

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 9th, 2020 - 9:00 am.

Via Zoom

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			
Chair , John Reynolds Firewise Community (21)	Vice Chair , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (21)	Secretary/Treasurer Don Gasser, RPF (20)	Julie Ruiz NSAQMD (20)
Dan Martynn NRCS (20)	Trina Cunningham (20) Watershed Research Center	Mike Callaghan Firewise Community (20)	Chuck Bowman Firewise Community (21)
Jim Hamblin Citizen (21)	Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (20)	Brad Graevs Feather River RCD (21)	Richard Stockton State Farm (21)
Ryan Tompkins UCCE (21)	Tracey Ferguson Plumas County Planning (21)	Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (21)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – no changes
3. Approval of June Meeting Minutes – approved via online survey
4. Public Comment – none
5. Board Comment – none

New Business

1. Fire Season Long-range Weather Outlook – Chris Smallcomb works for the National Weather Service office in Reno, which covers the eastern part of Plumas County. His role is providing public information to assist people in preparing for hazardous weather. Mr. Smallcomb said that it has been warm, but not hot, and super dry. There were fires in February this year, following a dry winter. There has been below normal precipitation as snow. The March snowfall significantly contributed to the overall snow pack. Mean temperatures have been higher, so precipitation is mostly falling as rain. He said that there were fewer red flag warnings last year, but that going into this season there are likely to be more. There was no drought in October 2019 and moderate drought on June 30, 2020. The conditions are going to start to stress the vegetation and there is not a lot of "hold over" moisture from previous years. Energy release components (fuel volatility) are above average and trending towards record values.

There are simulations of what might happen this summer, but there is no favored outcome for precipitation, and anything more than 3-4 weeks out has poor predictions. Thunderstorms are one of the least predictable weather events, usually with 1-3 days of lead time. Temperatures have higher confidence and they are expected to be above normal for July – September. Higher temperatures can dry things out faster. These conditions could contribute to smoke impacts later in the summer. Predictive Services outlook has above normal fire activity for July and significant activity in August and September. There is potential for fires in October because of potential wind events.

Mr. Smallcomb described the formation of pyrocumulus clouds that develop when heat rises from significant fires, and which can lead to thunderstorms. He outlined patterns that lead to significant fire weather concerns, and he defined critical fire weather:

Winds gusting over 30pmh and humidity below 15-20% for 3+ hours

Numerous thunderstorms with lightning but little rainfall

Warnings start with a “fire weather watch” (medium confidence) and get changed to “red flag warning” when there is high confidence. A Particularly Dangerous Situation (PDS) red flag warning has the potential for explosive fire growth or thunderstorms with an abundance of lightning with little time to evacuate. On days with this designation, residents should be ready.

2. Butterfly Valley Prescribed Burning – William Jacks described a potential 60-acre uderburn that involves at least four private landowners on a southern aspect in Butterfly Valley. He said that the Forest Service treatment upslope has reduced the risk of undertaking a broadcast burn. He would like to include the Forest Service in the burn in order to utilize a road as a containment line. He requested help from the Fire Safe Council putting in fire line on the private properties. He suggested that Stevens funds be used in support of the project. Ryan Bauer said that construction of fire line alone likely won’t be a high priority for Stevens funding unless it also involves some acres treated. Hannah Hepner pointed out that timing of Stevens funding could be limiting and that PUC could be a good resource for getting line constructed more quickly.

3. Sierra CAMP Membership Renewal – Hannah Hepner informed the Council that Sierra CAMP membership now requires a \$125 membership fee. Mr. Reynolds expressed that he is not sure about the value of the membership or whether it meets the Council’s strategic goals. He asked that more information be presented at the August meeting.

Old Business - None

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

CAL FIRE – not present

Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD) – Brad Graves said that the RCD is navigating the CAL FIRE VTP process to test its potential to streamline CEQA.

Feather River Stewardship Coalition – no update

Firewise Communities – Sue McCourt said that two Firewise video conferences have been held. She added that most community events have been postponed. Zoom events and webinars are be used as the Firewise education days. Mr. Reynolds commented that for Grizzly Ranch he’s not sure that a virtual meeting can be

put together that would be as meaningful. Kathy Kogge shared that the Fire and Emergency coordinator for Gold Mountain CSD coordinated with the fire department to allow residents to observe hydrant and ladder drills. She said that an informational video was made of the event. Chuck Bowman said that in Graeagle work has been done along the roadway in Mohawk Meadows and the Fire Chief has done site visits in Mohawk Meadows and Smith Creek Ranch to ensure roads have proper ingress and egress. He has encouraged people to participate in the virtual town hall and home hardening workshop.

Industry – Timber – not present

Industry – Insurance – Richard Stockton said that he is following California state legislation for home hardening, but that it has gotten nowhere. It is still hard to get insurance and premiums are going up.

Industry – Utilities – not present

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) – Dan Martyn said that the office doors are closed, but that he is available to meet in the field. There are ten forestry clients who will be awarded contracts this year.

Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – Melissa Klundby reminded everyone that CAL FIRE has closed residential burning for the season and that the District can be contacted if there are any questions about open burning.

Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association – not present

Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES) – Sue McCourt said that the virtual town hall event had 89 attendees and that the recording will be posted on the county website. She sent links to two insurance webinars to her email list. She is currently working on evacuation maps for the La Porte area.

Plumas County Planning Department – not present

Plumas Underburn Cooperative – Matt West said that this weekend Quincy Fire is hosting a car/dumpster fire training with the Forest Service. He hopes that it is the start of more collaborative trainings. The following weekend a Basic 32 class will be taught by Brad Miller. It is the wildland firefighter training that is required to get a red card. There will, hopefully, be a TRES burn in Plumas County this fall. PUC radios have been ordered and are on their way.

Tree Mortality Update – no comments

Tribal Representatives – not present

UC Cooperative Extension – Ryan Tompkins will post and email the recording of the home hardening webinar. The [fire preparedness survey](#) is still available. There is space available in the [Forest Stewardship workshop](#) in September.

USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction – Ryan Bauer said that Plumas National Forest is continuing implementation. They now have mastication equipment from a PG&E grant, which they will use to maintain fuel treatments and conduct work that is difficult to contract. They are beginning the budget process for next year, which includes Stevens proposals.

2. Status of Current Grants –

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: Mike McCourt said that the program has three grants – from CAL FIRE, PG&E and Plumas National Forest. The program is currently 5 weeks behind schedule because of delays getting the CAL FIRE grant agreement. There are 120 clients signed up. There will be two contractors: High Sierra Fire and Firestorm. Treatment will start next week. Mr. Reynolds asked if the Fire Safe Council is doing any outreach to expand the program since funding is secure for three years. Mr. McCourt said that newspaper ads have had little response and that most of the clients are by word of mouth or referrals from Hazardous Fuel Reduction projects. Other forms of outreach can be developed.

Chipping Program: Gary Parque said there have been almost 200 clients in the first round of chipping. The program has been running smoothly and two special projects are being addressed in Grizzly Ranch and

Portola. Richard Stockton asked that before and after photos be shared. Mr. Reynolds suggested that photos could be used with Mr. Stockton's insurance clients. Mr. McCourt added that residences that have had insurance issues have retained insurance after participation in the defensible space assistance program.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction: Matt West said that work in Butterfly Valley continues. Genesee is done except for areas with Limited Operating Periods. Bids for Franks Valley service work are due on Friday. The timber portions of Franks Valley and Butterfly Valley are being implemented now. Little Grass Valley will start next week. Lakes Basin is being squared away for bids in early fall.

Hannah Hepner said that \$15,000 was added to cost center 273 for the Senior/Disabled program, so that cost center won't be closing. The Portola project is finished and the final report will be submitted soon. The Forester has completed the environmental assessment report for the American Valley East project. The archaeology surveys are about to start. The project will be contracted for implementation later this year. The Mohawk Valley planning project has an open request for proposals for a Forester. The Greenhorn project didn't get any bids for a forester in March, Danielle Bradfield was contracted, but she is no longer available. The Plumas Disadvantaged Communities project is a new CAL FIRE grant that will treat in Chester, Portola and Quincy. Outreach is getting underway for that project.

3. Status of Grant Budgets – Don Gasser said that grant budgets are doing well.

4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner pointed out updates in status of grants. A proposal will be submitted to AIM for funds to hire and Outreach Assistant.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Adjourn - Next meeting August 13th, 2020