



P.O. BOX 1225
QUINCY, CA 95971

418 N MILL CREEK RD
QUINCY, CA 95971

(530)927-5294
PLUMASFIRESAFE.ORG

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 7th, 2023 - 9:00 am.
50 Church Street, Quincy

Board of Directors

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair , John Reynolds Firewise (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vice Chair , Sally McGowan Firewise (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Secretary/Treasurer Mike Flanigan, Insurance (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ron Heinbockel Plumas Fire Chiefs (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Joe Smailes Firewise (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Gasser RPF (24)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jonathan Pangburn CAL FIRE (24)	<input type="checkbox"/> Trina Cunningham Maidu Summit Consort. (24)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Bowman Firewise (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Tompkins UCCE (23)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kathy Kogge Firewise (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Hall Feather River RCD (23)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracey Ferguson Plumas County Planning (23)	<input type="checkbox"/> Julie Hunter NSAQMD (24)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ryan Bauer USFS PNF (22)

Mission Statement: “To reduce the loss of natural resources and human values caused by wildfire through Firewise community programs and pre-fire activities.”

5-Year Strategic Plan

Program Strategy: Expand existing programs and establish additional projects:

1. Leverage and expand partnerships
2. Sustainably increase staffing
3. Establish robust monitoring systems & metrics
4. Increase public engagement
5. Develop County-wide community fuels and threat mapping assessment

Funding Strategy: Target sustainable annual budget increase of 20%:

1. Continue to produce competitive grant proposals that are based on funder’s objectives.
2. Pursue approaches for non-competitive funding which reduce administration while increasing long term benefits.
3. Leverage charitable donations to increase public outreach, education, and participation.
4. Continue to pursue potential revenue-generating activities utilizing woody material.

Leadership Strategy: Ensure strong and functional systems are in place to facilitate ongoing organizational capacity:

1. Maintain a Board of Directors with strategically recruited membership.
2. Continue partnership with Plumas Corporation as fiscal agent.

9:00am Board Meeting

Roll Call

Approve Agenda

Motion: Jonathan Pangburn, Second: Chuck Bowman

New Business

1. Request for proposal (RFP) process / Project Prospectus Discussion

Hannah Hepner explained the PCFSC HFR RFP process. When PCFSC develops a project and pursues funding, there are three different avenues:

1. Planning grants
2. Implementation grants
3. Planning & Implementation all in one grant

Once PCFSC is awarded funds, a contract is established with a registered professional forester. The forester is typically responsible for layout, surveys, prescription, and other related planning items. From there, the forester identifies, completes, and submits the environmental compliance documents required for that project. All relevant information determined by the forester, like prescription and resources needed, is put into a project prospectus and bid sheet, which is laid out unit by unit. PCFSC then emails that information out to the PCFSC bidder list and it is published on the PCFSC website. In the past, information was also published on Plumas News. The PCFSC bidder list is robust, and consists of locals and out-of-county organizations. Many organizations on the list were inherited, and more are added upon request. It is not a closed bidder list nor is it vetted. If organizations want to be on the list then they will be included. However, it is up to the contractors to determine if they can meet deliverables once they view the project prospectus and bid request. PCFSC utilizes the same bidding list for all programs.

Almost all PCFSC Hazardous Fuels Reduction projects require a bid tour, where only contractors in attendance can submit a bid. This gives PCFSC the opportunity to answer questions and clearly convey project deliverables. Once bids are received, staff create a bid summary consisting of unit numbers, bid per acre, the state of production rates, and other related factors. PCFSC abides by a “low bid process.” If contractors document that they are capable of meeting deliverables at the lowest bid, then there is no justification for not going with that offer. If anything about their bid seems questionable, the PCFSC Program Director will reach out and ask for clarification. In some cases, bids are considered “non-responsive” and offered to the next viable low bid.

DISCUSSION

Mike Flanigan and Don Gasser inquired about utilizing bonds in our contracting process. Does PCFSC ever withhold a certain percentage of funds from contractors until deliverables are met? Hannah Hepner responded saying no, contractors are usually paid the full amount for work completed.

Jonathan Pangburn remarked on the prospectus that is created after the RFP has written a prescription. If the RFP determines that certain equipment or methods are required to meet deliverables and stay within environmental compliance, is that listed on the prospectus? Ms. Hepner explained that foresters typically take a different approach, and wait to see what resources the operators have. The foresters give prescription, then ask how operators can meet it, as opposed to listing specific pieces of equipment. However, if they knew a project could only be completed with

specific equipment, then that is specified. PCFSC puts out an RFP for foresters, archeology, and operators.

Ryan Tompkins asked, if PCFSC wants best value contracting, why are proposals not directly considering that? How does the proposal to do the work factor in to bid criteria? Ms. Hepner explained that the proposal only comes into the equation when we look at hard numbers: “at this number with this proposal, can we meet deliverables?” The primary objective is still to meet all deliverables. This is the alternative to looking at specific elements of the proposal and weighting those. Mr. Tompkins responded, suggesting that PCFSC may benefit from adopting some best-value matrices that could be borrowed from partners like the Forest Service, who abide by best-value contracting instead of low-bid contracting.

Ryan Tompkins asked if there is a unit closeout provision in PCFSC contracts. Ms. Hepner explained that typically this is not included. Recently, PCFSC had to amend that for a contractor who was not completing units, but overall this is usually not the case. Mr. Tompkins shared two methods for dealing with poor or timely performance: bonds and unit closeout. Both can be utilized at the right time.

Jonathan Pangburn suggested that the board can help implement policies to better equip staff when these performance issues arise with contractors. Because HFR treatments have a singular guideline to reduce flame lengths to less than 4 feet, Mr. Pangburn daylights the hazards of current projects that leave slash on the landscape. Even if flame lengths are below 4 feet, it may not consider post-treatment surface fuel loading, where landscapes have excess material emitting heat and smoldering to an extent that can cause damage to tree cambiums and root systems. Ryan Bauer mentioned that these programs are still designed to meet PCFSC goals: to reduce losses from wildfire through pre-fire activities. Ryan Tompkins also mentioned that when these programs began, there was a market for small diameter material, but in 2007 the market fell.

Mike Flannigan mentioned that adding too many regulations on PCFSC projects may hinder the amount of work that needs to be done in the face of wildfire urgency. Ms. Hepner uplifted this sentiment. Though mastication results are variable for HFR projects, what the landowner gets consistently is a potential for suppression resources on their property – this still abides by the PCFSC mission to reduce losses from wildfire through pre-fire activities.

Jim Willcox reminded the board that these projects are designed and implemented considering what the forester suggests, what the landowner will allow, and what furthers the mission of PCFSC. Ms. Hepner continued, explaining that PCFSC responsibility is to enable an initial investment that puts landowners in a position to maintain and improve their wildfire resiliency.

John Reynolds inquired, if PCFSC starts implementing performance bonds and high value contracting, what effect will that have on the current contractor list? Will PCFSC be slowing down operations by putting more barriers in the contractor’s way? “We should look at the value of what forcing all of our contractors to buy a bond would do to our ability to actually execute projects in a timely manner.” Mr. Pangburn responded, saying it takes one failed project to bankrupt an organization, so it might be a valuable sacrifice to make. There was a response that, PCFSC and Plumas Corp have insurance to

protect against such an eventuality. Mr. Tompkins added on, sharing that he doesn't think adding a performance bond will shrink the PCFSC contractor pool, but it will provide protection from collateral damage, like damage to a culvert or road. Ryan Tompkins said he also supports a unit closeout provision, but that won't cover PCFSC for that collateral damage. It is not just the cost of the bond that is prohibitive, but availability of bonds depending on an entity's credit score. Ms. Hepner responded, saying that contractors are already responsible to repair that collateral damage under current PCFSC contracts. PCFSC wants to incentivize new approaches to completing projects, like hiring the FRRCD hand crew. A performance bond would deter PCFSC from novel solutions like this. Ms. Hepner continued, asking if PCFSC can put a bond on some contracts, but not all. Mr. Tompkins responded saying yes, one can just put bonds on higher priced contracts. Chuck Bowman added on, saying that if a contractor can afford to do a large-scale project, then they can afford to adhere to a bond. Jim Willcox is cautious with exclusionary criteria, as he doesn't see a serious need for it. Mr. Willcox believes that the more Plumas Corp / PCFSC can build operators and nurture their growth, the more sustainable the available operator pool will be. In these projects, sometimes it's not the performance, but whether or not the contractor pays their bills. A performance bond won't cover that. One has to implement a payment bond if they're going to implement a performance bond. Bonding can be very restrictive, so one should have a "floor" when it's applied so it doesn't interfere with programs like Senior/Disabled defensible space.

Ryan Tompkins ultimately recommends that PCFSC implements more best value contracting as opposed to low-bid contracting. Ryan Bauer questioned if the PCFSC board has the authority to implement that, because all PCFSC contracts are technically Plumas Corp contracts.

Rachel Wehrman outlined the process for the current HFR project on Plumas Disadvantaged Communities. Because this project needs to be complete by February, PCFSC put out three bid items for each type of treatment – there will be one contractor for each bid item. Each bid item also has multiple "blocks" to enable PCFSC to hire multiple contractors for each bid item.

Jonathan Pangburn requested that abiding by the forest practice rules should be a standard for every contract drafted by Plumas Corp. Jim Willcox agreed. Jonathan continued, insisting that the PCFSC board should be notified when there are issues with projects.

Ryan Tompkins asked for an estimate on how many PCFSC projects utilize mastication. Hannah Hepner responded, saying that on private lands, about 70% is mastication and 30% is other. Matt West included that on public lands 70-80% of projects do not utilize mastication, and only 20-30% do.

2. Board member responsibilities / staff reporting

John Reynolds/Staff

John Reynolds explained that staff reporting will be moved to the start of each PCFSC board and member meeting. This will enable staff to give more in-depth updates, share conflicts, successes, and important details.

Jonathan Pangburn recommends that if information is pertinent to PCFSC, it could be sent out as an email to the board. He continued, saying that PCFSC could utilize closed meetings more often if there is

a genuine need to discuss certain topics. Mr. Pangburn is not requesting to know “every single nitty-gritty detail or bill,” but rather to know how on task PCFSC is with current projects. Mr. Pangburn is requesting to hear more about project conflicts.

Hannah Hepner suggests that PCFSC staff can begin sharing final reports at the end of each project/grant. Staff already compile information on conflicts for those reports, so it can be a new standard to share those with the board.

Ryan Tompkins asked about requirements for the public facing portion of meetings. Ms. Hepner and Mr. Reynolds explained that there are none. Mr. Tompkins daylights that most time during PCFSC public meetings is dedicated to partner reports, which he finds valuable, but it might be more productive to have more engaging conversations with the PCFSC board, and only hearing partner reports quarterly. Jonathan Pangburn recommends that instead of going through each partner and calling them out, PCFSC can ask the present partners if they have anything to share. Kathy Kogge prefers the current process because it gives community members an opportunity to ask each partner questions.

Jonathan Pangburn poses a “board challenge” to board members to make financial contributions to PCFSC. Mr. Pangburn insists that this gives each board member skin in the game. Hannah Hepner explained that even though donations are small compared to what PCFSC receives for grants, that money is still relevant. Utilizing donation funds is like the small acreage of prescribed fire around homes – it’s not a significant number but it is critical. With grants, funds have to be used for very specific items, which gives PCFSC no freedom for using those funds elsewhere. Donation funds, can be used for a variety of needs including outreach, education, and events.

Adjourned

Motion: Jonathan Pangburn, Second: Ryan Tompkins