

# Plumas County Fire Safe Council



## Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 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			
<b>Chair</b> , John Reynolds Firewise Community (21)	<b>Vice Chair</b> , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (21)	<b>Secretary/Treasurer</b> 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 – Brought Old Business before item two of New Business.  
Don Gasser requested more information about the Outreach Assistant position – discussed under Grant Opportunities.
3. Approval of July Meeting Minutes – approved via online survey
4. Public Comment – none
5. Board Comment – none

### New Business

1. Vulcan Vent Q+A presentation – Nate Oliver from New Cal Metals said they are the sole manufacturer of Vulcan Vents. The vent works in two phases: 1/16 mesh at the back and honeycomb mesh with intumescent paint at the front. Embers that can pass through the 1/16 mesh don't carry enough energy to ignite. The intumescent paint expands 70:1 when exposed to radiant heat, beginning at 380 degrees and sealing around 500 degrees. The paint expands one time and becomes a one-hour fire wall, which cuts oxygen flow. It is also important to consider if the vents are doing their job of venting to avoid mold issues. Mr. Oliver indicated that baffled vents restrict airflow. Vulcan has a range of vents including soffit, gable, and foundation vents. He said that California fire safe building code previously only applied to eaves and soffits, but that is broadening to include all vents. [Note: Plumas County's Building Department Director has confirmed that foundation vents

must also comply.] Mr. Oliver showed a demonstration video and a video of a home in Paradise that survived the Camp Fire, which was partially attributed to having Vulcan Vents.

Dan Martynn asked what the cost difference is compared to regular vents and how they are installed.

Mr. Oliver said that they install like any other vent. For new construction it is easy to incorporate the vents. Retrofitting will depend on the siding, which is true for all vents. Vulcan Vents can be bolted to the backside of existing vents as long as the entire ventilation hole is covered. For an entire home the cost can range from \$2,500-5,000 with labor.

## **Old Business**

1. Sierra CAMP Membership Renewal – Simone Cordery-Cotter from the Sierra Business Council shared information about the Sierra CAMP program highlighting the current members and membership benefits. She said that the group exists to engage the region on climate action, strengthen urban-rural connections, and ensure access to grants and funding. Sierra CAMP is actively working on recruiting other Fire Safe Councils. Member groups are invited to participate in annual membership meetings. Ms. Cordery-Cotter gave several examples of the way the group has benefitted its members. She also described the regional climate change vulnerability assessment that is underway. It will examine the vulnerability of Sierra Nevada communities to wildfire, changes in snowpack, etc. – which are often different to the vulnerabilities defined for urban areas. She said that Plumas County Fire Safe Council’s membership fee would be \$125/year. Mr. Reynolds gave some background on the Fire Safe Council’s request for a presentation. Kathy Kogge said that she sees a lot of benefit to participating. Don Gasser requested that the membership decision be recorded as a Board Resolution. Mr. Reynolds conducted a vote:

Ayes: Reynolds, Ruiz, Gasser, Kogge, Bowman, Martynn, Callaghan, Ferguson (8)

Noes: none

Absent: Cunningham, Hamblin, Bauer, Graevs, Stockton, Tompkins, Heinbockel (7)

Passes

## **New Business (resumed)**

2. Rustic Ranch Goat Grazing for Fuel Reduction – Larry Smith from two hearts event venue in Sierra Valley has recently acquired 150 goats that can be utilized for hazardous fuel reduction. Electric fencing and guard dogs are used to keep the goats safe. Goats are browsers who prefer brush and shrubs and are ideal in waterways and on steep slopes. They leave twigs and pellets behind. Mr. Smith shared a list of projects he has completed with the goats, they ranged from 2-20 acres. He said goats are a “good tool to have in the toolbox.”

Mr. Martynn asked if there are projects that are too big or too small, if there is an ideal time of year to use goats, and what the relative cost is for using them. Mr. Smith said that he has done projects as small as .5 acres and up to 25 acres. His goats eat about .25 – 1 acre per day. The cost is roughly between \$700-\$1,500 per acre depending on access to water and accessibility. It is best to keep the herd together, so Mr. Smith prefers to have several projects lined up in one area to reduce transport.

Kathy Kogge asked if the goats would stay overnight on a 3 acre project. Mr. Smith answered that, yes, they do. Ideally, he is able to stay in his 5<sup>th</sup> wheel with them for at least one night.

Sue McCourt asked if goats can deal with blackberry. Mr. Smith said goats will eat every leaf and the tender parts of blackberry – the woody stuff is left behind. The goats trample it. It can be mowed for 1-2 years after grazing to knock it back.

## Updates

### 1. Standing Reports and Discussion

**CAL FIRE** – not present

**Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD)** – not present

**Feather River Stewardship Coalition** – no update

**Firewise Communities** – Kathy Kogge said that Gold Mountain has been reinvigorated to do monthly meetings. They are focusing on preparedness and communication. Some of their communication trees have been lost. They are figuring out how to recreate them and how to communicate if cell service is lost.

Mrs. McCourt said that LACC is working on updating their Community Wildfire Protection Plan and that Taylorsville did a Firewise workday on a few acres. Mrs. McCourt has been hosting a Firewise leads monthly zoom meeting. Recently a woman evacuated from the Hog Fire shared information about the evacuation process. A CAL FIRE project around that community contributed to her home's survival.

Mr. Reynolds said that in Grizzly Ranch the fire department did a training exercise with the Forest Service. It was an opportunity to also discuss evacuations and Firewise business.

**Industry – Timber** – Camille Swezy said she is working for J&C enterprises. Jared Pew sees the value of participating with the Fire Safe Council. They are working on the Franks Valley project and appreciate utilizing a Master Stewardship Agreement through the Mule Deer Foundation. It has provided flexibility and the ability to get things done in a more timely manner. Homeowners in the Franks Valley area are happy the work is getting done, particularly after the Walker Fire last year. J&C has a new tracked chipper with a grappler to help process biomass. It can be used for roadside chipping. J&C is also tooled for small log thinning projects. The firewood processor that was previously presented to the Fire Safe Council by Randy Pew is not currently in use.

**Industry – Insurance** – not present

**Industry – Utilities** – not present

**Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)** – Dan Martynn encouraged people interested in working with the NRCS to contact him soon. Mr. Reynolds added that he has worked with the NRCS on a family property in Amador County and that office has been a pleasure to work with and provided significant help. Mr. Martynn suggested a field trip to see the work that landowners and partners have done locally.

**Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District** – Julie Ruiz said that the NSAQMD used grant funds to pay for equipment rental to support the chipping of green waste at the old Portola landfill. The chipping was done utilizing the PCFSC chipping program.

**Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association** – not present

**Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES)** – Sue McCourt said that Chief Pini at Peninsula Fire has announced that he is retiring in January. Nick Dawson has left all of his duties in Plumas County and is now Assistant Center Manager at NIFC. Mrs. McCourt has been working with the La Porte Fire Department, the Sheriff, and Forest Service on an evacuation map plan for the La Porte area. She continues to work with the Firewise communities.

**Plumas County Planning Department** – Tracey Ferguson said that the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan draft has been shared with the committee. It has a three-week review period. There are still a few data gaps. It has nearly 50 hazard mitigation strategies, many of them related to wildfire – which is identified as the biggest hazard in the county. There will be a virtual public meeting in mid-September after release of the public draft.

**Plumas Underburn Cooperative** – Matt West said that PUC has completed its first Basic 32 class, which was held in Quincy. There were 16 people who attended. PUC is looking into self-certifying pack tests to issue

participants red cards. There will be additional Basic 32 classes in Greenville and Graeagle. PUC has 12 new radios. Meadow Valley has a land preparation workshop scheduled for the end of the month. A TREX prescribed fire training event is being planned for the fall.

**Tree Mortality Update** – no comments

**Tribal Representatives** – not present

**UC Cooperative Extension** – Ryan Tompkins was not in attendance but asked that the Council be informed that the [wildfire preparedness survey](#) is still open and that a Forest Stewardship Workshop series will be held as a blended online and in-person format starting August 26<sup>th</sup>. Registration is required before August 21<sup>st</sup>.

**USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction** – not present

## 2. Status of Current Grants –

**Senior/Disabled Defensible Space:** Mike McCourt said that most years the program would be wrapping up around now. This year had a late start, and the program is currently close to halfway done. There are two operators: High Sierra Fire and Firestorm. Firestorm sent their crew down to the Stagecoach Fire, but they will get another crew here by early next week.

Mr. Reynolds asked if the program is serving the same number of individuals as we usually do. Mr. McCourt responded that there are currently about 120 clients and 10 on the waitlist. Mr. McCourt expects additional interest to be generated from a recent PG&E press release about the program.

**Chipping Program:** Gary Parque said there have been large numbers of participation. He also described the work done in Portola.

**Hazardous Fuel Reduction:** Matt West indicated that the CCI project is mostly complete. The commercial units of Franks Valley are being implemented and the service work units will start soon. The SNC Butterfly project is almost complete. Mastication is finishing up in Little Grass Valley. The Lakes Basin project should be put out to bid in late summer or early fall.

Hannah Hepner said that on private lands the American Valley project is getting close to a Request for Proposals from operators. The Plumas Disadvantaged Communities project includes Chester, Quincy and Portola. It will provide treatment on parcels over 5 acres.

## 3. Status of Grant Budgets –

Don Gasser asked if Living with Fire has a date that it will be available and noted that without the newspaper it is difficult to proceed. He also asked about the status of the PG&E funds for the Senior/Disabled program and if the Mohawk Valley project will be complete by the end of the year. He suggested that the agencies funding our programs should be made aware of the projects' success. Ms. Hepner responded that 15,000 copies of Living with Fire are being printed right now by Feather River Publishing. It will be distributed by Feather River Publishing to venues where they distribute other materials, as well as fire departments, post offices, and Firewise communities. The Fire Safe Council is considering sending postcards to all residents directing them to a pdf version online. PG&E just sent the agreement for signature. Mohawk Valley is not going to be done by the end of the year, an extension will be requested. There was one forester bid for the project, which was beyond our budget. They will do layout and preliminary work, but will not complete a NEPA document for the project.

## 4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities –

Ms. Hepner pointed out that AIM funds were awarded to the Fire Safe Council to increase capacity by establishing an Outreach Assistant position. The opening is being advertised right now. Job duties include site visits, responding to calls and emails, being present with Firewise communities, and taking meeting notes. Ms. Hepner added that Stevens funds proposals were submitted to

Ryan Bauer and that Sierra Nevada Conservancy has several opportunities that she will be developing proposals for.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Adjourn - Next meeting September 10th, 2020