

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



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Shane Vargas (16)

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, September 8, 2016 - 9:00 am.

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

1. Welcome, Introductions - Mike Callaghan
2. Review Agenda - **no changes**
3. Approve Meeting Minutes – **m- Bowman, s-Callaghan, passed.**
4. Public Comments -

Portola City Council member, Phil Oels, suggested that wood chips created from dead tree removal be marketed for landscape restoration and exported by the County. Mike De Lasaux offered to speak to Mr. Oels following the meeting.

John Kolb, Plumas Corporation Board member, added comments regarding last month’s discussion of air curtain burners. In his experience, the small curtain burner previously used by the County had an issue with emitting embers as far as 20 feet and was in too close of quarters with other property. A new location would be needed to resume use of the burner. There are plans to mobilize it for use in roadwork projects across the county. It is not a big enough unit to use on a large-scale project. Additionally, wet fuels are a problem. While green waste continues to be an issue throughout the county, a county representative would likely be interested in speaking to Skip Dieter about developing his prospective project. Claude Sanders added that air curtain burners are a great solution for the light fuels that result from felling dead trees. Once that material is removed, the remaining woody debris can be turned into usable chips.

Old Business

1. Transition of Mission of Feather River Stewardship Coalition –

It was noted that Rachael Norton was in attendance at the SNC decision meeting for the Bucks Lake project and, otherwise, would be present to speak on behalf of continuation Coalition. Mike Callaghan questioned if the coalition is a Fire Safe Council responsibility and requested a definition of “coalition.” Mike De Lasaux stated that an “official” collaborative based on CLFR legislation was never established due to a lack of funding for the process. Ryan Tompkins added that any group that is “transparent and non-exclusive” is adequate for collaborative work with the Forest Service and clarified that funds will likely be available to continue after the December funding source terminates. Claude Sanders repeated his query from last month: what outreach has been done to solicit collaborators? He suggested that all attendees of the Tree Mortality Task Force meeting be included and that the Fire Safe Council is not the only responsible party. Ryan Tompkins countered that the Fire Safe Council is the responsible party because they were the entity given grant funding to create the outreach. Mike De Lasaux said that outreach was done. Nonetheless, meetings were not well attended. Mike Callaghan noted that the council “reinvented” outreach for the TMTF meeting and added that it may well be a place to resume coalition efforts. Sue McCourt asked if another coordinator would be hired to support the coalition. Mike De Lasaux said that there is no oversight for the role and pointed out that without a definitive decision the coalition will terminate. Mike Callaghan concluded that someone needs to bring a proposal to the table.

New Business

1. Report from the California Society of American Foresters meeting –

Don Gasser attended the centennial celebration of the California Society of American Foresters (SAF). He shared photos from the event’s field trip, which captured the mortality of lower elevation Gray Pines, dead pines in Yosemite, and closed campgrounds around Bass Lake. Don noted that in some places there is 100% mortality. The Southern Sierra is currently in its second wave of tree mortality; the initial dead trees have already been removed. However, no industry exists for removed trees. The first priority in Southern Counties is maintaining infrastructure, but we have the opportunity to address the issue in Plumas County preemptively. Mike De Lasaux was also in attendance at the SAF meeting and added that the mortality exists across all lands, even well managed ones. The mortality happens quickly, over the course of weeks.

2. Results of RFP for Foresters –

We received two responses. Neither proposal met the qualifications for insurance. Danielle Bradfield is an RPF with insurance with whom Jim Wilcox has negotiated terms. She will work with Kyle Felker as a subcontractor. The contract is in progress.

3. Organization & Goals of Plumas County Tree Mortality Task Force –

There were about 60 attendees at the August 25th pre-planning meeting. At the meeting Mike Callaghan asked for commitments from individuals to form an organized Task Force; 20 people

so far have identified themselves. The first meeting of the Task Force is Oct 5th at 1pm at the Quincy library. Objectives will be created for each of five working groups to create an Incident Action Plan: 1) Materials Disposal, Storage, and Utilization, 2) Mapping and Data Collection, 3) Public Outreach and Information, 4) Permits and Regulations, and 5) Resource Allocation and Funding. Don Gordon added that a declaration by the Board of Supervisors needs to be in place to streamline permitting processes. Lassen County is suffering from a lack of interest in Task Force participation. Lassen BOS is considering a resolution to legitimize the task force to show support, but they do not see the need for a State of Emergency declaration. However, momentum is greater in Plumas County. Efforts have primarily been localized lately as fire activity impacts the State. The California task force meeting was cancelled last month. Mike Callaghan stated that although it is not currently an emergency issue locally, the outcome of not taking action could be devastating. He emphasized that the task force is a co-effort of PC FSC and OES. Mike De Lasaux said that information from recent assessment flights is not yet available. There is a video online if anyone is interested in learning more about these flights. He has requested UC's assistance in creating interactive maps which can be used by individuals to collect information on dead trees in real-time. He also noted that other counties have already paved the way and are a resource that we can tap into. He is coordinating with Shane Vargas to bring some of that expertise to the Oct 5th meeting. Ryan Tompkins noted that the issues here differ from Southern Sierra: they have a tactical issue while we still have the opportunity to be strategic. Stand density is the issue and we need to incorporate the idea of forest health into the actions of the council. Claude Sanders echoed this, sharing that in Danny Cluck's presentation he said that it's not just an insect problem; it's a stand density problem. Which Claude says dovetails perfectly with the Council's mission to take a proactive approach. Kyle Felker supported these comments saying he is working on the Cedar fire with a researcher whose data initially suggests a need for thinning. Don Gordon stipulated that healthy stands are being overwhelmed, which is masking the issue of stand density. Mike De Lasaux encouraged ongoing local research, noting that Plumas County has some of the most heavily thinned stands in the state.

4. Selection of PC FSC SRA Project -

Three applications will be submitted, earmarked with the Council's priorities. **m – De Lasaux, s - Gasser**

First priority: County-wide Chipping Program. It has twice been proposed and rejected. It should be revised to include the potential for using an air curtain burner. Mike Callaghan noted that the council would need to hire someone to manage the program. Additionally, communities would need to self-organize in order to create a schedule. Mike McCourt added that based on the pilot chipping program, it would need to be a customizable program for the varying needs of different communities and drawing on local contractors. Don Gordon offered support saying that State equipment and crews could be available. Jerry Sipe stated that allowing contractors to dispose of material outside of the county is in violation of County code. John Kolb shared that EPA grants are also available. Portola has been identified as one of the worst air basins. Funding slated to purchase equipment – chipper, trucks, etc. – that will be mobile and available for a chipping program.

Second priority: Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Program. Mike McCourt served so many landowners this year that his program requires SRA funding to operate next year. SRA funds

will be used to meet the 50:50 match for the California Fire Safe Council grant that was awarded to the program. Mike De Lasaux asked if it would be worthwhile to extend the program to all landowners, while Sue McCourt questioned the program's capacity to handle an increase. Mike McCourt thinks that some people would take advantage of a broader defensible space program but noted that there is only one contractor willing to do the work. He added that a chipping program would support the Senior/Disabled program.

Third priority: C-road Community HFR Project. They are a well organized group that requires funding and could be a great showcase for multiple treatments over time in the same area.

Motion to approve order of priorities – Callaghan, seconded, passed

Updates

1. Status of Current Grants –

Hannah Hepner updated that C-road Narrows burning is to be completed this fall. La Porte Road mastication work will resume next week. The final report for 258 (Lee Summit, Dwyer Tree Farm) is ready for submittal. The East Shore Lake Almanor project will begin once the RPF contract is signed. The Hwy 70 project is still awaiting NEPA approval and will be addressed by the forester after the American Valley project. American Valley work will begin once the final archeological report is submitted. Mastication work can begin after La Porte Road is complete. Hand thin work will likely begin in early October. The Dixie Valley project will be addressed by the newly contracted forester after the East Shore Lake Almanor project. Mike Callaghan noted that the SNC Wolf/Grizzly paperwork will be in place for an October start for the project.

2. Status of Grant Applications in Process -

- a. Bucks Lake – SNC Decision to be made today.
- b. Mohawk Vista – Granted 2017 Stevens Funds.
- c. Senior Disabled – California Fire Safe Council grant awarded.

3. Standing Reports and Discussion

- Senior/Disabled Defensible Space Assistance Program - Mike McCourt said the contracts have ended for this year. 72 homes were treated.
- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES) – Jerry Sipe noted that the BOS did send a letter of support to Governor's office in support of Honeylake power.
- CAL FIRE - Shane Vargas' unit completed 2081 inspections in Plumas County; there were 596 violations. He considers this a surprisingly low number considering inspections haven't been completed for many years. CAL FIRE provided 265 hours of education in conjunction with the inspections addressing several common themes including: single or double dead trees and flammable landscaping adjacent to homes. Mike De Lasaux suggested that this coming May will be time for another tabloid in Feather Publishing. Additionally, volunteer consultations could be resumed.
- USFS Hazardous Fuels Reduction – Jennifer Erickson from Lassen National Forest, Almanor District, said they have no burns planned in Plumas County. The settlement funds from the Storrie Fire will be used on The Rocks project to create a defensible area at the northern line where the Chips and Storrie fires were both caught.

- Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District – no representative present
- Firewise Communities - John Reynolds of Grizzly Ranch shared that they received funds for treatment. Standards were approved by their Board in August. They now have the ability to levy fines and do the work if it is not done by the landowners. The rule defines Covenants, Conditions, Restrictions and Reservations (CC&Rs) that are enforceable. Mike De Lasaux asked if other HOAs know about alternatives for establishing rules. Cary Curtis of Gold Mountain said a rule may not be needed if the language interpreted by an attorney is legitimizing of actions. Their Firewise committee made a recommendation that no development be allowed on lots until the whole area has been treated to the community standards. Their recent Firewise Day had 60 attendees and demonstrated a shift to greater “buy-in” by residents. The HFR treatment program kicked off in 2014. Initially there were 67 critical lots (170 acres), now only 21 of those lots remain (58 acres). If remaining owners don’t comply, treatment will be done and the property liened. Sue McCourt said that the Long valley Firewise assessment reports are nearly done. Genessee Woods will be hosting a Firewise day and will be submitting an application. Chuck Bowman said that the only active community in Graeagle is Whitehawk. They are currently in the process of taking down trees. They went through a CAL FIRE exemption process so the wood can be used for firewood. A 138 acre thinning project is scheduled to occur in October around their burn pile.
- Website Development Committee – Sue McCourt shared a demo of the prototype. Ideally it will go live next month, but we need to make sure that everything from the old site has been archived first. Notable features: meeting information and archived minutes, current events, an activity counter, maps, and outside resource links. The archived projects will continue to be a work in progress.

4. Other Updates & Upcoming Events

- Wild & Scenic Film Festival, Sept 14th
- Regional public meeting for spotted owl strategy, Sept 22nd
- TMTF meeting, Oct 5th

Adjourned - Next meeting October 13, 2016