment to individuals who lost homes and some will be directed to local organizations in Plumas County. \$5 million was awarded to PCFSC. Hannah is currently working on budget and a plan to leverage the funds to support as many programs and initiatives as possible.

Jeff Greef asked if the rumors of PGE starting a co-gen plant were true. Ms. Hepner answered that she was not aware of that being the case.

Ms. Cunningham answered that MSC will be continuing in the lawsuit against PG&E and may receive support for biomass energy. Ms. Cunningham expressed the need for a collaborative strategy session outside the regular board meetings to leverage all settlement funds in all organizations to the maximum.

Ms. Hepner reported that FRC received \$2 million, the Dixie Fire Collaborative was awarded \$2 million, Sierra Institute \$1 million, and \$100,000 was awarded to local VFDs to share across the county.

Mr. Reynolds said that the plan for the funds will be shared with the council.

### **New Business**

1. California Fire Safe Council - Rachel Ostrander introduced the Wildland Fire Assessment Program Toolkit Overview (WFAP), a new training program for volunteers to conduct home assessments in the WUI. This program is targeted at volunteers, includes 4 modules, talking points, discussion questions, instructor notes, reference resources, and more training options. The training is available now online. Fellows will be providing an upcoming in-person training.

Wildland Fire Assessment Program is a free “train the trainer” program through National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) and the U.S. Forest Service. Easy training to conduct home assessments in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) and is targeted to volunteers to evaluate a home and provide residents with SUGGESTIONS to protect their property.

Overview:

Introduction: Online / In-person training, Home Assessment Checklist, WFAP toolkit, quizzes & certificate (upon completion).

Module 1: Understand the Problem - Combination of drought, warmer temperature, high winds, and large amounts of dried vegetation in forests and grasslands. Wildfires can start from vehicle exhaust, camping, arson, smoking, lightning, and sparks from trains and heavy equipment. Living in the WUI, wildfires are a problem, but also a natural occurrence. What are some of the main causes of wildfire in your community?

Module 2: Identify the Zones - Defensible Space, Structural Ignition Zones (HIZ), 0-5 ft, 5-30 ft, 30-100 ft and beyond. REMOVE dead and dying grass, shrubs and trees, REDUCE the density of vegetation: prune, mow, and thin, REPLACE hazardous vegetation with less flammable plants or irrigated landscape.

Module 3: Evaluate the Home - Conducting a home hazard assessment, identifying hazard reduction options, list homeowner preparedness steps, identify evacuation options.

Module 4: Available Resources - [WFAP Toolkit](#), the [online checklist](#) provided by NVFC is one resource they offer to keep track of forms and data, [free web banners, flyers, and more](#).

Ms. Hepner added that Liam Gallaher, the new PCFSC County Coordinator, will go through this training and report to the Board on if it will be useful for our community.

2. USFS Claremont Project – PNF representative was not in attendance. Ryan Bauer shared that scoping for the Claremont project will hopefully begin this week.

Mr. Reynolds asked what area this project covers and will the project include reforestation. Mr. Bauer answered that the project will cover everything south of Quincy from Meadow Valley to Spring Garden and is focused on fuels reduction and forest health and includes thousands of acres. Reforestation work might overlap with the North Complex and the Minerva footprint is covered by a separate document.

Dave Kinatader added that the project started with a timber focus, but has changed due to recent fires. The new project concept has a stronger WUI focus and Mr. Kinatader and Mr. Bauer have been focusing on completing work in the WUI. Currently trying to finalize acres and units. The project will go out for scoping soon.

Mike Flanigan asked what the time frame for scoping was. Mr. Bauer answered 1 year.

Sally McGowan asked what project scoping entails. Mr. Bauer responded that this project requires 30 days of scoping for environmental requirements and a public comment period. Specialists and surveyors all work together to sort out and bring to light significant issues. Public comments should be specific to the project area.

Ms. Cunningham asked what project scope means in simple terms and what scope looks like for this project. Mr. Bauer answered that project scope and scoping provides guidelines on how to proceed. Mr. Kinatader added that scoping is a NEPA process and draws on the knowledge base of the public.

Joe Smailes suggested that we hear a presentation from the District next month. The Council has been talking about this section of the forest for a long time and should not let this opportunity go.

Ryan Tompkins added that two years ago UCCE brought in a Forest Health planning grant from Sierra Nevada Conservancy. UCCE has been working with the District and a lot of the awarded funds are going to the Feather River Resource Conservation District to make sure that some of the new forest concepts are being woven into projects. Maurice Huynh is on detail at the moment, but UCCE will be at the Timber Industry meeting in June to focus on this project.

Mr. Bauer added that the Claremont Project is great, but will not protect Quincy proper. There is still a large area of untreated private land that will need to be addressed. Better protection for Quincy will mean more work on private land.

3. Wildfire Preparedness Month – Beth Rouse announced that April 22nd “Poses for the Planet” Fundraiser through Heart Root Yoga will benefit PCFSC.

Wildfire Preparedness Month activities:

- May Round up at the register – Feather River Foods Co-op
- May 4th Tool Trailer Work day at Plumas District Hospital
- May 13th Wildfire Restoration Symposium at Feather River College
- May 14th Wildfire Prep Day at Plumas County Fairgrounds
- May 21st Wildfire Prep Tour at various locations throughout the county

## **Old Business**

1. 2022 PCFSC Goals – Mr. Reynolds shared that The Board has been meeting to discuss PCFSC 2022 goals along with the strategic plan and will have a rough draft ready for the next PCFSC meeting. The Board is meeting Monday, April 25th at 9:00 am in the Plumas Corporation offices.

## **Updates**

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Green Waste Working Group: Beth Rouse will be attending the April 26th Plumas County Public Works Meeting to discuss green waste.
- CAL FIRE: Captain Alan Thornhill shared that 4 Defensible Space Inspectors (DSI) have been hired for 9-month long positions. The new DSIs have done some inspections for AB 38 in Plumas and will be in Ford pickups. The vehicles will be marked as DSI soon. The Unit is still looking for a permanent hire.

Mr. Bauer asked if 4291 inspections for real estate sales were still required and if the DSIs will be doing this type of inspection. Mr. Thornhill answered yes and the real estate agent or homeowner should be able to request this online. Mike Callahan added that this process is working well and the DSIs are timely.

Jonathan Panguburn shared that burn permits are required starting tomorrow, April 15th. The permits are free and available online. There is fuel reduction work and burning is going on in Lassen County. The Unit also has projects in Chester and Butterfly Valley. CAL FIRE is trying to make a stronger presence in Plumas County and can be contacted for assistance. Mr. Pangburn suggested depositing the settlement funds into an endowment account to fund future programs down the line.

Dan Martynn asked what CAL FIRE projects are occurring in Butterfly Valley. Mr. Pangburn answered that the Butterfly project is a collaboration with Bill Jacks, local residents, and USFS. It will be roughly 80 acres of broadcast burning in the WUI.

- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Julia Sidman reported that the Feather River Resource Conservation District (FRRCD) has a 740 acre fuel reduction project out for bid in the Mohawk, Blairsden and Graeagle area. 4 - 5 person handcrew of Feather River College students will be doing fuels reduction work in Plumas Eureka State Park. Emergency Forest Restoration Team (EFoRT) is their biggest project and will provide free assistance to properties affected by the 2020 and 2021 fires. Landowners are still getting signed up and work will begin this spring and summer.
- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Ms. Hepner shared that the Feather River Stewardship Coalition (FRSC) will be meeting Wednesday, April 27th at 9 am to hear a presentation from Jason Moghaddas about various digital tools and projects and Todd Sloat about a biomass facility north of Plumas County.
- Firewise Communities: Beth Rouse shared that the Firewise Annual meeting went well. There will not be a Firewise Leads monthly meeting this month and the next will be May 9th @ 6pm.
- Industry – Timber: Not present
- Industry – Insurance: Mike Flanigan reported that the Moratorium on non-renewals will expire on July 22nd. Insurance is getting more serious about defensible space inspections. The FAIR Plan is also getting serious about inspections/defensible space. The PG&E settlement is paying homeowners \$400 per square ft, but people who purchased homeowner's insurance will only receive the difference between what their policy covered. Mr. Flanigan expressed concerns about equity.

Mr. Reynolds asked what we can expect with insurance inspections. What are they focused on? Mr. Flanigan answered that these inspections are similar to the volunteer inspections but will be required and serve an official purpose.

Mr. Reynolds asked what are the specific perimeters of defensible space for insurance inspections? Mr. Flanigan answered that the main concern is the roof of the home.

Claude Sanders asked if these inspections are aerial or in person. Mr. Flanigan responded that they are a combination of both.

Gary Parque asked why the attorney general is not involved. Mr. Flanigan answered that there are worries that PG&E will not be able to pay the settlement since they have filed for bankruptcy in the past. In the long term, where is the money for this settlement coming from and will they have the means to produce this settlement?

Ms. Hepner shared that the entire settlement is available online. David Hollister (the Plumas County DA) was very clear that the payments to community organizations will not be passed on to ratepayers. PG&E is meeting the terms of the settlement in good faith to change their image as a company. Hollister leaned heavily on the BOS to determine which organizations were included.

- Industry – Utilities: Not present
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Not present
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District: Julie Hunter reminded the group to please get burn permits in Sierra County. All non-residential and residential burning needs permits and the Northern Air Quality Management District is happy to provide education. Make sure to keep fuels dry, smoke will be an issue with green fuels. Check the website for more information on burn day status.
- Plumas Audubon Society: Not present
- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association: Not Present
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES): Not Present
- Plumas County Planning Department: Not present
- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West shared that most in person training for TREX has finished. Over 60 people attended the TREX training - both at FRC and in the burn plan writing workshop. Both TREX burns at FRC and Butterfly went well. PUC has conducted 5 private burns this year. PUC will be meeting at PCFSC offices at 12:00pm. Greg Kinne has created a job board to inform people about new burns.

Mr. Parque asked what was happening with PUC dues? Mr. West answered that there is currently not a way to renew a PUC membership on the website, but PUC memberships should be paid at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Greef asked if the PG&E settlement funds will pay a PUC coordinator? Ms. Hepner answered that PCFSC has applied to CAL FIRE for a 4-year PUC position. Mr. Reynolds added that the \$5 million awarded to PCFSC will require time to create a budget. The best way to use the \$5 million is to roll it into more grants.

- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship: Not present
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy: Not present
- Tree Mortality Update: Mr. Sanders shared that the trees are dying. A large patch of die-off was found in Cub Valley. More fir than pine on north slopes and trees are weak. There are more pockets developing and spreading rapidly. If you have diseased trees, try to get rid of affected trees. This may require cutting more green trees. Danny Cluck informed us last year that a poor winter would mean high mortality due to beetles.

Mr. Tompkins shared that the Calpine community had a Western Pine Beetle flight at the end of March. CAL FIRE forest health protection folks reported seeing beetle activity across the state. This type of beetle attack was seen at the beginning of the 2012 - 2016 drought. Wildfire is a symptom of what is happening at a climatic scale. We are seeing potential for increased drought and we need to see more focus on drought.

Mr. Sanders asked the group if any studies have been done on the correlation between communication towers and tree die-off? There was no response.

- Tribal Representatives: Ms. Cunningham reported that MSC is maxed out with only 3 staff members. They are changing the structure of the organization to take on more grants. The small staff cannot interface with all partners and MSC is asking the state legislature to provide budgetary funding so Tribal members do not have to show up to partnerships on good will. MSC has a great need for funding and is looking to partner more effectively with larger agencies. The Maidu currently own 600 - 1100 acres of burned timber on ancestral property and will need to figure out how to treat and restore this landscape.

Kevin Danaher added that Trina Cunningham is [featured in Sierra Club magazine](#).

- UC Cooperative Extension: Mr. Tompkins shared that UCCE is working with the Board of Forestry Management Committee to revise stocking guidance for the California Forest Practice and hoping for statewide policy changes in forest density. UCEE is hosting a webinar focused on Forest Resilience, mechanical and fire treatments for the landscape scale project. In early May Ryan Tompkins will be speaking at The Forest Landowners conference in Chester. The Wildfire Restoration Symposium is scheduled for May 13th. There will be a presentation focused on the Venado Declaration.
- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Mr. Bauer reported that the Claremont Project will go out for scoping soon. The Crocker portion of the MAPES project is now focused on WUI.

Mr. Sanders asked what the green trees on the Lake Davis bike path were marked for. Why take green trees when our mills are already stressed? Mr. Bauer answered that the trees were marked before the Dixie Fire and revisions may happen, but there is a new District Ranger for that area. Mr. Kinateder added that the USFS frequently changes decisions on green trees.

Mike McCourt asked if anyone was bidding on these trees. Mr. Bauer answered yes with extension contracts, the contract lasts 3-5 years.

Mr. Bauer said that the Community Protection Project will get started with implementation next field season. Three project areas focused on the greater American Valley, Mohawk Valley and La Porte on the west slope. All work is focused on community protection. This project will seek input from Firewise and PCFSC.

Mr. McCourt asked if the log market was affecting these projects? Mr. Bauer answered yes. The salvage market has 3-5 years before mills will be seeking green logs.

Mr. Bauer continued that USFS has separated burned and unburned communities, this is being referred to as the recovery effort and includes community protection actions. Some burned communities will see fire risk in the next decade. There will be focus on high severity burned communities which will grow brush fuel in the next year. The 45 acre pile escape in the Moonlight footprint is a reminder of how dry it is and shows that the Moonlight footprint is available to burn. The fire cycle is currently 8-12 years and will see highly flammable landscapes. The recovery project will focus on reforestation. USFS is done with pile burning for the year unless there is more precipitation. There was an attempt to burn piles at Smith Creek Ranch Estates today, but it did not work out. They are focusing on underburn opportunities. The priority for this spring is the Jackson Project in Graeagle, the Big Hill Project between Greenhorn Ranch and Cromberg, and maybe Spanish Ranch.

Mr. Kinatader shared that a \$1.4 million grant from PG&E has been awarded forest-wide. This grant includes some innovative things like a drone that will be capable of firing. It will also fund some fuels work on the Beckwourth as well as contract burning crews that have been helpful in accomplishing more work quickly. There is a struggle to get the crews together and apply these funds effectively and efficiently, and USFS is looking for a partner because it is more effective to use partnerships. USFS is still interested in the Quincy Watershed Improvement Project and a Decision Memo should come out soon. Hoping to accomplish this project soon. American Valley RCD project has design, layout and units prepared and might move along faster and is important for Quincy protection.

Dan Martynn asked for an update on what was accomplished in Butterfly Valley this spring. Mr. Kinatader answered that in total on the Mt. Hough District, 2,419 acres of pile burning was completed and 269 acres of underburning. USFS had an escape in the Moonlight footprint that caused some anxiety.

Dan Martynn asked what percentage of work had been completed in Butterfly Valley. Mr. Kinatader answered that 95% of the area has been treated and follow up treatments are critical.

Don Gasser asked what the protocol is on gaps and clumps. Mr. Bauer answered that the projects follow the GTR220 forest guidelines and USFS has been integrating these standards into local projects. The older protocol creates a homogenous forest and this protocol includes gaps and clumps that can create variables on the landscape.

Mr. Parque asked where examples of this can be seen. Mr. Bauer answered Red Clover Valley that burned in the Dixie Fire.

- Feather River Tourism Association: Not present

## 2. Status of Current Grants

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Mike McCourt reported that he has been back to work for two weeks and has 117 folks on list for defensible space treatment. This list will go out to bid soon. The goal is to contact

everyone within the next few weeks. The program's funding has increased and Mr. McCourt is feeling confident that we will be able to help most all participants.

Mr. Callahan asked how we are outreaching for S/D. Mr. McCourt answered that PCFSC used to advertise the program in the newspaper, but that was not successful. Word of mouth is the most successful network. Some of this work depends on the local contracting company's availability. We have not reached the maximum number of people we can serve, but the season is getting longer and more people need this service. Last year there were a number of delays that have to be made up for this year.

Mr. Flanigan asked if Mr. McCourt had any insight as to why there are issues with hiring contractors. Mr. McCourt answered that it is not a funding issue, but a staffing issue. Contractors have trouble keeping people on the crew.

- Chipping Program – Mr. Parque shared that he has been receiving calls and telling folks to look forward to the available funding for the chipping program this fall. The program is on hold for now, but there is a lot of interest.

Ms. Hepner added that the online site to sign up for the Chipping Program is not active.

- HFR Project Schedule: Mr. West shared that the Lakes Basin project is ready to begin for the season.

Ms. Hepner shared that the Mohawk Valley Project layout is being wrapped up and forester site visits are to come. The NEPA for Greenhorn has been submitted with no response from the District yet. SPI has not signed an agreement with PCFSC, which is holding up the project.

Kyle Felker shared that the PDC project layout is wrapping up and working on getting the botany and archeology surveys contracted. Eastern Plumas WPP is in the layout process.

Ms. Hepner continued that the Quincy WPP adjacent to PDH ties into the work day on May 4th and the operator will be coming back to work on the CHY property, 16 acres of the Wayland property, and PDH property.

- Status of Grants Budgets: Mr. Reynolds updated the group that PCFSC currently has \$6 million in fuel reduction projects and is managing \$10 million in grants overall.

- Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner shared that the grant submitted to SNC for planning for the Lake Almanor peninsula was unsuccessful. It appears that across the state there is not a lot of interest in planning projects.

Mr. Bauer asked if this proposal could include both planning and implementation like a Stevens Fund project? There may be an opportunity to implement this project through Lassen NF. Ms. Hepner answered yes, that is the ideal scenario.

Ms. Hepner continued that Plumas RAC has extended the deadline to April 15th, but PCFSC has not heard back since applying last fall. PCFSC has requested a \$3.5 million CAL FIRE Fire Prevention grant for various projects. PCFSC has submitted a PG&E grant request for the chipping program, but have not heard back. The Watershed Research and Training Center grant request would be for PUC Coordination time and PUC training for all members.

### 3. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Ms. Cunningham reminded the group that MSC has partnered with the Lake Almanor Foundation and is hosting a Big Time Log Show, a fundraiser for Dixie Fire Recovery. Still looking for sponsors to support the event. June 4th at the Chester Park.

Mr. Greef shared that the Forest Fire Lookout Association will be doing some fundraising events and are looking for participants. They will meet on April 26th at 6pm in the Mineral Building.

Adjourn - Next meeting May 12th @ 9am.