

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Board of Directors

Chair, Don Gasser, Citizen (20)
Vice Chair, John Reynolds, Firewise Community (19)
Secretary/Treasurer, Julie Ruiz, NSAQMD (20)
Dan Martynn, NRCS (20)
Trina Cunningham, California Indian Water Commission (20)

Chuck Bowman, Firewise Community (19)
Jim Hamblin, PC Fire Chiefs Assoc. (19)
Ryan Bauer, USFS (20)
Mike Callaghan, Firewise Community (20)

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, August 8th, 2019 - 9:00 am.

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

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1. Welcome & Introductions – Don Gasser
 2. Review Agenda – Moved item (2) under Old Business to item (1)
 3. Approval of July Meeting Minutes – **m Hamblin, s – Ruiz**
 4. Public Comment – Bill Wickman said that Plumas District Hospital will be building a skilled nursing facility on the south side of Bucks Lake Road across from the hospital. They would like assistance undertaking hazardous fuel reduction work in the area before work gets underway. Soper Wheeler and Chy have land adjacent to the area, but there is still a lot of material in areas where they have removed timber.

New Business - none

Old Business

1. Mapping Update – Jason Moghaddas presented initial online-based maps of reforestation and fuel reduction work. Currently there is no other place where public and private data is aggregated. The map covers Modoc to Lake Tahoe areas. Mr. Moghaddas estimates that the maps include about 80-90% of the existing treatments. It represents about one million acres of reforestation across the whole area and a half a million acres of fuels reduction. Federal treatments make up about 80% of the fuel reduction work. It is necessary to come up with a protocol for data management to make annual updates easier. The data will be provided to 34 North, who have a platform that allows for editing the data. The information should be useful for grant proposals and identifying maintenance needs. The cost of maintenance is significantly less than the initial investment made in treatment and the benefit of that investment should not be lost. The data will be reviewed in the next month and presented to the Board of Supervisors in October.

Don Gasser commented that the treatments do a good job of encircling communities. Mr. Moghaddas agreed that it's an opportunity to look across boundaries and link efforts.

Phil Noia asked how far back the data goes because there are some early QLG projects that require maintenance. Mr. Moghaddas said that data as far back as the early 2000s is the most useful. Jim Crane pointed out that the map does show return entries to sites with multiple treatments.

Mr. Gasser asked if prescription is indicated on the maps. Mr. Moghaddas said that the original data set is preserved so that users can find that information.

Dave Kinader asked if producing the maps revealed trends in accomplishments over time. Mr. Moghaddas said that the QLG effort was apparent in the work that got done on the ground.

Mr. Crane said that adding a planning data set would be the next step.

Trina Cunningham added that the state will be very interested in this data as they are evaluating how to direct funding.

2. CWPP Revision Update – Sue McCourt said that updates from the County Planning and Building Departments, as well as an updated fire station map, have been integrated into the CWPP.

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- **Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES):** Sue McCourt said that the County now has the capability to participate in the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System. However, it will only be utilized in a significant event. CodeRed is still the best option for local information. John Reynolds asked if the County ever does tests of the CodeRed system. Mrs. McCourt said that it has been done during evacuation exercises, but that it costs money every time it is used.
- **CAL FIRE:** Chief Christopherson said that the Governor's executive order, signed July 31st, announced the hire of four hundred seasonal firefighters. However, CAL FIRE can't find qualified people to hire. Additional State funding is supporting emergency funds, the C130 program, and delivery of new Blackhawk helicopters. The Lassen-Modoc Unit will be receiving one of the Blackhawks as soon as a new hangar is built for it. It will be used to service Plumas County as well. There have been staffing changes in Fire Prevention on the unit. There is a transfer coming to the unit, but they likely won't be stationed in Plumas as expected. There has not been significant fire activity in the area. Mr. Noia asked about the status of the Unit Vegetation Program Manager. Chief Christopherson said that someone started in the position this week.
Mr. Gasser pointed out that the Lassen National Forest has been providing firefighter training. He asked if they have been finding qualified people to hire. Nick Bunch said that most of the opportunity for recently trained individuals to get involved will be through prescribed fire.
- **USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction:** Jennifer Ericson (Almanor Ranger District, Lassen National Forest) gave an update on the Warner Valley evacuation route signs. She said that the 1,800 acre Warner Valley prescribed burn project is being put off until spring because specialist reports are needed to update the NEPA. They are working with the Sierra Institute on planning for the West Shore WUI

project and Robbers Creek restoration project, which will be released for public comment soon. Humbug Valley is going into escrow with the Maidu Summit Consortium and the District is looking at doing a hazardous fuel reduction project in the Big Springs area. Ms. Ericson said that planning capacity has been lost and that they are turning to partners for assistance. Nick Bunch added that the Almanor Ranger District expands through four different counties, so there are multiple partners including the Tehama RCD that are providing planning assistance. He said that lack of funding on the Forest is an issue, but staffing is the bigger challenge. Mr. Bunch has been working with Sierra Pacific Industries and Collins Pine Co to share data. They have been responsive to working in areas that tie into Forest fuels projects.

Dave Kinateder (Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas National Forest) said that the commercial timber owner involvement has increased compared to in the past. He said that there is a lot of work being done on the Bucks project. There has been some negative public reaction to the work. The Twain West timber sale that was awarded last year is almost complete. The larger Butterfly Twain project has virtually every acre accounted for shortly after planning through Sierra Nevada Conservancy, CAL FIRE CCI, and Forest funds. There has not been much fire activity. Mr. Gasser asked when the piles on the Bucks project are likely to be burned. Mr. Kinateder said that there is not much capacity and the number of piles on the landscape is increasing. He followed that it is up to the Ranger to set priorities. They may do full service contracts in the future where the operator returns to burn the piles. Mr. Kinateder is hoping to utilize the California Conservation Corps to get a lot of work done. He also shared that there is a company out of Redding that takes small diameter material to make fence posts. He said there may be a private lands application, too.

- **Natural Resource Conservation Service:** Not present
- **Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District:** Julie Ruiz announced that the Air Quality Management District has received another grant to support five years of stove change outs in the greater Portola area. She suggested that more people in Portola may take advantage of the chipping program now that the city just passed a residential burn ban.
- **Industry Representatives:** Not present
- **Tribal Representatives:** Alisha Wilson from the Maidu Summit Consortium said that she is working with the Fire Safe Council to get contracts in place to involve Traditional Ecological Knowledge consultants in the Plumas Collaborative Forest Health project. She said that the Maidu Summit Consortium has been developing its own programs which will bring an indigenous element to projects, particularly with regards to burning.

Trina Cunningham from the California Indian Water Commission said she is working with state and federal leadership on water issues, which are linked to fire issues. She noted that there is a difference between tribal cultural fire and prescriptive fire. She has participated in an evaluation of the differences with the Karuk tribe and anticipates that in September the Mendocino National Forest will share a model that can be used by other National Forests. There was recently a presentation by the Department of Water Resources to the Integrated Regional Water Management team. In that presentation it was stated that the Upper Feather River is ranked the highest fire risk in California by the agency. Dave Kinateder asked how to develop projects with tribes as the driving force. Ms. Wilson said that tribes need to be involved in planning prior to implementation. Ms. Cunningham shared relevant history about exclusionary laws and land ownership rights for native people. She said that as a result of this history mechanisms are still being identified to empower tribes in that capacity.

- **UC Cooperative Extension:** Hannah Hepner shared an update from Ryan Tompkins about a pre-proposal submitted for a demonstration project at the UC Forestry Camp/Baker Forest in Meadow Valley. She also shared a flyer about a prescribed fire workshop that will be taking place at the camp on October 18th & 19th.
- **Feather River Stewardship Coalition:** The steering committee recently met to discuss an opportunity to submit a Collaborative Landscape Forest Restoration program proposal. The group decided to bring stakeholders together for a strategic planning summit this winter before submitting a proposal.
- **Plumas Underburn Cooperative:** Matt West announced a site visit to Old Highway following the Fire Safe Council meeting. He said that the Underburn Co-op has purchased some tools and that they will acquire a trailer next week. There are several training opportunities coming up including a TREX prescribed fire training exchange this November.
- **Firewise Communities:**

Don Gasser reminded Firewise representatives to share a success story with absentee landowners. He said that Napa County created an ordinance that requires defensible space to be cleared on neighboring properties within 100 feet of a structure.

Chester – Karen Lichti said their committee spend a week handing out flyers about Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) consultations and the chipping program in the Martin Ranch subdivision. There were three consultations as a result. Sierra Pacific Industries has finished a fuel break along Juniper Lake Rd and will start work on the Martin Ranch fuel break soon.

Galeppi Ranch – Dave Kinatader said that they have had success getting an absentee landowner with property in a critical saddle assistance from the NRCS.

Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman – no update.

Graeagle – Karen Neely said Valley Ranch has started doing bitter brush removal. A workday was held on an absentee landowner's property. Since then they have joined the Mohawk Valley Hazardous Fuel Reduction project.

Chuck Bowman said that Graeagle proper has a lot of inherited properties. Absentee landowners that need to do work will received a letter from the Fire District. The committee is in the process of developing a work day on one of these properties. The recent demonstration day in Graeagle had ten participants. Mr. Bowman displayed a yard sign that will be used on demonstration sites and where Home Ignition Zone consultations have resulted in significant work. A mailing was sent out to six hundred people in Graeagle. It resulted in two calls. A total of about a dozen HIZ consultations have been done in the last month. Mr. Bowman is working with Mohawk Meadows to make changes to their community's design document and to incorporate fuel reduction rules. Whitehawk has strong rules and a fine structure. Clio recently had a Firewise assessment.

Smith Creek Ranch – Mr. Bowman assisted with two HIZ consultations in Smith Creek Ranch last week. Their community has a requirement that all landowners will have a consultation.

Grizzly Ranch – John Reynolds said that in 2014 an amendment was added to the community's CC&Rs to include rules for work that would influence insurance availability. In 2016 they enacted another rule to address fuels and defensible space. In 2017 they issued letters stating that everyone needed to meet those standards. Last year they began implementing fines. Currently 13 out of 300 lots are out of compliance. At the Firewise day last Sunday the Fire Department did a presentation about the HIZ and evacuations. The community is considering developing street captains. There was a wildfire on Old Grizzly Road in July.

Taylorville – Mike Yost said that an absentee landowner had a cistern covering that had caved in. Work to rebuild it has been contracted and, once complete, will be accessible by the fire department

to draft water. The Firewise committee has been distributing reflective address signs door to door along with informational brochures.

Old Highway – Sally McGowan reported that her neighborhood has twelve homes and have logged 356 hours of fuel reduction work, particularly on common boundaries between homes. She said there is a potential for the Plumas Underburn Co-op to burn in that area. Chris Coen has contacted 32 insurance companies and documented responses. So far there have been 16 refusals, 2 quotes, and 2 “maybes.” The two companies offering a policy are utilizing the FAIR plan. Sue McCourt announced that Old Highway has just received their official Firewise recognition.

Hamilton Branch/East Shore/Seneca – These communities had a combined Firewise assessment at the beginning of the week.

Not present/no update: Almanor Pines, Mohawk Vista, Lake Almanor West, Plumas Eureka, Johnsville, Greenhorn Creek, Sloat/Cromberg/Camp Layman, Lake Almanor Country Club, Portola, Gold Mountain

Potential Communities: Paxton Lodge, Feather River College, Genesee Woods, Meadow Valley, Hamilton Branch/Seneca, Clio, River Valley View

Sue McCourt said that an assessment will be scheduled for Hamilton Branch and Seneca and will include all of the East Shore of Lake Almanor.

Lori Simpson told Sue McCourt to expect to hear from Twain. They recently had a community meeting as a result of losing their insurance. The County Board of Supervisors will be writing a letter to the Insurance Commissioner, as other counties have done. The issue affects real estate and has become a crisis situation. Richard Stockton said that State Farm hasn’t cancelled any policies. They give people two years to make recommended changes and no one has ignored the recommendations. He said that a landowner must be denied a policy by three insurance companies in order to be covered by the FAIR plan.

- **Tree Mortality Update:** Incidental mortality in white fir was noted.

2. Status of Current Grants –

Senior/Disabled Defensible Space: Mike McCourt reported that High Sierra Fire has completed about ninety residences. There are about fifteen remaining. Feedback has been positive. The Fire Safe Council has received a PG&E grant that allowed the addition of eleven new clients to the list.

Chipping Program: Gary Parque said that there has been high participation and that insurance issues have motivated a lot of people. He noted that about 34% of the grant funds have been spent in the first year of the three year grant.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction Schedule – Matt West said that there was a request for proposals issued for public lands in the CCI project. The bids are due September 3rd. This will be the first time that the Fire Safe Council is doing the contracting on public land. The Butterfly implementation contract has been awarded to Summitt Forestry and the Little Grass Valley contract was awarded to Imperial. Grapple piling continues at Bucks Lake. There were no questions about the HFR schedule. Hannah Hepner pointed out that implementation at Dixie Valley is complete.

3. Status of Grant Budgets – Hannah Hepner said that there are a few new cost centers included on the active grant status sheet, all of the agreements still require execution.

4. Status of Potential Projects/Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner said that she submitted pre-proposals to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for planning on the Greenhorn Ranch HFR project and for implementation of the Forest Service’s Lakes Basin project. The result of the Stevens requests won’t be known until September at the earliest.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

August 30th – Sustainable Forestry Tour of Collins Pine Company sawmill and forests. 10:30am-4:30pm. \$60

August 30th – Chester Town Talk Mixer (with PUC presentation) 5-7pm at the Collins Pine Museum.

August 31st – Wildfire on the Watershed Outdoor Educational Tour 2:30-5:30pm. \$60

October 18/19th – UC Cooperative Extension Prescribed Fire on Private Lands Workshop, Meadow Valley

Adjourn - Next meeting September 12th, 2019