

# Plumas County Fire Safe Council



## Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - 9:00 am.

50 Church St, Quincy and 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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Chair</b> , John Reynolds Firewise Community (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Vice Chair</b> , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Secretary/Treasurer</b> Dan Martynn, Retired (22)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lindsay Wood Plumas Audubon Society(22)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	<input type="checkbox"/> Trina Cunningham Maidu Summit Consort. (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Callaghan Firewise Community (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Bowman Firewise Community (21)
<input type="checkbox"/> Jim Hamblin Citizen (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brad Graevs Feather River RCD (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> Richard Stockton State Farm (21)
<input type="checkbox"/> Ryan Tompkins UCCE (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> Tracey Ferguson Plumas County Planning (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (21)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – No changes
3. Approve July Meeting Minutes – **m – Martynn, s - Graevs**
4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to: [Brad Graevs](#)
5. Public Comment:

Kevin Danaher recommended the book Smokescreen by Chad Hanson.

Sally McGowan read a thank you letter from the community of Old Highway Road to the Fire Safe Council for the Hazardous Fuels Reduction completed.

Ron Heinbockle thanked the fire teams for keeping the fire out of Meadow Valley and for all of the prep work that was done.

6. Board Comment - none

### New Business

1. **Dixie Fire Update** – Rocky Opliger, Incident Commander, and Sean Colins, Public Information Officer, from IMT 4 provided a Dixie Fire updated. Chief Opliger shared information about his background and the accomplishments of the Fire Safe Councils he has been involved with. He Said that fuels treatment was responsible for the evacuation success in populated areas. His first questions when he arrives at an

incident are what is the fuel history and what are the fuels treatments. The Dixie Fire is the single largest fire in California. The North Complex was the longest sustained run of a fire. The Dixie Fire started in Butte County as a CAL FIRE incident. The Highway 70 corridor was the initial holding line, but the fire crossed the canyon and threatened Meadow Valley. The Fire is divided into the East and West zones in unified command with CAL FIRE. It has been hard to get fixed wings assigned because you have to apply every day (helicopters are assigned to the incident). There are currently 99 uncontrolled large fires in the United States. If resources were divided evenly, there would only be 250 people assigned to the Dixie Fire. The conditions are 6-8 weeks ahead of the fire season last year. Currently there are 29,000 evacuees across the entire incident. There was a 70%+ loss of the community of Greenville. Every person in Greenville is accounted for. There are 33,000 hazard trees identified by Cal Trans for removal. Hazardous Fuel Reduction treatments have allowed for greater access by suppression resources and have lowered the fire intensity in place, but the wind can do anything.

Brian West asked about the condition of Canyon Dam. Chief Opliger replied that there was significant damage.

William Jacks asked if we can expect the northeastern winds to affect this fire later in the summer. Chief Opliger said that there are many factors affecting progress and that the fire dynamics are unprecedented but that there is progress on the East Zone.

Phil Oels asked if fuel reduction worked has helped. Chief Opliger said without a doubt, particularly on private timber lands.

Ron Heinbockel asked if Washington DC understands the need for fuels treatments and better pay for firefighters. Chief Opliger responded that there is progress. LaMalfa has been an advocate; he is pushing a bill forward based on what he has seen on the ground from the Dixie Fire.

Claude Sanders inquired about the Moonlight Fire impacts. Chief Opliger responded that areas with brush and dead down trees increases the fire behavior, but that overall it is slowing the fire.

Hannah Hepner asked how community members can help support the IMT and suppression efforts. Chief Opliger outlined initiatives of other Fire Safe Councils including fuel treatments with a focus on community protection, evacuation planning, providing fire training, and enhancing communications. Ultimately these things can be included in an IAP that gets the approval of the Board of Supervisors.

John Sheehan asked if anyone is considering utilizing biomass facilities that are closed down to deal with the material after these large-scale fire events. Chief Opliger suggested a discussion with PNF Supervisor Chris Carlton. Mr. Sanders added that micro grids can be powered by biomass and that creative thinking will be required to address the issue.

Mr. Jacks asked the IMT to consider maintaining dozer line around communities to be utilized for prescribed burning.

2. **PCFSC Total Accomplishments** – Hannah Hepner shared a graphic of the funding that the Fire Safe Council has received since 2002. \$19.4 million has been secured. 80.4% has been used to implement HFR projects. 17,169 acres of treatment have been completed or are in progress. These treatments are strategically placed around communities and have been shown to be successful at saving homes. There are an additional 5,000+ acres of project area awaiting funding. 7.5% of funds have been used for coordination. That is, essentially, the cost to maintain the organization. For every dollar invested in coordination \$12.36 has been generated for projects. The Fire Safe Council supports about 500+ residents annually through the chipping and defensible space assistance programs.

3. **Plumas Disadvantaged Community HFR Contribution Waiver** – Ms. Hepner requested approval of a cost share waiver for a landowner that is part of the Plumas Disadvantaged Communities project. The landowner can contribute \$500 towards treatment on their 11.8 acres. **m – Oels – Graevs**. Approved.
4. **WUI Districts** – William Jacks presented a concept of coordinating communities into strategic “WUI districts” that are encircled by fire line to allow for large-scale “free range” prescribed fire. Many communities now have dozer lines around them that were put in by fire teams. Maintaining the line will allow for prescribed fire and future suppression. Each district would have a local leader that would plan prescribed fire according to resident needs. Regular burning is an opportunity to get out of the cycle of high intensity fires. Currently the forest is being managed for perpetual brush fields. Mr. Jacks implored the Council to consider the global impacts of climate change on local forests and urged immediate action at larger scale.

There was discussion as to the feasibility of using fire as initial entry fuels treatment at scale and the need to maintain fuels treatments to retain their value. Air quality concerns were voiced.

Dave Kinatader said that the Forest Supervisor is promoting the idea of not re-vegetating strategic dozer lines.

## Old Business

None

## Updates

### 1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- **CAL FIRE:** Joel Goldman said that the Unit has not been able to hire Defensible Space Inspectors. They are only doing inspections to meet the requirements of AB 38. He reminded the group that AB 38 inspections can be requested online. Mr. Reynolds added that the inspection is good for 6 months.
- **Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD):** Brad Graevs said that the RCD shut down two weeks ago because all leadership was evacuated. Most RCD projects have burned. He said that the UC Extension stakeholders exchange is August 26<sup>th</sup>. It is open to anyone and is \$15 for a great meal. The event features “lightening talks” from local professionals and a keynote speaker. [Note: the August stakeholders exchange was postponed at the time of this writing.]
- **Feather River Stewardship Coalition:** Ms. Hepner said that the recent meeting was sparsely attended due to fire impacts.
- **Firewise Communities:** Several Firewise events have been postponed.

Joe Smiles said that Seneca was hit by the fire storm and that most of the homes were lost. There was higher severity in the timber than he had hoped. As a consequence, they will be looking at grant opportunities for reforestation. He asked the Fire Safe Council to provide a letter of recommendation for applications. The available funding needs to be commensurate with the need of the communities and time is of the essence.

Tyson Rael shared that Greenhorn Firewise has been inactive. Community engagement is needed to manage it. The CSD has been monitoring the water table. During the North Complex residents left their sprinklers on when they evacuated, leaving no water for suppression. The CSD will be working towards grants for power resiliency.

- **Industry – Timber:** Camille Swezy, representing J&C Enterprises, gave an account of the effect of the Dixie Fire on the residents of Greenville. J&C Enterprises has volunteered their employees and equipment

to protect areas of Indian Valley, which has gone unacknowledged. There is a lot of salvage recovery work to do, but once we lose green forests there will be no more local loggers. She said that the sociological challenges of the fire need to be given as much consideration as the ecological. The community of Greenville feels left out and forgotten. Ms. Swezy added that defensible space did not ensure home survivability. She recommended convening a stakeholder group with landowners, operators, and forestry professionals to figure out how to move forward, particularly considering that the mills already aren't taking logs.

Keith Linford suggested that the US military be refocused on domestic issues and be trained for firefighting.

Mr. Sanders voiced that National Forests should no longer be viewed as a commercial enterprise and that money needs to be invested on the ground.

- **Industry – Insurance:** not present [highly impacted by Dixie Fire response]
- **Industry – Utilities:** not present
- **Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS):** not present
- **Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District:** no update
- **Plumas Audubon Society:** not present
- **Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association:** Ron Heinbockel said that the 17 fire districts in the county have been stressed this year. Volunteer memberships are down. (The Dixie Fire has increased membership in Meadow Valley.) The fire in East Quincy last night had six local responders after multiple pages. Chief Heinbockel is approaching CAL FIRE about support for local fire departments. Greenville is without a fire department. The Chiefs Association will be working as a group to address these issues.
- **Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES):** not present
- **Plumas County Planning Department:** not present
- **Plumas Underburn Cooperative:** Matt West said that planning is underway for a TRES prescribed fire training event in Butte County in the fall. It will return to Plumas County in the spring. Ms. Hepner said that red carded individuals can sign up for Plumas National Forest's on call (OC) fire crew and participate in suppression on the Dixie Fire.
- **Sierra Nevada Conservancy:** Kristy Hoffman announced that the Quincy Wildfire Protection plan grant agreement is ready for signature.
- **Tree Mortality Update:** [Don Gasser provided comments in chat that were lost due to technical issues]
- **Tribal Representatives:** Ms. Hepner said that Trina Cunningham is not able to attend the Fire Safe Council meeting because she has been participating daily in the Dixie Fire cooperators meetings. Ms. Cunningham asked that the Council be made aware that areas of Plumas County affected by the Dixie Fire are not likely to qualify for FEMA assistance. The damages are below the threshold for federal assistance. However, if we work across county lines to quantify damage, there may still be the opportunity for FEMA aid.
- **UC Cooperative Extension:** not present
- **USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction:** Dave Kinatader said that PNF has received a \$1 million PG&E grant for an ongoing contract burn crew. There were multiple projects laid out around Indian Falls and Greenville that burned in the fire.

## 2. Status of Current Grants

- **Senior Disabled Defensible Space:** Mike McCourt reported that nearly 100 residences have been treated. Next month he expects to report how many clients were affected by the fire. The operator still needs to get to Meadow Valley and the canyon. It has been a tough year for the contractor; they have not been able to hire as many crew members as they would like.

- **Chipping Program:** Gary Parque said that the first round is complete. The crew had to return to some locations due to bad conditions, crew members being evacuated, etc. Chipping will start again in August. We are waiting to hear about additional grant funds to continue the program beyond this year.

Jason Ackley asked the Council to consider an opportunity for residents to take the material to a centralized location for processing and that the material be utilized for biomass. He added that SPI needs to take chips and that an initial investment in sorting costs for contaminants is a better investment than suppression costs.

Mr. Jacks suggested that residents should be able to dump burnable green waste on federal lands that have been burned.

Mr. Sheehand suggested talking to John Kolb and the Board of Supervisors to address the green waste issue.

Gerd Ebeling explained that biochar could be a commercial product produced at scale for agricultural application.

- **HFR Project Schedule:** Matt West said that hand crews were working in Franks Valley until they were evacuated. Work has started on the Lakes Basin project and it looks great. Mr. Kinatader added that there were also crews working on the Butterfly project that had to be evacuated. The mastication treatment is where fire crews held the line.

3. Status of Grant Budgets: No update

4. Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities: No update

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Adjourn - Next meeting September 9th, 2021