

# Plumas County Fire Safe Council



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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, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019 - 9:00 am.

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

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1. Welcome & Introductions – Don Gasser
  2. Review Agenda – no changes
  3. Approval of June Meeting Minutes – **m Bryant, s – S. McCourt**
  4. Public Comment – non

## Old Business

1. CWPP Revision Update – Don Gasser said that the current draft is a great improvement over the previous document. Mike Callaghan said that there are two final versions that need to be synced. Sue McCourt has interfaced with the Building and Planning Departments and their updates will be incorporated. The document will be ready to go to CAL FIRE once two updated maps have been integrated. Don Gasser said that he will take a copy to the Board of Supervisors once it is complete.

2. Mapping Update – Hannah Hepner said that SIG has sent the first draft of all of the treatments, which totaled over 48,000 polygons, to their Open Source Web Developer. She said that Jason Moghaddas has reiterated that there is a need for a regional data management collaborative to develop protocols for collecting, sharing and storing information.

## New Business

1. On-site Biochar Production for Forest Health – Stephen Feher introduced himself as a retired engineer who list his home and office in the Camp Fire. He is currently a professor at Butte College looking at how to utilize biomass. Overseas he was exposed to the use of pyrolizing stoves that are fed with rice hulls and walnut shells. His primary interest in utilizing biomass is sequestering carbon rather than sending it into the atmosphere. Secondarily the byproduct is useful for retaining water in soil and improving soil health. He is conducting research on the impact of biochar on productivity in organic farming. Biochar is the charcoal made from incomplete combustion due to limited oxygen. Biochar can be created in a kiln to capture the material. Alternatively, burn piles can be lit from the top (which reduces smoke production) and can be extinguished before completely burned. The process captures about 25% of the material that would otherwise go into the atmosphere. The material can be used on-site rather than exporting the nutrients.

It was asked if the process requires regulation of the temperature and level of incineration. Mr. Feher said no, the results depend on ambient conditions and how dry the feedstock is. To stop the fire water is needed.

There was a question of the optimal particle size. Mr. Feher responded that the optimum size for agriculture passes through a quarter inch screen. Simply driving over the material can make it a smaller size.

It was asked if clean burning in a biomass facility is a better alternative. Mr. Feher said that carbonators are a semi-trailer sized container that does not generate any smoke and that can be used during the burn season. It has tracks and can be moved like a large excavator and requires an excavator to feed it.

There was a question about the ideal moisture content of the source material. Mr. Feher said that the carbonator processed material from the Camp Fire with no issue. However, hand built piles need to be dry.

A meeting member asked what the demand and market value is for biochar. Mr. Feher responded that there is no market, only experimental use. People may pay \$.50-1.00/pound, but there is a need to educate the farming community about the benefits of the use of biochar. Lindsay Wood pointed out that there was an operator in Oroville selling biochar in Chico.

## Updates

### 1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- **Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES):** Sue McCourt has been supporting new Firewise communities. The County's Disaster Council is evaluating county response to power shutdowns.
- **CAL FIRE:** Chief Packwood announced that the Unit went into peak fire season staffing on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Burning was extended until the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, but there wasn't much activity since people are conditioned to shut down on the 1<sup>st</sup>. The online burn permit process has been successful and there is no longer a restriction on burn ours. There haven't been any significant control burn escapes. Forest Health grants will now be handled completely out of Sacramento rather than at the Unit level. Chief Christopherson said that they are continuing to do Defensible Space Inspections but that it has been difficult to retain people in those positions. Firefighters will be assisting with the inspections.
- **USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction:** Dave Kinatader (Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas National Forest) said there has been lots of activity up at Bucks and the CCC are starting on the project next week. The Butterfly timber sale has sold. The thinning contract is getting close to awarding. Little Grass Valley reservoir had a site visit with contractors and bids are due soon. The Feather River Resource Conservation District has submitted a pre-proposal for fuels project planning on public and private

lands in Indian Valley. Plumas Audubon has submitted a proposal for planning on a South Park project. Nick Bunch (Almanor Ranger District, Lassen National Forest) said there have been a handful of lightning fires that didn't get very large. The District is working on a West Shore/Robbers Creek project with the Sierra Institute. The project should be implementable by next June. Existing NEPA is being updated for a Warner Valley project. There were forty people who participated in the Basic 32 training – about half were members of the public. The District has had to down staff one engine and are now at four engines. There are a total of fourteen engines on the forest. Evacuation and Temporary Refuge Area signs will be installed in Warner Valley. The success of the Stevens proposal for the Peninsula project won't be known until next the next fiscal year.

- **Natural Resource Conservation Service:** Not present
- **Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District:** Not present
- **Industry Representatives:** Not present
- **Tribal Representatives:** Not present. However, it was shared that Greenville Rancheria is partnering with Plumas National Forest to take over the AD (on call) fire program.
- **UC Cooperative Extension:** Ryan Tompkins submitted a proposal to bring NFPA Home Ignition Zone training to eastern Plumas. The training includes a field component and results in certification. It would be a two day workshop with a maximum capacity of 35 people. Additionally, UCCE has CAL FIRE grant funds to host twelve prescribed fire workshops throughout the state. A Plumas workshop is planned for October and we'll have some say in the content. Mr. Tompkins and Brad Graevs recently spent a week burning with the Humboldt Prescribed Burn Association. Mr. Tompkins has an interest in bringing together the Master Gardener program and Firewise communities.
- **Feather River Stewardship Coalition:** A public meeting was held in June followed by a committee meeting to strategize for upcoming grant proposals.
- **Plumas Underburn Cooperative:** Matt West said that Feather River College is planning on doing underburning on campus and that PUC may be involved. PUC will be conducting a site visit at Don Gasser's property following the Fire Safe Council meeting.
- **Firewise Communities:**

Don Gasser asked that Firewise representatives come to the August meeting prepared to share a success story in dealing with absentee landowners.

**Smith Creek Ranch** – Andrea Irving said they had a second workday this summer that produced over 20 piles, which the Fire Safe Council chipped.

**Gold Mountain** – Judy Clot has been having monthly meetings with community members to talk about evacuation plans and fuel treatment maintenance. She has been getting a lot of calls for site visits. She is putting a project together to treat within the community.

**Portola** – Michael Mattis announced that this Saturday July 13<sup>th</sup> is Portola's annual community meeting. There will be a Firewise booth at the Veterans Hall. Temporarily Dave Rudolph has taken the lead for the Firewise committee.

**Galeppi Ranch** – Dave Kinatader said that they have had success getting an absentee landowner assistance from the NRCS.

**Old Highway** – Sally McGowan reported that things have quieted down since the community participated in the chipping program. There are piles ready for burning. Residents in the neighborhood have concerns about insurance costs. Mrs. McCourt noted that there may be a discount on the FAIR plan for Firewise communities.

**Valley Ranch** – Sarah Phallow said that eighteen people participated in a demonstration day last month and there was a lot of participation in the chipping program.

**Graeagle** – Chuck Bowman has another workday coming up this week. The piles created at the workdays aren't totally clean, but there is a lot more work getting done that would otherwise. A flyer went out to 600 people in Graeagle. There have been several Home Ignition Zone consultations done – many as the result of difficulty getting insurance. Absentee landowners will be receiving letters on Fire District stationary. Mr. Bowman described a product that Vulcan vents makes that has a coating that melts and closes the screen. Jeff Greef said that the chemical used has a limited lifespan. There is a galvanized alternative that has channels in it.

**Lake Almanor County Club** – Barbara MacArthur said that inspections are being done on all lots. They are starting a “junk the juniper” program to encourage landowners to remove them. A local nursery will offer replacement plants at a discount at the end of the season. Collins Pine is doing a big harvest on a parcel adjacent to LACC. Bob MacArthur said that during the annual meeting at the Firewise information booth he was approached by a man who couldn't get insurance. With a letter from the fire chief about the community's Firewise status, the man received insurance.

**Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman** – Mike McCourt reported that there has been a lot of participation in the chipping program and less burning. Mr. McCourt will attend Camp Layman's homeowners meeting this Saturday with information. Mrs. McCourt said that the community has reported 900 Firewise volunteer hours.

**Chester** – Karen Lichti said that after the first phase of the chipping program there were a lot of calls about participating in the next round. The Firewise committee is working on a Home Ignition Zone assessment program this summer. When a new landowner moved in adjacent to a lot that needed work the new residents talked to the landowner and they did work that they've never done before.

**Meadow Valley** – Sue McCourt said that the community got their evacuation plans in the mail and that they held an evacuation planning meeting at the fire station.

**Not present/no update:** Almanor Pines, Mohawk Vista, Lake Almanor West, Plumas Eureka, Johnsville, Taylorsville, Grizzly Ranch, Greenhorn Creek

**Potential Communities:** Paxton Lodge, Feather River College, Genesee Woods, Meadow Valley, Hamilton Branch/Seneca, Clio, River Valley View

Sue McCourt said that an assessment will be scheduled for Hamilton Branch and Seneca and will include all of the East Shore of Lake Almanor.

Don Gasser commended Mrs. McCourt for the work that she has done establishing 15 Firewise communities. Mr. Gasser pointed out that Sierra County has none and Lassen has 4 or 5. Mrs. McCourt said that Title III funds have funded her position but that currently there is only one more year of those funds available.

- **Tree Mortality Update:** Chuck Bowman reported 60 dead trees in Whitehawk, mostly white fir. At the end of last year there were 105. Andrea Irving said that Smith Creek Ranch is losing cedars. Chief Packwood added that further north there has been a lot of cedar mortality where the species occurs in groups. Ryan Tompkins said that the tree mortality priority treatment area map has just been updated and includes private lands.

## 2. Status of Current Grants –

**Senior/Disabled Defensible Space:** Mike McCourt reported that High Sierra Fire has been working the east side of the county. They are about halfway done with the 90 existing clients. Mr. McCourt has been receiving positive feedback.

**Chipping Program:** Gary Parque said that the program has taken off – there were about 280 participants in the first round. He pointed out that there is still a lot of fuel in the communities. It was clarified that landowners can participate in both phases of chipping at this point. Bob MacArthur from LACC said that the chipping program would benefit their “junk the junipers” effort. A budget update was requested to ensure that funds will support three years of chipping.

**Hazardous Fuel Reduction Schedule** – There were no questions about the HFR schedule. Matt West said that bids for the Little Grass Valley project are due July 19<sup>th</sup>.

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

4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities –

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

July 13<sup>th</sup> – Portola Annual Community Meeting

July 16<sup>th</sup> – Board of Supervisors meeting includes presentation by the Citizens Climate lobby about national legislation similar to California’s Cap & Trade.

July 20<sup>th</sup> – Clio Firewise assessment

Adjourn - Next meeting August 8th, 2019