

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 9th, 2021 - 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 (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice Chair , Kathy Kogge Firewise Community (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Secretary/Treasurer Dan Martynn, Retired (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lindsay Wood Plumas Audubon Society(22)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (22)	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)	<input type="checkbox"/> Brad Graevs Feather River RCD (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Stockton State Farm (21)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Tompkins UCCE (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> Tracey Ferguson Plumas County Planning (21)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (21)	

1. Welcome & Introductions – John Reynolds
2. Review Agenda – No changes
3. Approve August Meeting Minutes – m- Sanders, s- Kathy Kogge. Approved.
4. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to: Matt West
 - Dave Kinatader submitted the nomination for all of Matt’s dedication to Community service and relentless pursuit of fuels reduction and community fire protection! Of note is his service on the Volunteer Fire Department, his help in developing the Plumas Underburn Cooperative, and Forest Service contracting efforts including Franks Valley and Lakes Basin.
Ryan Bauer added that Matt acts as a crucial link between PCFSC and Quincy Fire Department.
5. Public Comment

Kevin Danaher commented on Plumas County’s unique natural resources and noted that we may be one of the few counties with water in the coming years. There are a few pieces of real estate on the market with

year-round access to water. There is the potential for outside developers to purchase this property. Mr. Danaher proposed the creation of P.U.R.E (Plumas Real Estate) a non-profit that would bring in outside money to Plumas County in order to purchase unused properties and keep resources local. Contact Kevin Danaher for more information.

Lindsay Wood followed up to Mr. Danaher's proposal by commenting that in the past 10 years, Plumas County has exported 41 million acre feet of water from our watershed. If we don't protect our water we will continue to see unprecedented fire. She emphasized a need to contact Board of Supervisors for water issues.

Karen Kleven asked about management plans for the forested private lands north of town. Lindsay wood offered to provide an update.

Penny Leinwander asked where she can locate defensible space laws/code for Plumas County.

John Reynolds responded that Plumas County has not adopted CAL FIRE's defensible space standards, but some communities have independently.

Chuck Bowman added that most defensible space inspections are done through peer consulting. Mr. Reynolds can share information on treatment standards for Grizzly Ranch, and Mr. Bowman can share them for Whitehawk Ranch.

6. Board Comment

Kathy Kogge shared appreciation for the article that Hannah Hepner submitted to Plumas News.

Don Gasser urged the Council to recommit to 2021 goals. PCFSC's responsibility is to increase community-based involvement. He asked the Council to take a big-picture perspective to protect communities and to require the Board of Supervisors to provide input on defensible space and greenwaste initiatives. He added that PCFSC needs to look for more funding in order maintain capacity without the use of grants.

Joe Smailes added that we can agree on desired outcomes for forest management, but we need to figure out how to get there. There is a need for collaboration across organizations and stakeholders. Mr. Smailes is involved with a meeting with USFS to discuss Firewise Community's maintaining dozer lines around communities.

Mr. Bauer said that we have a changed forest condition and we need to tighten our focus on communities and the protection of watersheds. He officially requested that PCFSC redefine the WUI layer.

Mr. Sanders said that the past strategies of the Quincy Library Group need to be redefined due to new fire behavior. We need a greenwaste program that can generate useable power. Private sectors (SPI, Collin's Pine) could be partners.

Ms. Wood shared a suggestion from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy that a free punch card program be developed to take greenwaste to the Waste Management Transfer Station or local lumber mills.

Mr. Sanders added that the main issue with greenwaste utilization is the quality of greewaste. Only a certain quality of feedstock can be used to generate energy. A second issue with greenwaste utilization is transportation. The material from the Chipping Program requires a method of transportation.

Mr. Kinateder suggested the formation of a committee for greenwaste.

Mr. Reynolds said that PSFSC's responsibility could be forming a committee and coming up with ideas to present to Board of Supervisors.

Trina Cunningham added that the Maidu Summit Consortium (MSC) is interested in greenwaste issues. Tribal resources have been impacted from fire, but it has created an opportunity to collaborate. MSC could help to access funding to help initiatives move forward.

Mr. Bauer said that this issue has existed for years; we need a group to take action.

A committee was formed consisting of Camille Swezy, Penny Leinwander, Sally McGowan, Jason Ackley, Don Gasser, Dave Kinateder, and Dan Martynn.

Mr. Reynolds requested that greenwaste be added to the agenda each month.

New Business

1. PG&E Moratorium – Lindsay Wood said that PG&E has caused devastating fires in our communities. She questioned if it is safe to have PG&E in our communities when we have a cooperative like PSREC. She asked if there is interest in developing small cooperatives that provide electricity and if PCFSC is interested in backing a decision like that.

Mr. Reynolds requested a formal presentation for the board.

Ms. Kogge specifically asked for the presentation to include what energy alternatives there are and what the ramifications would be of removing a company like PG&E.

Mr. Reynolds shared that that PCFSC's focus is on WUI treatments and assistance to landowners.

Ms. Kinateder added that the most prevalent issue is the accumulation of fuels.

Mike McCourt pointed out that small biomass units generate electricity from the hazardous fuels. He suggested contacting John Sheehan for more information.

Camille Swezy said that portable units are best for small on-site timber projects. Biomass facilities like the one at the County Annex can only take wood chips.

Gerd Ebeling suggested contacting All Power Labs.

Old Business

None

Updates

1. Standing Reports and Discussion

- CAL FIRE: Mark Rotlisberger said they have been unable to fill the Defensible Space Inspector positions. There is also a vacancy in the Fire Prevention Program. Most CAL FIRE resources are engaged in Dixie Fire. Ms. Leinwander asked if CAL Fire is allowing local district to do defensible space inspections. Officer Rotlisberger responded that there has been a lot of interest from local fire departments. There shouldn't be an issue with delegating defensible space inspections to local fire departments and CAL FIRE can provide training to support those efforts. Ms. Leinwander asked if CAL FIRE provides funding for local fire districts. Officer Rotlisberger said no.
- Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD): Michael Hall said that most projects on hold. The RCD has received permission to enter burned areas. Blairsden, Plumas Pines and eastern side of the county

will receive treatment soon. The RCD did not receive CAL FIRE funding for the Plumas Underburn Cooperative coordinator. Hiring a full-time PUC coordinator is a priority for the RCD. Cal-trans has funded HFR work on Highway 89.

- Feather River Stewardship Coalition: no update

- Firewise Communities: Ms. Leinwander shared that the evacuation for LACC went well. LACC is working on defensible space. The greenwaste facility near Chester is non-operational and Lake Almanor communities need fuels reduction soon.

Beth Rouse announced that the next Firewise Leads meeting has changed and will be on Tuesday, September 21st @ 6:00pm.

Ryan Tompkins said that evacuation preparation counts towards Firewise reporting and requested that the group to enter these hours on the Survey123 tool.

- Industry – Timber: Ms. Swezy said that J&C Enterprises is transitioning into hazardous fuels treatment work throughout Indian Valley. They also worked in Paradise after the Camp Fire. She said that if you lost property and you are insured, you can use a third party tree removal contractor. J&C Enterprises will leave live trees. PG&E is removing green trees and sprouting oaks. J&C can work with landowners if they would like firewood or need chips broadcasted. J&C thinned at Copper Creek and there are great before and after treatment photos that include fire affected areas. Most of what was thinned had full mortality, but with reduced severity. Most houses and structures were saved within the treatment. Treatment areas that received prescribed fire performed the best.

Sheri Wert asked how to address hazard trees on Forest Service property adjacent to her home. Mr. Bauer responded that if you live within 100 ft of FS Land, USFS will thin. There is also an option to get a permit and hire a contractor to take down hazardous trees. Residents have the option to treat of FS land if there is no product being sold. Plumas National Forest's restoration efforts will start adjacent to private land. Ms. Wert asked if there a timeline for salvage logging. Mr. Bauer said there is no timeline. USFS usually tries to claim salvage logs quickly, but as of right now there is no market for salvage trees.

Mr. Tompkins suggested that Plumas and Lassen National Forests expand the wood-cutting permit so there could be a process for landowners adjacent to FS.

Mr. Kinatader suggested that there be a blanket permission for landowners thinning forests adjacent to FS land within the 100ft of defensible space.

Mr. Tompkins said that the accretion of fire events through the years effects all aspects of our community. Timber, power, etc. These fires have changed the fuel profile. 10 years from now this burned area will be a new fuel profile.

Mr. Gasser suggested a meeting for landowners to discuss property damage.

Mr. Smalles said that private landowners will need to accept that logs may not be eligible for sale.

- Industry – Insurance: Richard Stockton said insurance will continue to be an issue in our county. State Farm has 75 total losses in Plumas County due to the Dixie Fire. The insurance commissioner has placed a moratorium on non-renewals in affected zip codes.

- Industry – Utilities: not present
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Not present. It was requested that the Council contact Ben McNally about participation in the meetings.
- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District : Melissa Klundby said now is the time to renew air pollution permits. Call NSAQMD to receive a permit. Make sure to renew early.
- Plumas Audubon Society: Ms. Wood said the Genesee project is on hold due to the Dixie Fire. Most of the project’s prescribed fire objectives were achieved by the Dixie Fire. The Quincy Watershed Project will have a public meeting on September 21st @ 2pm in the American Valley Community Services District (AVCSD) board room. AVCSD Board would like to move forward with hand thinning treatments only – not mastication or prescribed fire. If you have property adjacent to the Boyle Ravine, please attend.
- Plumas County Fire Chiefs Association: not present
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES): not present
- Plumas County Planning Department: not present
- Plumas Underburn Cooperative: Matt West said it is time to think about underburning. Let him know if you have a project in mind. There is Basic 32 training scheduled for the last two weekends of September. There will be a Butte County TRES training in fall. Registration is open. TRES will take advantage of burn windows in both Plumas and Butte County. There will be a pack test offered in near future. There is a PUC meeting at PCFSC office at noon today.
Mr. Smailes asked if the a burn boss certification course took place in Humboldt. The response was yes, the training took place and more will be scheduled throughout the state.
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy: Kristy Hoffman is working with projects that have been affected by the Dixie Fire and other fires around the state. SNC will receive \$60 million in Wildfire Resilience Funds. The Governor is currently considering a boundary expansion for SNC that will include more of Shasta, Siskiyou and some of Trinity Counties.
- Tree Mortality Update: Mr. Sanders is starting to see an uptick in all species mortality due to insects. He reminded the group that at a previous meeting Danny Cluck warned that bark beetle problems would increase. If you see damaged trees, try to get rid of them ASAP.
- Tribal Representatives: Trina Cunningham left meeting early
- UC Cooperative Extension: Mr. Tompkins said the County is working on an emergency ordinance for tree removal. If you see significant tree damage or tree mortality, there is a tree damage guideline available through CAL FIRE and USFS for landowners. The UCCE Stakeholders Exchange will be held on Sept 16th @ Elks lodge from 5-8pm. The topic is climate change, wildfire, and management strategies. Mr. Tompkins

has been invited to participate in Science Advisory Panel for the California Wildfire Resilience Taskforce on the statewide reforestation workgroup advocating for private landowners. A strategy will be out by November. UCCE is pushing for policy change in terms of funding. Right now, many projects depend on grant assistance programs. UCCE is advocating for block grants for organizations like PCFSC. Financial assistance is needed to incentivize thinning on private lands. UCCE is looking into policies that have greater impact than grant programs.

Mr. Sanders commented that noxious weeds will be a huge issue after fire. Mr. Tompkins said that if you see noxious weeds, let the county agriculture department know. There is assistance available for invasive weeds on private lands.

Bill Jacks asked how have plantations fared through the Dixie Fire. Ms. Swezy responded that she has been through a few plantations that are mostly intact.

- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Mr. Kinatader said that the Forest shutdowns are causing a delay in work. Treatment effectiveness in the Dixie Fire has been variable.

Mr. Bauer said the USFS is re-examining fire restoration work. They have already determined that there will not be a sale of salvage logs as there is currently no market. Working around communities is the focus. There has been no promise of additional funding for fire restoration. Funding for suppression can be used for hazardous tree removal. In the Beckwourth Complex, Frenchman Lake fared well. Facilities will be open next year. Survivability of homes was variable, but the chances are much better with substantial defensible space. Some treatments have performed well; treatments with prescribed fire perform the best.

Mr. Sanders asked if hazard tree removal is finished along private land and roads in the North Complex.

Mr. Bauer responded that progress continues.

Mr. Jacks asked if there a plan for the un-damaged forest left from the Dixie Fire. Mr. Bauer said a plan is in development. The emphasis will be on remnant forest and not salvage logs.

Mr. Tompkins added that the USFS will require partnerships to meet objectives. There is no export allowed for federal timber. Private companies can export, but cannot export logs harvested from USFS land. Fire Safe work and USFS work is tied to economic policies. Organizations like PCFSC can support resource based economic development like these.

2. Status of Current Grants

- Senior Disabled Defensible Space – Mike McCourt updated that 125 properties have been treated thus far. Four houses were lost that were participating in the program: 2 untreated and 2 treated. Several houses with treatment survived. Right now, the crews are working in Butterfly Valley and in the Feather River Canyon. Applications continue to be received and High Sierra Fir will continue work on the additional properties. There are lots of happy clients.

- Chipping Program – Gary Parque said the program is approaching the end of the first year of utilizing the new software. The software has allowed for more access to the program. Crews are still working in the fire affected areas. The Chipping Program is experiencing high demand, but participants are generally happy.

- HFR Project Schedule – Matt West said that due to forest closure and fire danger all projects are shut down. Project Activity Levels are being tracked. Shut downs are very expensive for operators. Franks Valley

was burned by Dixie and a site visit will be necessary. May get an extension from CCI to finish work in Frank's Valley.

Mr. Bauer said that the completed areas of Franks Valley look good and there are no piles remaining to burn. Forest permissions can be changed for working crews.

Mike Callaghan asked about opportunities to extend grant funding.

Ms. Hepner said that CCI grants can be extended through 2025. The scope of work can be amended to address post-fire restoration.

Ms. Hepner updated that the American Valley East hand thin units were not contracted. A mastication operator will complete as much of the work as possible starting next month. The Mohawk Valley project has resource surveys underway. Greenhorn is undergoing archeology surveys. The Quincy Wildfire Protection is ready for crews to begin work.

Don Gasser asked how much the archeology survey is slowing down the Greenhorn project. Ms. Hepner responded that archeology will take 2 months to complete.

Ms. Wood asked if the lack of hand thin crews is slowing down progress. She suggested that PCFSC employ hand crews. Ms. Hepner responded that the RCD currently employs a hand crew.

3. Status of Grant Budgets

Ms. Rouse shared that there is a new cost center on the budget sheet titled 917. This is a \$15,000 grant from the California Fire Foundation for Wildfire Education and Preparedness. It will fund Wildfire Preparedness Day, education efforts and more.

4. Status of Potential Projects & Grant Opportunities – Ms. Hepner shared that CAL FIRE announced Fire Prevention grant recipients. \$5.7 million has been awarded to the Eastern Plumas Wildfire Protection Project. The Community Chipping Program has not been funded. This means that the chipping program is not funded for next year. It is unfortunate because it is the only PCFSC program that is able to consistently contract with a local operator. There has been no direct reason as to why the Chipping Program was not funded, but it is suspected that there is lack of capacity on the state administrative side.

Mr. Gasser asked if it is a result of the lack of representation from the CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc Unit.

Ms. Hepner suggested that the biggest challenge is the nature of competitive grant programs. It is difficult to sustain the Chipping Program when there is no method of consistent funding. PCFSC needs a sustainable source of funding in order to build programs. PCFSC can maintain programs with grant funding, but cannot expand capacity with inconsistent funding. The Fire Safe Council is applying for California Fire Safe Council funding for a new employee who will conduct site visits. However, each new hire requires additional grant funds to sustain that position each year, as opposed to implementing projects.

Officer Rotlisberger said that he will share this information with Chief Packwood.

Mr. Bauer suggested that the Chipping Program could look into utilizing chippers.

Ms. Leinwander asked if the status of potential projects is a priority list? Ms. Hepner responded that prioritization is dependent on the funding source.

5. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

Mr. Smailes – meeting with USFS September 15th @ 2:00pm in Serpilio Hall to maintain Fire lines nearest communities.

Adjourn - Next meeting October 14th, 2021