

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Board of Directors

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Don Gasser (17)
Jim Hamblin (17)
Jerry Sipe (16)
Shane Vargas (16)

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 14, 2016 - 9:00 am.

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

1. Welcome & Introductions - Mike Callaghan
2. Review Agenda - **no changes**
3. Approve Meeting Minutes – **m- Gasser, s-Hamblin, passed.**
4. Public Comments – Don Gasser expressed concerns about tree mortality across the state and passed around a map to help inform the scheduled California Tree Mortality Task Force discussion.

Old Business

1. Update on Council Co-ordination Position – Hannah Hepner has been hired as our Council’s Coordinator and attended her first meeting today. The council had posted the position announcement two times in order to increase the pool of applicants.

New Business

1. California Tree Mortality Joint Task Force – Mike Callaghan opened with background information on the California Task Force and shared a list of online resources. Don Gordon reported that a CALFIRE flight tour of affected areas highlighted the scope of the issue. Conditions are at crisis level in southern counties where beetle populations are exploding as a result of drought weakened trees. Overall there is a lack of trained people available to deal with the crisis. Focus in the area has become focused on public safety and the preservation of structures and infrastructure. An increase in mortality should be expected in Plumas County. Currently there are pockets of dead trees on public and commercial timberlands. The state is attempting to address the lack of training and infrastructure necessary to deal with the fire and public safety hazard created by the situation. Don encouraged a grassroots effort to preempt a crisis situation locally. Financial support exists and is funneled through the state Tree Mortality

Task Force. The initial step to access funds is a BOS declaration of emergency, followed by creation of a task force.

Additional action required is early identification and removal of dead trees. Don Gasser expressed that energy production is the answer to the biomass generated by the mortality. Support was shown for creation of a community based chipping program. Kyle Felker reports that he sees beetle killed trees regularly in residential areas. These trees are expensive to remove and mortality-specific funds are not available for residential work. The Fire Safe Council has a potential role in securing funding for dead tree removal. Additionally, Mike Callaghan suggested that a countywide chipping program might be initiated by the Council during this crisis in order to aid residents in removing waste generated could be considered by the Council. Claude Sanders suggested definitive guidelines for identifying dying trees and how to manage biomass. CALFIRE has guidelines available online. Jerry Sipe shared that last spring this issue came before the BOS and an emergency was stated due to the lack of co-gen processing. Board commitment to the issue was not renewed and they should be re-briefed. Prior to addressing the BOS a community workshop meeting with targeted participants will be organized. Danny Cluck and Don Gordon will present on the issue.

2. Sierra Institute FRC small scale biomass project request for HFT chips - Camille Swezy presented an overview of the long-term goals of the project which include a county-wide biomass heat network, a three megawatt bioenergy facility, and value-added wood products. A biomass heating system is being considered for the FRC dormitories. It will accept some green biomass material, ideally from “healthy forest” projects including hazardous fuel reduction treatments. Foresters and contractors in the council were invited to exchange contact information with Camille so that she could have access to chips generated by their projects locally in the Quincy area.

Updates

1. Status of Current Grants – Kyle Felker reported that masticators are on site at La Porte Rd and the project is three weeks from completion. The American Valley project is on a tight timeframe. A mandatory bid tour has taken place and 3 contractor bids have been received. Hwy 70 project is flagged and NEPA is in progress. Approval will take 6-8 weeks. An extension should be considered if possible. At C Road Narrows, piles need to be tarped for burning.

2. Status of Grant Applications in Process -

A. Wolf & Grizzly Creek Municipal Watershed (Round Valley/Lake Davis) – Still awaiting Collection and Tenancy Agreements between parties. The biological assessment is moving forward. The Forest Service is working on streamlining the process for projects requiring both NEPA and CEQA.

B. Bucks Lake – Rachael Norton presented a map detailing the proposed work at Bucks Lake. The tour of the site on July 13th generated enthusiasm. A decision may be made by SNC at their Sept 8-9th meeting.

3. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Website Development Committee & Updated Plumas Fire History Maps - Sue McCourt posted the fire history maps for viewing. They were well received by participants in the Firewise event at LACC. Digital copies of maps can be obtained from Kyle. Work continues on the website.
- Feather River Stewardship Coalition - No additional updates
- Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance Program - Mike McCourt has 65 clients signed up, 19 of which are new. 2016 program has been a success. Next year will require additional grant funding.
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES) – Animal evacuation guides have been printed and are available online through OES. Six evacuation maps are also available online and at the fire departments.
- CAL FIRE – Sean Delacour reported that 1,000 hours of crew work took place in Plumas County in the areas discussed at the May Council meeting. The program was well received and will hopefully return next year. Scott Rosikewicz announced that greenhouse gas grants for 2016/17 are available. Don Gordon added that the State approved all budget items. Fire season is well underway in the south / central Sierra and one new transport has been lost to fire. Burn permits are suspended. Two more defensible space inspectors are being hired. 300 inspections were completed in Plumas County last month. Work is being done with the Planning Department to implement regulations across the county to meet 4190 standards. Mike Callaghan pointed out that the BOF has published an initial report detailing expenses and uses of SRA funds.
- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction – Nick Bunch reported that contractors are performing hand thin and pile in East Quincy. CCC has been involved. Work is being done addressing FS gaps in Hwy 70 project. Sara Billings added that underburning is planned and some hand thing & pile.
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – no representative present
- Firewise Communities – John Reynolds announced the Aug 7th Firewise Day for Grizzly Ranch. They are interested in assessing tree mortality. Chuck Bowman said 19 HFR letters have been sent by Graeagle Firewise in Whitehawk requiring that work be done. They have adopted a fine structure for work not initiated by landowner. 27 letters have been sent regarding tree mortality and work is to be done within three weeks. Cary Curtis announced a Gold Mountain Firewise Day on Sept 3rd. There are only 22 remaining ‘critical’ properties which need to be completed in the Gold Mountain community by the end of this year.

4. Other Updates & Upcoming Events – None announced

Adjourned 11:05 am - Next meeting August 11, 2016