

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 9th 2022 - 9:00 am.

Combination of in-person and zoom meeting

Mission Statement: “To reduce the loss of natural resources and human values 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 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"/> Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	

- Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
 - New HFR Project Manager: Rachel Wehrman
- Review Agenda – no changes
- Approve April Meeting Minutes – Ryan Bauer corrected the notes from May’s meeting and stated that the CFMA does not identify Local Responsibility areas.

Don Gasser clarified the discussion in May about the strategic plan and the budget.

Motion to approve corrected minutes - Trina Cunningham, Second - Ryan Bauer

- Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to:
 - Robert & Sarah Pahlow
 - Bill Davies

5. Public Comment

Kevin Danaher reminded the group of the rural economic development meeting today in the Mineral Building.

Gary Parque added that improving Nervino Airport for faster wildfire attacks is a good idea. However, the airtanker is not practical for the community. The funds required are unrealistic.

Mr. Reynolds stated that the proposal is not focused on the type of aircraft, but with the infrastructure and extension of the airport. The only modification to PCFSC's letter of support was a change in language in regards to forest health.

6. Board Comment

Ms. Cunningham shared that MSC will be submitting a grant for a biochar kiln and equipment. Two full time staff and \$3 million are being requested.

Bill Jacks reminded the group of the Quincy High School fuels reduction project on Friday. He had waivers available to sign.

Mr. Gasser voiced his opinion that Plumas County is not getting the support expected from the state. Any directors who are interested in discussing the CFMA, see Don Gasser.

New Business

1. Plumas Corporation MOU - Mr. Reynolds stated that, in 2002, an MOU was signed between Plumas Corporation and PCFSC. A revision has been created that establishes 10% of all expenditures will be paid to Plumas Corporation. This change to the MOU reflects current operations allow for less review than a grant-by-grant determination. The board also strengthened the language on leadership training and staff development, which has already made progress.

Joe Smiles added that transparency in these matters is beneficial for the Council.

Mr. Reynolds added that the Plumas Corporation Board did not have any issues with the MOU.

Mike Callahan stated that this agreement does not change anything, it just records how Plumas Corporation receives payments for their efforts.

Ms. Hepner added that this arrangement benefits PCFSC because a 10% overhead cost is favorable and competitive in grant proposals.

Mr. Smiles asked how long is the MOU good for. Mr. Reynolds answered that the MOU is open indefinitely. Both parties have 30 days of notice to exit the agreement.

Vote to approve the updated PC-PCFSC MOU:

Motion - Chuck Bowman

Second - Mike Callahan

John Reynolds - aye

Kathy Kogge - aye

Don Gasser - aye

Mike Callahan - aye

Dan Martynn, Ryan Tompkins, Mike Flanigan, Ron Heinbockle, Tracey Ferguson – absent

Sally McGowan - aye

Ryan Bauer - aye

Micheal Hall - aye

Joe Smailes - aye

Trina Cunningham - aye

Chuck Bowman - aye

2. California Fire Safe Council Conference – Liam Galleher attended the Northern California Wildfire Mitigation Group conference, which was attended by Fire Safe Councils from Siskiyou, Lassen, Plumas, Butte, Modoc and Trinity counties. The conference covered the County Coordinator mission, success stories, data organization and management, project overviews and implementation, common challenges, and coordination strategies. Mitigation groups across these counties range from HOAs, resource conservation districts, fire protection agencies, Firewise communities and Fire Safe Councils. Plumas County has the highest percentage of Firewise communities. RCD engagement in wildfire mitigation projects ranged from not engaged to heavily engaged. PCFSC is heavily engaged with the Feather River RCD. Most counties have experienced a wildfire burning more than 100,000 acres within the last 5 years and 80% of counties have experienced a wildfire that burned more than 25 homes. In Plumas County there are 2,634 households with a disability, 5,654 people who are 65 or older, 422 households without a vehicle and 14% of households are below the poverty level.

3. PG&E Funding Update – Hannah Hepner shared that PCFSC is considering investing \$4 million in a [RCAC](#) (Rural Community Assistance Corporation) loan investment fund that has an interest rate of 2% and the ability to withdraw at any time. PCFSC has received \$1.5 million to date and the rest of the funds will arrive in July.

Mr. Danaher asked if these funds are FDIC insured.

Ms. Hepner answered she did not know, but would update the group.

Mr. Gasser asked if Plumas Corporation was involved.

Ms. Hepner answered yes, as the fiscal agent Plumas Corporation drives some of these decisions.

Mr. Reynolds stated that the key to this investment loan is that the funds can be withdrawn at any time.

Mr. Smailes asked if there was a minimum balance.

Mr. Reynolds answered he was unaware of a minimum balance requirement.

Ms. Hepner added that the RCAC focuses on rural economic development. [Annual reports](#) and quarterly reports are available.

Mr. Reynolds suggested that a presentation on the investment loan and associated risks would be beneficial for the next meeting.

4. Strategic Plan Budget Projection - Ms. Hepner shared that the budget for 2022 has been finalized. \$6.3 million has been budgeted for FY 2022/23. \$2.9 million was budgeted for 2021/22, but only half of that was used due to impacts of the Dixie Fire. According to PCFSC's strategic plan, an annual budget goal of 5% per year would lead to an annual budget of \$13.1 million in 5 years.

Ms. Cunningham asked if there are more contractors available compared to years previous.

Ms. Hepner answered that there are several bid tours coming up, which will be an opportunity to find out how available contractors are. PCFSC struggles to contract hand-thin operators for small-scale private lands projects. PCFSC has less trouble contracting hand thin crews for larger projects on federal land.

Mr. Gasser asked if there was an update on the mapping segment of the strategic plan.

Michael Hall answered that the mapping project is a work in progress. FRRCD has is working with Dan Martynn and a new RCD employee to develop this map. Will have more to share soon.

Mr. Bauer added that USFS is working on an annual budget that will be approved soon. PNF's strategy is to implement 7,000 acres per year on each of the community protection areas. This means PNF aims to treat 21,000 acres per year for the next three years. There is room for expanding grant funds. Staffing and resources will be the limitation for the agency.

Mr. Callahan asked what kind of cost ranges PCFSC will see for hand-thin crews.

Ms. Hepner answered that PCFSC has been awarded a CAL FIRE grant to fund an RCD crew for one year. This is a short-term solution to contracting issues.

Mr. Callahan added that he reviewed a grant in a different area of CA that cost \$12 million per acre for hand thin treatments.

Mr. Bauer shared that different areas require different, and often higher, amounts of funds.

Mr. Smailes added that treatment costs can be hard to predict.

Old Business

None

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Biomass Working Group: Beth Rouse shared that recurring meetings with Sean Graham from Public Works have been going well. Still in the brainstorm stage, but a few ideas are forming. More to come.
- CAL FIRE: Ms. Kogge asked how the burn ban set in place for Monday, June 18th would affect people's ability to dispose of green waste. Jonathan Pangburn answered that CAL FIRE has suspended burning in the SRA for the season. This happens each year and is dictated by conditions.

Mr. Bauer asked if some specially permitted burning can still occur. Mr. Pangburn answered that there can be case by case approval for underburns and other burns based on conditions, resources and burn windows.

Dave Rudolph asked if a fire would be allowed for a Veteran's ceremony in Portola. Mr. Pangburn answered that the City of Portola would be the entity to allow this.

Mr. Pangburn added that CAL FIRE is at peak staffing with CAL FIRE in the Lassen/Modoc unit. This covers the Chester and Almanor areas, but does not cover other parts of Plumas. CAL FIRE has a project in Butterfly Valley that will be expanding to include most of the valley in different treatment stages. CAL FIRE, along with landowners and PNF, will be conducting fuels reduction and underburning. Mr. Pangburn has met with many property owners to bring in CAL FIRE resources to landowners. CAL FIRE can offer advice or project support. If you want to burn, go to PUC first and then reach out to CAL FIRE.

Alan Thornhill updated the group that the DSIs are in Graeagle for the month and will shift to Modoc next month.

Claude Sanders asked if there was a recommended protocol for beetle affected trees on private and public land? Mr. Pangburn answered that the material can be covered with plastic to help prevent the spread of beetles.

Mr. Sanders expressed that leaving a covered pile could lead to increased fire risk. Is there a policy for bark beetle issues? Can the public call CAL FIRE for advice? Mr. Pangburn answered that Ryan Tompkins with UCANR can be a resource. Mr. Pangburn can also be contacted for advice on bark beetles. There is not a policy, it is a case by case basis. It is best to leave the material standing, but this depends on many factors. If the material is on the ground or will be on the ground shortly, the best practice is to cover the material. Mr. Pangburn suggests visiting the [bark beetle information page](#) on the CAL FIRE website for more information.

Steve Kreth asked if beetles die when the tree is cut down. Mr. Pangburn explained that cutting trees can increase beetle infestation if done in the wrong time of year. Winter is best for pruning when the tree is dormant. Fresh cut trees can be a signal for beetles to spread.

Mr. Sanders added that USFS has a pamphlet on bark beetles and is a great resource.

- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Mr. Hall reported meeting with Ms. Hepner, Rachel Wehrman and other RCD foresters about EFoRT site preparations. PCFSC and RCD discussed how to go about contracting work for thousands of acres of private non-industrial land. RCD will pass some of this work to the PCFSC and the RCD will handle the CEQA side of things. Aiming for 2023 planting window. Still hoping to accomplish 1,000 acres of restoration per year. Mr. Hall met with the American Valley CSD and finalized the Plumas Audubon Society Boyle Ravine CEQA and will go to the County next. Boyle Ravine is ready to go.

Mr. Bauer asked if the RCD will lead implementation for Boyle's Ravine and if PAS is pulling away from the project. Ms. Hepner responded that PCFSC plans to implement the project and has already requested funds.

Mr. Hall shared that the FRC crew hired through the RCD is working in Plumas Eureka. The RCD will have this crew for 10 weeks this summer and hope to keep two crew members on for permanent seasonal positions. All the small projects that might not be bid on will now have a labor force. The RCD accepted an SNC award to complete the NEPA and CEQA for the Quincy North project that is about 70,000 acres. This project will include land from Snake Lake down to the Cascade trail head and over to Massack.

- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Mr. Hall shared that FRSC will be organizing a summer meeting, possibly a field tour in July. More to come.

- Firewise Communities: Ms. Rouse reported that the next FW Leads meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 15th.
Penny Leinwander shared that LACC is doing outreach to the Almanor area including 1,800 lots. They started FW block parties with representatives from CAL FIRE. Outreach has been successful.
Sally Yost shared that Taylorsville is having a FW field tour on June 18th starting at Bob Beckwith's property in Genesee.
- Industry – Timber: not present
- Industry – Insurance: not present
- Industry – Utilities: not present
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): not present
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District: not present
- Plumas Corporation: Scott Corey reported that Plumas Corporation recently hired 2 new PCFSC staff and 2 more watershed staff. Two of these new hires will be forestry fellows through the Sierra Nevada Alliance. One fellow for PCFSC and one for Plumas Corporation. Plumas Corporation is implementing two meadow projects this season. One is in Plumas county, called Thompson Meadow in Red Clover Valley. The other is in the Stanislaus National Forest. Plumas Corporation is currently working with PNF on a forest recovery planning project on the eastern side of the county. This will be a landscape-scale project incorporating reforestation and restoring riparian and meadow areas as well as county and forest roads. NEPA will be included.
- Plumas Audubon Society: not present
- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association: Ms. Hepner reported for Meadow Valley VFD Chief Heinbockle: PCFCA met and all departments are in need of certifications for state engine training which is mandatory for all drivers. It is a 40-hour class with a fee of \$1,200, not including travel. This is difficult for volunteers as they have to take a week off to complete the training. Red cards are now required for volunteers. PCFCA is also needing a SBCA certification. Plumas County will see a shortage of volunteers for this fire season. Volunteers will be first on scene and likely spread thin with limited back up.
Mr. Parque added that the Eastern Plumas Fire District requires EMT courses for volunteers. This might be a barrier for new volunteers. Mr. Reynolds added that EMT courses are practical for medical response.
Mr. Kreth added that volunteer participation has gone down over the years. The over-regulation of Volunteer Fire Departments can be prohibitive to new members.
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES): Mr. Gasser suggested that Pam Courtright from OES should be re-invited to PCFSC meetings.
- Plumas County Planning Department: not present
- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West shared that the .25 acre underburn on Buffalo Ranch went well and will likely be the last one for this season. The small grass burn planned for Genesee Woods has been postponed. The TREX event finished with an S-290 course. Twenty-three people attended. TREX had 62 participants in the in-person training at FRC, 26 at RT-130 (the annual firefighter refresher), and 23 at the Burn Plan Writing Workshop. TREX burned 2 units at FRC and 6 private units and assisted PNF on 1 federal burn. It was a successful TREX season. PCFSC and partners will start planning for the fall TREX events throughout summer. The Peninsula Fire Chief will be planning a burn in the Peninsula area that would include TREX. In

Taylorville, PUC will assist Plumas Charter School students with an underburn of an area that they have been prepping. The RCD secured an AIM grant for Mr. West's time to plan Basic 32s, TREX events, as well as pay for some prescribed fire signs. A Watershed Research and Training Center grant will help with PUC planning and assisting with PBA start-ups. PUC was awarded CAL FIRE funds to employ a full-time coordinator for 3.5 years.

Mr. Smailes asked if any more RT-130s are scheduled for this year. Mr. West answered that all PUC's RT-130s are planned through TREX and only two are offered each year.

Mr. Smailes shared that he visited Jeff Greef's property and saw a high severity burn surrounding the property, but because of the underburning, his home and property survived. This is one of the best examples seen in Mr. Smailes' career. Jeff Greef replied that there was no way for firefighters to be at his property during the fire and the flames were within 200 ft of the building. High severity fire affected all areas around the home and about half of the trees on Mr. Greef's property were lost.

Sally McGowan asked for PUC data from the past year. Mr. West replied that he can share this data via email.

- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship: not present
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy: not present
- Tree Mortality Update: Phil Oels reported seeing a lot of pine and twig beetle infestation on the East side of the county. Mr. Sanders added that Douglas fir is seeing a lot of beetle attacks, which is not typical for this species. Juvenile cedar is also dying due to beetles. Cedar is a classic ladder fuel and something to watch for. Fuel ladders can be a hazard for transportation corridors.

Mr. Gasser asked what size of Douglas fir is being killed. Mr. Sanders answered that large trees seem to be less affected, but anything within 12 – 16" DBH is vulnerable. Pine is surviving more than in past years.

Mr. Rudolph said that due to logging there was a massive regrowth of young trees that contributed to this issue.

Mr. Pangburn reported that CAL FIRE foresters are predicting massive die off for the Central and Northern Sierras due to beetle damage. This started in January in the foothills.

Mr. Gasser added that the Beskeen Lane outbreak has expanded from 10 trees to 30 trees.

- Tribal Representatives: Ms. Cunningham shared that Lassen National Forest contacted MSC with 35,000 trees for planting. These trees are available for any entity planting trees. MSC and Tribal Communities have always advocated for the use of fire and support all the efforts to restore the landscape using fire. Fire is critical to restoring both human and non-human systems. There is a difference between prescribed fire and cultural burning. Fire is critical for water, perennial herbs, and herbaceous plants; timing with the use of fire is critical. MSC is applying for funds to increase capacity, purchase equipment, and develop thinning crews. They have a current staff of three but are engaged with many groups. MSC is looking for a buyer for 600 acres of timber they need to remove from Maidu land.

Mr. Kreth added that the cheapest and quickest way to get rid of fuels is to burn it. He asked if it's true that burning is not allowed in Portola. Mr. Oels replied that Portola is in a federal nonattainment area. Mr. Reynolds added that a significant HFR project has started in Eastern Plumas and will help to reduce risk. Mr. Bauer added that PNF stopped burning in Portola at the request of the city government. The larger piles are still there, some have been masticated. Mr.

Sanders added that there are trade-offs for landscape scale burn windows. We are limited for burning opportunities.

- UC Cooperative Extension: not present
- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Mr. Bauer shared that PNF has one of the only contracts with Firestorm. The Forest's budget has not changed in 30 years, the organization is shrinking and relies heavily on contracts. Summit Fire is also contracted. Prescribed fire has been halted for 90 days, due to the New Mexico fire. Planning for the Community Protection projects is moving forward with three partner organizations involved - west slope communities are covered by the Butte County RCD, the east side communities are run by Lassen County FSC and all else fell into a large pot with the Great Basin Institute. The fire restoration project is starting to move forward and Plumas Corporation is the first to apply. Plumas Corporation is familiar with this area of the forest. PNF is down 4 engine modules because of hiring issues. One more engine module is likely to come online soon. PNF Hot Shot crews are fully staffed and have increased the crews from 20 to 25. The intention is to improve work life for these crews and there are 3 crews on the Plumas. All 3 have already been on assignment to the southwest. Mr. Smailes asked if there had been an environmental firm hired to conduct the Post Fire Restoration project. Mr. Bauer answered that PNF decided not to contract the project, but instead chose to work with partners. The Restoration project is next in line after the community protection project.

2. Status of Current Grants

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Ms. Hepner reported that 3 people have been interviewed and one will be offered the job today or tomorrow. This position has been expanded to include more responsibilities. The program currently has 148 clients already contracted. Additional list will include up to 200 clients.
- Chipping Program – Gary Parqu updated the group that the chipping crew started work on May 31st and will be continuing the first round through July. The crew had some confusion about the schedule and their chipper was broken, but has since been repaired and the crew is back on track. Work has been exceptional. The program has a little less money than usual and we have more on a waitlist than previous years. There is a need for more money to treat more homes.
- HFR Project Schedule – Mr. West reported that hand thinning and hand pile work has started in the Lakes Basin project.

Ms. Hepner shared that Rachel Wehrman is the new HFR Project Manager. Greenhorn is ready for the bid tour and should be contracted soon. For the Quincy and Chester projects, the layout is being finished and archaeology surveys should be conducted soon. The NEPA for Mohawk is done and implementation should begin this summer. Quincy WPP is currently being implemented and one piece of equipment is out there now. The Eastern Plumas WPP layout is ongoing. The C-Road section of the project has been completed for layout and archeology surveys will be completed soon. \$200,000 has been awarded by CAL FIRE for the Hamilton Branch/Clear Creek Fuel Break, which is a CAL FIRE VMP project.

3. Status of Grant Budgets – Mr. Reynolds shared that PCFSC added a \$2.4 million grant which will cover a multitude of objectives.

4. Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner reported that the LNF Steven's request for the Peninsula project was not awarded due to missed deadlines, but LNF is interested in working with us to fund the project. We have not heard about the RAC or PG&E Vegetation Management proposals. The CAL FIRE Fire Prevention grant will be awarded and covers the Chipping Program for 3.5 years, the Senior and Disabled Assistance program, a full-time PUC coordinator and the RCD crew.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Adjourn - Next meeting July 14th, 2022