

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 11th 2022 - 9:00 am.

Combination of in-person and zoom meeting

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			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair , John Reynolds Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice Chair , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (23)	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 Heinbockle Plumas Fire Chiefs (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
 - o Introduce Tommy Brenzovich - Mitigation Assistance Project Manager
 - o Introduce Sarah Nasif - Sierra Nevada Alliance Fellow
2. Review Agenda – No changes
3. Approve January Meeting Minutes – **Motion - Kathy Kogge, Second - Chuck Bowman**
4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to: Joe Smailes
5. Public Comment - None
6. Board Comment - Don Gasser provided report on behalf of himself and Mike Callaghan regarding the California Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement (CFMA) - the agreement between the USFS and The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Hannah Hepner requested that any formal recommendations from the PCFSC reflect facts of the relationship between PCFSC and CAL FIRE. PCFSC programs have received funding and support from CAL FIRE. She sought to clarify if the primary focus of the committee's recommendation is in regards to suppression response in Plumas County.

Mr. Callaghan agreed with Ms. Hepner that suppression support is the priority. It is important that we not overlook the funding we receive. Mr. Gasser commented that Plumas County is still not receiving the support we should.

Mr. Callaghan added that the CMFA contributes to the absence of CAL FIRE in Plumas County and we are out of sight out of mind for CAL FIRE.

Tracey Ferguson shared that the relationship between Plumas County Planning and Building and CAL FIRE has been positive. Ms. Ferguson is willing to be liaison between the two organizations. It is important to come to the table with open minds and with the intention to work together to solve the issue. She Encouraged a collaborative approach.

Mike Flanigan asked how much funding comes from CAL FIRE. Ms. Hepner responded that CAL FIRE has provided multiple millions of dollars in support of PCFSC's programs.

Mr. Reynolds added that PCFSC doesn't want to impact our ability to receive funds from CAL FIRE. He suggested that the self-appointed committee can work with Ms. Ferguson and CAL FIRE or that their conclusions can be distributed to the Board for comments.

Mr. Gasser added was amenable to input from the Board and Mr. Callaghan suggested there be more effort to communicate with the Lassen-Modoc unit.

Alan Thornhill shared that the Lassen-Modoc unit is understanding of the limitation of the CMFA. CAL FIRE is supportive of building stations in Plumas and Sierra Counties. The only way a station will be built is if legislation changes. CAL FIRE is actively pursuing these changes to benefit Plumas and Sierra. CAL FIRE would not withhold funds for valid concerns being brought to the table. He suggested going to higher government to raise these concerns.

Mr. Gasser asked who should be contacted to raise these concerns.

Mr. Thornhill answered that individuals can approach state senators, legislators and the state governor.

Scott Corey asked if there a document that details CAL FIRE's plan to support Plumas County?

Captain Thornhill answered no, this kind of support will require legislation changes.

Bill Jacks suggested a petition for a CAL FIRE station in Plumas County signed by citizens could be brought to the Plumas County BOS and then distributed to higher forms of government.

Captain Thornhill responded that Plumas County BOS support would help.

Gary Parque asked how we can leverage this into community and economic development. Is CAL FIRE our only option when it comes to suppression response?

John Sheehan added that this is a highly political discussion and should be discussed by the Board. Mr. Reynolds answered that the committee's recommendation will be on the next PCFSC meeting agenda for a resolution. A petition will be the next step, but approving the recommendations is the first step. Mr. Reynolds suggested connecting with Tracey Ferguson and Alan Thornhill to review the comments.

New Business

1. Zone Zero – Yana Valachovic from UC Cooperative Extension presented information about the new California Zone Zero Defensible Space requirements (AB 3074). She said that California has been a leader in fire preparedness and shared a timeline of legislative enactments.

AB 3074 requires:

- Create an ember-resistant zone within 5 feet of the structure, based on regulations promulgated by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection.
- On or before January 1, 2023, The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, in consultation with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, shall update the guidance document to include suggestions for creating an ember-resistant zone within five feet of a structure based on regulations promulgated by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, in consultation with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, to consider the elimination of materials in the ember-resistant zone that would likely be ignited by embers.
- For purposes of this section, a structure for the purpose of an ember-resistant zone shall include any attached deck. This section does not limit the authority of the state Board of Forestry and Fire Protection or the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to require the removal of fuel or vegetation on top of or underneath a deck pursuant to this section.
- (2) (A) The requirement for an ember-resistant zone pursuant to Section 51182 shall not take effect for new structures until the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection updates the regulations, pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 51182, and the guidance document, pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (c) of Section 51182.
- (B) The requirements for an ember-resistant zone pursuant to Section 51182 shall take effect for existing structures one year after the effective date for the new structures.

Defensible space: Three Zones (work form the house outwards)

- Zone 0 = Noncombustible zone, 0-5' from the house and any attached deck + 6" of vertical clearance around the house.
- Zone 1 = Intermediate Zone, 5-30'
- Zone 2 = Extended Zone, 30-100' +

Zone 0 reduces the likelihood of structure ignition by reducing the potential for **direct ignition of the structure from flame contact**, by **embers that accumulate at the base of a wall**, and/or indirect ignitions

when **embers ignite vegetation, vegetative debris or other combustible materials located close to the structure that result in either a radiant heat and/or a direct flame contact** exposure to the structure.

Zone 0 is the **horizontal area within the first five feet around the structure and any outbuildings and attached decks, and stairs**. The zone also includes the **area under attached decks and stair landings**. To be most effective, the zone should incorporate a **6-inch vertical area** between the ground and the start of the building's exterior siding. *(Note: the appropriate vertical height would be dependent on whether combustibles are retained in Zone 0 and coupled with Chapter 7A requirements. The Office of the State Fire Marshal is the regulatory authority for this vertical zone since this zone would be part of the built environment.)*

Zone 0 is a critical component of structure defense and, when coupled with Zones 1 and Zone 2, is essential to defensible space.

Items commonly located in Zone 0:

Rock, pavers, statuary, fountains, cement
Mature trees
Lawn
Synthetic lawn
Non-woody plants
Decorative structures
Gate or fence that attaches to the building
Parallel fence
Covered storage facilities

Landscape materials
Potted plants
Garbage, recycling receptacles
Vehicles
HVAC, heat pumps
Outdoor kitchens
Attached patio covers
Portable BBQs
Pet and animal structures

Process for implementation of Zone 0:

- California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's Resource Protection Committee developing standards for Zone 0 and alignment with Zones 1 and 2
- 45 day – Public notice
- Tentative approval: December 2022
- New construction standards start ~ March 2023
- Existing construction standards ~ 2024 with the goal of leading with educational approaches first

Mr. Gasser asked if there are any efforts being made to deal with neighbors who do not comply with defensible space, particularly absentee owners.

Ms. Valachovic answered there have been conversations regarding this topic, but there is not legal enforcement for neighbors to comply with code. PCFSC and other organizations are crucial for working together to solve issues such as these. The code for fences and attached structures may be changed to require non-combustible material. Ultimately, you are responsible for your property and not your neighbors. Education is key.

John Sheehan asked if the Forest Products Lab at UC Berkeley is working on any kind of guidebook for communities on defensible space/home hardening. Who is creating constitution solutions that can be used in the commercial market?

Ms. Valchovic answered that under the Wildfire Forest Resilience Task Force there is a new effort that has brought back the focus on wood products utilization and there are efforts to reestablish the Forest Products Lab. As far as exterior construction codes, the IBHS Lab in South Carolina is working on home ignition research due to wildfire and will help to set standards for construction going forward.

Tom Cooley stated that Portola is the only incorporated town in Plumas County and asked if cities can adopt these standards for a formal ordinance.

Ms. Valachovic answered that the Board of Forestry decided that they do not have jurisdiction over LRA land. She will look into whether or not Zone 0 can be adopted as a city ordinance. The BOF can dictate certain standards for defensible space, but does not have authority over enforcement.

2. Greenhorn cost-share waivers – Ms. Hepner shared that the Greenhorn Project has received bids and there are two requests for cost-share waivers. One waiver is for Greenhorn CSD. They have requested a full waiver for 15 acres (\$3,750). This cost-share was agreed upon prior to project development.

Kathy Kogge asked if the full waiver was the agreement from the beginning of the project? Ms. Hepner answered yes.

Mr. Smailes asked where the money come from. Ms. Hepner answered that the funds come from the project grant. There were no bids received that were within the project budget, so additional match will need to be identified regardless.

Tracey Ferguson asked what percentage of match of the total grant is required from landowners. Is there criterion for how waivers are accepted and approved? Ms. Hepner answered that PCFSC projects require a \$250 per acre cost-share from landowners. The Board is working on a formalized process for cost share waivers. Currently landowners fill out waiver request form. The waiver inquires if the landowner can contribute a portion of the \$250 per acre. Lastly, PCFSC considers if this participant's property contributes to treatment continuity and integrity. It is important to consider if a waiver will contribute to overall project value.

Ms. Ferguson asked what Greenhorn CSD specified on the waiver application.

Ms. Hepner answered that Greenhorn CSD owns 39 lots and does not have the financial capacity to contribute. There are no structures on this land, but some land is within the defensible space of the residential lots.

Mr. Gasser asked if SPI was still involved with this project? Ms. Hepner answered yes.

Mr. Callaghan asked if these 15 acres are owned by the Greenhorn CSD and is it developed land?

Ms. Hepner answered that it is undeveloped land, aside from pumphouses and tanks.

Mr. Callaghan added that this is critical infrastructure for the community of Greenhorn and should be protected.

Mike Flanigan added that PCFSC has set some precedent, but it is important to approve these waivers on a case by case basis to see how this affects the community.

Resolution to approve waiver:

Motion - Don Gasser, Second - Kathy Kogge

None opposed.

The second cost-share waiver request is for a large landowner in the American Valley project adjacent to Galleppi Ranch. The landowner has agreed to be a part of the project after being approached multiple times by neighbors. The landowner has requested a partial cost-share for \$50 per acre for 86 acres totaling \$4,300.

Mr. Flanigan asked if the applicant expressed financial hardship. Ms. Hepner answered no.

Mr. Flanigan expressed that the Board create a policy about what PCFSC's expectations are regarding cost-share waivers to avoid all applicants requesting waivers.

Mr. Reynolds added that the Board will create a policy for further direction on cost-share waivers.

Ms. Ferguson asked where these funds will come from to cover the cost-share waivers. Ms. Hepner responded that grant funds cover the project costs. It is unknown if the grant will be sufficient to cover the entire project area until bids have been received.

Mr. Smiles added that cost-share waivers need a more structured approach. What does \$250 actually mean? Where did this number come from and should we charge that for all projects?

Mr. Reynolds added that a one or two acre parcel is different than an 86 acre parcel in terms of cost share waivers.

Chuck Bowman added that the \$250 per acre was put in place years ago and the cost-share could change. This was established when implementation was about \$1,200 per acre. The essential question to ask is if the acreage is critical to the success of the project.

John Sheehan added that PCFSC used to collect revenue from logs and chips to contribute to project development. Each cost-share needs to be negotiated on a case by case basis.

Resolution to approve waiver:

Motion - Chuck Bowman, Second - Kathy Kogge

None opposed

Old Business - None

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Michael Hall reported that Hannah Hepner and Rachel Wehrman are working on EFoRT. 300 acres have been cleared so far and will be reforested. FRRCD is still working on the Plumas Eureka project and will be expanding onto the Beckwourth RD.
- Green Waste Working Group: Beth Rouse reported that Sarah Nasif (Sierra Nevada Alliance Fellow) will be assisting with a green waste program as well as a fire wood processing unit on Plumas Corporation property.
- CAL FIRE: Alan Thornhill commented that PCR 4291 can be adopted in the City of Portola. Any entity can adopt defensible space regulations, PCR 4291 would just have to be enforced by that entity. Tom Cooley added that the previous defensible space code did not offer Portola residents enough definition and Zone 0 will help to define defensible space for the community of Portola.
- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Michael Hall reported that Hannah Hepner and Rachel Wehrman are working on EFoRT. 300 acres have been cleared so far and will be reforested. FRRCD is still working on the Plumas Eureka project and will be expanding onto the Beckwourth RD.
- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: Ms. Hepner shared that FRSC is planning a field tour of the Dixie Fire and is taking suggestions for locations. The Field tour will be FRSC's meeting for this quarter.
- Firewise Communities: Ms. Rouse added that the next FW Leads meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 17, 2022 @ 6pm. Email reminder to come. Mr. Smalles added that Seneca hosted a BBQ and it went well. Seneca residents got some USFS updates they had not received and were appreciative.
- Industry – Timber: Not present
- Industry – Insurance: Mr. Flanigan shared that the moratorium on non-renewals has not been reinstated. Clients are having trouble getting insurance, mostly homes outside of a fire district.
- Industry – Utilities: Not present
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Ben McNally said that NRCS is still busy working with landowners on post-fire restoration. Plumas NRCS would like to host a local public working group meeting to advertise NRCS services. Mr. McNally would like to host this working group to gauge interest from the community in conservation practices.
Mr. Smalles asked when the next cut-off date is for post wildfire NRCS services. Mr. McNally replied December. Will update at next meeting. Folks are currently waiting 6 months to a 1 year for treatment. Mr. Gasser asked if Mr. McNally was still working on EQIP Grants? Mr. McNally answered yes, but not a lot of money is coming in.
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District: Julie Hunter introduced Mikki Brown, NSAQMD's new grant specialist. Ms. Hunter shared the Portola Burn Wise event scheduled for September 24, 2022. NSAQMD is looking for contacts for wood harvesting to provide to residents at no-cost. This is to make sure people are burning clean, dry and seasoned wood. Ms. Hunter shared that the prescribed burn reports showed that 4,362 acres have been burned in Plumas County this year.

- Plumas Corporation: Scott Corey shared that Plumas Corporation is mainly in the field implementing projects. Thompson Meadow in Red Clover Valley and Yellow Creek in Tasmam Koyom are the main projects right now.
- Plumas Audubon Society: Not present
- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association: Not present
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES): Not present
- Plumas County Planning Department: Ms. Ferguson shared appreciation for Pam Courtright (Plumas County OES) who attended last month's meeting, Pam is a great resource. The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection is meeting August 17th @ 10am to discuss the new fire safe rulemaking. There were over 300 comments on the new rulemaking and the Board may take action. The current draft of fire safe regulations is more fine-tuned and has been adjusted to fit the legislative mandates that came through under the fire safe regulations. Plumas County BOS provided a comment. Wildfire exemption for burned homes clause is still missing under the fire safe regulations. We will not see that exemption in the new set of regulations. Currently the regulations require a 30ft set back for all structures in the SRA very high fire severity zones. Many lots are too small to meet these regulations and there is an exception process. The intent is to avoid paperwork. This is a huge relief for rebuilding Greenville. When residents rebuild, mitigation standards are included in the building plan. There will be more information on the Planning and Building page for Plumas County residents to reference. Plumas County planning has state and federal partners on board and are setting up working groups to create a county wide plan for recovery and community specific plans. Ms. Ferguson offered to provide more information on how to rebuild.
Jeff Greef asked if the regulations for using non-combustible construction materials was exempted for Greenville. Ms. Ferguson answered no, only the 30ft set-back is exempted. Mitigation still needs to occur for the same practical effect to meet the 30ft set-back.
- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West shared that the Butte County TRES will be open for registration soon. Last month PUC met at Dan Martynn's property. Parts of the property are ready for a burn. PUC will meet at the FSC office for this month's meeting, Thursday at 4:30. The PUC September meeting will be a work day to prepare the trailer for the burn season.
Mr. Greef asked if the TRES event will be the first weekends on October. Mr. West answered yes.
- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship: Trinity Stirling shared that she has been helping with the Wildfire Resiliency Task Force to address recreation components on how trails can be used for fire lines and underburning. She hopes to present desired conditions along trails at the next meeting.
Mr. Smiles asked what the working group for this project was called. Ms. Stirling answered that the working group is titled Cal Recreation's Working Group to Establish a Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation in California.
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy: Not present
- Tree Mortality Update: Mr. West read a message from Ryan Tompkins: the beetles are here! The most concerning is the Doug fir dying. There is extensive fir mortality. Late beetle flights expected in August – cover your firewood. USFS tree mortality flights will begin this month.
- Tribal Representatives: None
- UC Cooperative Extension: Ms. Hepner read a message from Ryan Tompkins: UC Cooperative Extension is hosting a [Post Fire Resiliency Workshop](#) geared toward non-industrial private landowners that will include

research on the 2021 fires. \$25 registration fee can be waived for those who were affected by fire. Post Fire Restoration Field Tour for forestry professionals will be held in September and is a two day event. \$40 for registration. The state has allotted \$50 million for reforestation. Burn Pile workshop is in the works for this fall, more details to come.

- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Ms. Winford shared that the Community Protection Project is focused on fuels reduction, including burning. The project is designed to reduce risk of high severity wildfire to the WUI. West Slope communities, Paradise communities and Eastern County communities are the current priority. USFS is aiming to reduce fuels on 300,000 acres of PNF within the next 3 years. They are figuring out how to expedite this process. This project aims to treat areas of concern in terms of very high severity wildfire. January is the target for a Decision, the project will need subsequent survey work.

Implementation should begin spring 2023. They are looking at top priority areas first. For the Fire Recovery Projects, the Tributaries Fire Recovery Project (Walker Fire, Dixie Fire and Moonlight Fire) will cover meadow enhancements, riparian restoration, road rehabilitation, dozer line repair, botanical and wildfire recovery, forest resilience, prescribed burning and fuels reduction, and range infrastructure repair. In the north Fork areas, project work will be more focused on community protection. Not all projects have been scoped yet. When recovery projects roll out, there will be public outreach.

Mr. Smailes added that Seneca FW has been working with Joe Hoffman. They are waiting to hear who the 3rd party NEPA contractor will be. Ms. Winford answered that PNF cannot provide name before the contract is signed.

Billy Davies asked if the NEPA process started. Ms. Winford answered yes, this is the early stages of planning, but this project has not gone through scoping. This is USFS trying to address the concerns of the community.

Mr. Sheehan asked if there is there a similar process happening in Lassen. Ms. Winford answered that she is not sure what is happening on the LNF.

Dave Kinatader added that the Claremont project and American Valley projects are ready for scoping and the EA is in development. Firewood is available at the USFS Mt. Hough Ranger District and the area surrounding the office has been receiving HFR treatment through Firestorm. This wood is free. The Mt. Hough Ranger District could be included in the FRSC field tour.

Joe McGinn added that burn plans are being written for this upcoming fall. Butterfly RX Fire is in planning. Firestorm has been out putting in fire lines with the intention to burn the units the first chance in fall. The piles in Butterfly were burned last fall. Pile burning is a priority and starts with Bucks Lake. PNF has about 4 or 5 thousand acres of piles on the Plumas.

Mr. Smailes asked who will be replacing Jeff Dupras. Joe McGinn answered that right now Jordan Townsend is the interim DFMO.

- Feather River Tourism Association: Not present

2. Status of Current Grants

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Tommy Brenzovich shared that High Sierra Fire is finished with the East Side and Meadow Valley. Total number of homes included in the program: 201. Approximately half have been treated to date. Over the next few months the program will be changing to figure out how to streamline the application process, collect data, and transition to a digital program.

- Chipping Program – Ms. Hepner said Phase 2 has a lot of people on the waitlist. The intent is to treat all properties. The CAL FIRE agreement to fund the chipping program has been signed and will allow us to treat all properties.
- HFR Project Schedule: Mr. West updated that the American Valley and East Shore Lake Almanor projects will be completed soon. Quincy WIP implementation grant application has been submitted. Hopefully work will begin next season. Lakes Basin project is going well and loose ends should be completed this fall.

Ms. Hepner shared that the East Shore Project is in the beginning stages of planning. She shared a map that showed a 12,000 acre project boundary. The majority is private land. This project will focus on the unburned area. PG&E is interested in moving forward.

Billy Davies added that a lot of this has recently changed hands to the Maidu. He asked if they have been contacted. Ms. Hepner said the PCFSC will ensure we make contact.

Mr. Smailes asked when implementation will begin. Ms. Hepner answered that there is no a timeline established yet.

Mr. Davies asked if the landowners will have a say in how the land will be treated. Ms. Hepner said that generally a forester determines property prescription. With larger land managers, as long as the project meets HFR and community protection objectives, landowners can have involvement in the project design.

Bill Jacks asked which foresters the Fire Safe Council works with. Ms. Hepner answered that the PCFSC currently has contracts with Danielle Bradfield, Rachael Norton, and the firm Mason, Bruce and Girard. Evan Watson is also a contract forester on the EForT project.

Ms. Hepner added that the Quincy Wildfire Protection Project is looking good and biomass chipping has started. PCFSC is taking on implementation of the Quincy Watershed Improvement Project (QWIP). PCFSC struggled to find a hand thin operator for the American Valley project, but it was contracted and work is being completed. The other American Valley and Eastern Plumas projects are in layout. The Mohawk Valley is in open bid and bid tour will be next week.

- Status of Grants Budgets: Mr. Reynolds shared that PCFSC has \$8 million in program grants. HFR grants is now at \$20 million. Numbers are growing quickly.
- Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner shared that PCFSC is still waiting on Plumas RAC. PG&E Vegetation Management was not successful. An implementation proposal was submitted to SNC for the QWIP. PCFSC staff has been participating in a grant writing workshop and we will have more capacity to apply for grants soon.

Mr. Kinatader asked if NEPA good enough for CEQA in terms of securing state funds. Mr. Hall answered yes.

Mr. Gasser asked if we have enough operators bidding on projects. Ms. Hepner answered yes, PCFSC and FRRCD had 17 bidders on the EFoRT project.

Mr. Smiles asked if have operating prices have increased. Ms. Hepner answered that there have been a range of bids, but for the Greenhorn Project, the mid-level bids were reasonable.

3. Other Updates & Upcoming Events: None

Adjourn - Next meeting September 8th @ 9am.