

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Board of Directors

Chair, Don Gasser, Citizen (20)
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Dan Martynn, NRCS (20)
Trina Cunningham, California Indian Water Commission (20)

Chuck Bowman, Firewise Community (19)
Jim Hamblin, PC Fire Chiefs Assoc. (19)
Ryan Bauer, USFS (20)
Mike Callaghan, Firewise Community (20)

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, May 9th, 2019 - 9:00 am.

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

1. Welcome & Introductions – Don Gasser
2. Review Agenda – no changes
3. Approval of Meeting Minutes postponed
4. Public Comment –

Kevin Danaher expressed concerns about residents’ lack of awareness about the dangers of lightning. He suggested targeted outreach about lightning. Ryan Bauer said that usually Smokey Bear teaches about lightning in schools, but that this year school visits are limited because of the number of Camp Fire transplants. He added that lightning and human starts have, until recently, been pretty balanced in Plumas County. Across the state 90% of fires are human caused. Trina Cunningham suggested putting together a fact sheet about different types of fires. Don Gasser suggested that it could also be a good topic for a press release. Kyle Felker offered lightning strike data, which Ryan Bauer said is also available on the Plumas National Forest Facebook page.

Rob Gimble commented that he would like to see home consultations provided through fire districts and supported with grant funds. He said that it provides landowners with an idea of how to improve fire safety around their homes and is often more welcome than CAL FIRE’s defensible space inspections.

Susan Harvey, a Graeagle resident, said that Graeagle is characterized by small lots with a large amount of material. She asked if it is appropriate for the chipping program to broadcast the chips, since it is within the defensible space zone. Gary Parque explained that chips on the ground are subject to the effects of soil moisture and compaction and are less of a hazard. Mr. Bauer added that chips are not a driver of fire

spread but that deep enough piles can spontaneously combust. Mike McCourt said that there is little depth from the amount of material allowed in the chipping program.

New Business

1. Sierra Nevada Landscape Strategy – Hannah Hepner introduced Plumas Corporation’s regional strategy. She said that Plumas Corporation is seeking input and endorsement for the document. Jason Christian added that the intent of the document is to provide guidelines to change the trajectory of land management. He emphasized that implementing the strategy will require significant investment. Mr. Christian said that the Fire Safe Council holds a lot of expertise within its membership that would be valuable to the further development of the strategy. Additionally he would like to see the Fire Safe Council help launch outreach about it. He sees it as a “rebooting” of the Quincy Library Group efforts at a state level.

Judy Clot asked if there was a specific modelling program that will be utilized as part of the data collection aspect of the strategy. She emphasized the importance of monitoring and data collection.

Don Gasser said that the proposal was missing education and training and that he is interested in working with Jim Wilcox to develop the document further. He said that the Fire Safe Council will consider endorsing an updated strategy at a future meeting.

Trina Cunningham said that she would like to review the document to ensure that there is adequate language about tribal involvement.

Ryan Bauer expressed concerns about plans that focus on utilization of a single tool. He said that thinning and prescribed fire are very constrained and that the focus cannot be solely on economic value or community protection – landscapes need to be designed to allow the use of fire on the landscape.

Claude Sanders followed that the use of multiple tools is going to come with significant manpower and costs. He said that commercial returns from the forest cannot be expected to cover the costs of the amount of work needed.

2. Plumas County Coordinating Council – Hannah Hepner and Matt West attended the recent PCCC meeting. There was no mention of Fire Safe Council participation on the Board. Ms. Hepner suggested that if a Fire Safe Council member opts to join the PCCC that they have a broad interest beyond fuels reduction and that they be able to provide the PCCC with accurate on-the-ground information.

Old Business

1. CWPP Revision Update – Mike Callaghan has incorporated climate change information provided by Don Gasser and Ryan Tompkins. Mr. Callaghan plans to have a 4th draft available for final review in the next two weeks. The Fire Safe Council can then submit it to the Board of Supervisors and CAL FIRE for endorsement. Mr. Callaghan said that Jerry Hurley would like to see information that has come out of the Camp Fire included in the revision, including discussion of how wind driven vegetation fires become urban fires.

Update

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- **Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES):** Sue McCourt reminded the group that May is Wildfire Awareness month. There are advertisements sponsored by Plumas National Forest and the Fire Safe Council in each week’s newspaper. There will be a wildfire function exercise on the Lake

Almanor Peninsula on May 29th. There are two upcoming Firewise assessments: Johnsville and Meadow Valley.

- **CAL FIRE:** Not present.
- **USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction:** Nick Bunch reported that the Almanor Ranger District is working with the Sierra Institute on the planning for a West Shore project. The district is also working with the Maidu Summit Consortium to identify goals in Yellow Creek. Grant funds have been received for evacuation route signage in Warner Valley. The district is offering a Basic 32 class in June that is open to the public. The intent is to get members of the community red carded so that they can be a resource when needed.

Ryan Bauer said that the Plumas is focusing on planning. Mt. Hough is working on a Middle Fork project which has been broken into the Claremont project. The Forest has met with Sierra Pacific Industries about tying into treatments that have been done on private land. Mike Callaghan asked if the planning includes Wild & Scenic areas. Mr. Bauer said that no, they can't treat in those areas, but that treatment around the designation will allow fire to burn there in the future. On the Mt. Hough Ranger District implementation has started in the Butterfly area. On the Beckwourth planning efforts have focused on the Haskell and Mapes projects. Brandon Hostetter added that the Mapes project includes 90,000 acres. Implementation on the Lakes Basin project will start this year. There is a private landowner near Smith Creek Ranch interested in treating property that will tie into the Forest Service project. The Forest Service will be burning in the Dixie Valley area in the next two weeks. Mr. Bauer followed that the Plumas is done with pile burning for the year and that prescribed fire is on hold until training is complete. The Mt. Hough Ranger District is planning on burning in Meadow Valley and Antelope Lake areas. He added that "Wildfire Awareness Week" was changed this year to "Wildfire Preparedness Week" to emphasize the need for action.

- **Natural Resource Conservation Service:** Not present
- **Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District:** Julie Ruiz said there has been great weather for smoke dispersion. The primary complaints have been about residents letting piles burn in the evening and smoking out communities overnight.
- **Industry Representatives:** Steve DeBonis of Sierra Pacific Industries explained the 45-day report generated for the Governor. A project on SPI land on the north side of Chester above the Martin Ranch subdivision was identified in the report. CAL FIRE is implementing the project with mastication. The area directly adjoins other holding where SPI is doing fuel breaks. The Stover Mountain fuel break west of Chester will be implemented in the late fall. A 250 acre fuel break along Highway 147 will start earlier in the year. These fuel breaks are sawlog removal followed by mastication. Off of La Porte Road the Fells Flat fuel break will be implemented this year, which ties into the Forest Service work on Claremont. SPI currently has some chipping equipment working in Paradise. Don Gasser asked if other commercial timberland owners such as Collins Pine are undertaking fuels projects. Mr. DeBonis said yes and that there will be enhanced collaboration in the future.
- **Tribal Representatives:** Trina Cunningham reported that Mooretown and Greenville Rancherias are increasing their work. She is personally working statewide with Region 5 evaluating opportunities for collaboration and increasing tribal capacity, including building tribal crews and training.
- **UC Cooperative Extension:** Ms. Hepner said that Ryan Tompkins is working with the Sierra and Plumas Fire Safe Councils to host a Home Ignition Zone training. The UCANR has given directive to advisors to become more involved with fire issues.
- **Feather River Stewardship Coalition:** The next FRSC meeting will be June 20th at 3:00pm

- **Plumas Underburn Cooperative:** PUC will now be holding it's meetings at Carey Candy. The meetings start at 11am following Fire Safe Council meetings.
- **Firewise Communities:**
 - Gold Mountain** – Kathy Kogge said Gold Mountain has a lot of awareness about defensible space, so their annual meeting on May 26th will focus on preparedness and planning. Judy Clot said that the community is doing a 7 acre fuel reduction project around the maintenance shop.
 - Taylorville** – Mike Yost reported that they have a meeting next week to set goals and an agenda for the coming year.
 - Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman** – Mike McCourt said that the committee had a fire preparedness and evacuation meeting with 20 people in attendance. They handed out evacuation maps and checklists. The local horse owners are initiating discussion about evacuating horses. On Saturday they will have another event to cover defensible space and home hardening. Sue McCourt added that the Firewise community has developed a newsletter in coordination with the Community Services District, which is mailed to all residents.
 - Old Highway** – Sally McGowan reported that the community had an awareness and preparedness event last week. Two homeowners came together to thin brush and small trees. Over the weekend six participants piled brush. Ms. McGowan thinks it will be a great location for an underburn, which was one of the recommendations of the Firewise assessment.
 - Portola** – Phil Oels said that the annual community event is at the end of the month. The City Council passed a weed abatement ordinance that addresses “junk piles.”
 - Graeagle** – Chuck Bowman said that he is getting participation in all of the communities. Valley Ranch had a community hazardous fuel assessment at the end of April. Danielle Bradfield is producing a report from that assessment. Mr. Bowman hosted a Home Ignition Zone training that had 20 people in attendance. There was a demonstration work day held in Graeagle last Saturday. There is an upcoming meeting in Graeagle Meadows. Susan Harvey would like to mail outreach materials and asked if Graeagle Firewise could involve a non-profit for a tax deduction on the \$400 in anticipated costs. It was suggested that Graeagle Land & Water might be willing to donate to cover the cost.
 - Smith Creek Ranch** – Andrea Irving reported an impressive amount of work done in the community on Wildfire Preparedness Day. The Fire Safe Council's chipping program is addressing excess material that was generated. Don Fregulia has been helping provide information to landowners. There have been several applications submitted for the hazardous fuels reduction project. There is a homeowners meeting on May 18th. The community is interested in a hazardous fuels assessment.
 - Grizzly Ranch** – John Reynolds said their committee is meeting to review the agenda for the Firewise day in August.
 - Chester** – Sue McCourt reported that the group did fuels reduction at two homes on Wildfire Preparedness Day.
 - Geenhorn Creek** – Mrs. McCourt reported that the community removed 13 truckloads of material from their evacuation route.
 - Not present/no update:** Almanor Pines, Mohawk Vista, Lake Almanor West, LACC, Plumas Eureka, Galeppi Ranch
 - Potential Communities:** Paxton Lodge, Feather River College, Genesee Woods, Meadow Valley, Hamilton Branch
- **Tree Mortality Update:** Kyle Felker said there are areas of tree mortality in the Mohawk Vista project, but that they haven't grown. Claude Sanders said that there has been a die off of juvenile cedars in the Comberg area from a cedar specific beetle.

2. Status of Current Grants –

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: Mike McCourt said that the operator contract will be awarded today. There are currently 85 people signed up and 30 on the waiting list. The contractor will start in the next two weeks and work through July.

Chipping Program: Gary Parque thanked the community representatives for sharing information about the program.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction Schedule – There were no questions about the HFR schedule.

3. Status of Grant Budgets – Hannah Hepner said that there have been few changes to the budget.

4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – A Living with Fire outreach proposal for \$41,505 was approved by CAL FIRE. The Greenhorn Creek HFR and Senior/Disabled Defensible Space proposals were not funded. There was a request for Chief Packwood to present information about CAL FIRE’s various granting programs. The Plumas National Forest is ready to accept Stevens proposals. Ms. Hepner has two cost-share waivers to be considered by the Council that will be tabled until the June meeting.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

May 11th – “Could your Home Survive a Wildfire?” presented by Cromberg Firewise

May 14th – “Evacuation and Communications Plans” presented by Chester Firewise

May 29th – Lake Almanor Peninsula WUI drill

June 20th – Feather River Stewardship Coalition Meeting, 3pm

Adjourn - Next meeting June 13th, 2019