

Plumas County Tree Mortality Task Force Meeting Notes

February 9th, 1:00-2:30pm

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

The objective of the Plumas County Tree Mortality Task Force is development of an action plan addressing local tree mortality.

1. Meeting Introduction – Mike Callaghan, Plumas Fire Safe Council

2. Working Group Updates

Resource Allocation - John Sheehan – Nothing new to report. The Plumas County Fire Safe Council chipping program will be a resource, once established. Has seen no effect yet from [AB 2480](#).

Lynn Campbell – There are no new developments from the State TMTF. Regionally, Butte County is seeking OES money. Loyalton Biomass is in the process of doing due diligence for acquisition. The [Sierra Nevada Conservancy Summit](#) in Sacramento on Wednesday, March 1st, may look at issues around AB 2480. There will be a SNC grant writing workshop in Quincy in early summer. A [time lapse on the SNC website](#) shows how mortality is growing.

Mapping and Data Collection – Mike Callaghan – The tree mortality app is web-based and limited by spotty access to cell service. The Task Force doesn't have resources to make a software based app. Kyle Felker – there is an app called [Collector](#) that can be used without connectivity. It is an ESRI product used primarily for damage assessment.

Ryan Tompkins – The State Tree Mortality Task Force has updated the state's high hazard zones. Tier 1 areas are associated with infrastructure and Tier 2 areas are watershed based. Some areas of Plumas County watersheds have been identified. Biomass support, via SB 859, is based on cogen facilities sourcing stock from Tier 1 & 2 areas. The Insect and Disease Categorical Exclusion has been used for forest health projects. The Forest Service efforts based on risk – not totally on mortality rates. Claude Sanders – Does the bill support removal to the facility? Mr. Tompkins – No, sawlog products are being used to subsidize removal of materials.

Materials Disposal, Storage, and Utilization - Don Gasser – The group has worked with the Fire Safe Council and Firewise communities to identify disposal sites. The current sites available would be totally overwhelmed if Plumas County experiences the rates of mortality found in other counties. Guidelines for temporary holding sites have been drafted. Biomass utilization will be a key component of utilization. A recent study states that biomass must be subsidized because there are too many

hurdles to operation. We will not be able to act quickly enough should we have a large mortality event.

Danny Cluck – If we have a significant tree mortality event, there will be a lot of merchantable saw logs. Plumas County has some capacity for that. Mr. Gasser – The mills are nearly at capacity and it will be low value lumber that won't pay to get itself to the mill. Steve DeBonis – In a mortality event, SPI will take logs off of their own land first.

Permits and Regulations – Chuck Bowman – The established rules aren't going to change. The CAL FIRE exemptions that have been added are on the RPF/LTO list issued in November.

Public Outreach and Information – Sue McCourt – Key contact and social media outlet lists have been created. Contact information for faith groups is needed. A distribution plan is the next step. The group will refer to the online list of Plumas County events for venues we can tap into for distributing information. The group has identified the handouts we will be using. Tree mortality information will be included in the Fire Safe Council's "Living with Fire" tabloid.

3. Public Outreach Website Review – Sue McCourt

The Plumas County TMTF website is housed on the county site under the Office of Emergency Services – where evacuation maps and other resources can be [found](#).

The front page provides contacts and links to various resources - content approved.

The bark beetle information page contains pictures, informational documents, and a link to the CAL FIRE bark beetle campaign. Danny Cluck – The photos are specific to Ponderosa and Jeffery Pine. The page lacks information for signs of attack in other species. It is fine as is, as long as it's made clear that other information should be used for a more comprehensive understanding.

The State and local task force information page contains notes about actions taken.

John Sheehan – The IAP should be included on FSC and TMTF webpage.

4. 2016 Tree Mortality: Aerial Detection Survey Results for Northeastern California – Danny Cluck

At the tree mortality informational meeting in August, mortality was reported, but it was before the results of the 2016 flights were known. The 2016 survey report includes a graph that tracks mortality and the Palmer Hydrologic Drought Index (PHDI) since 2000. Mortality follows dips in the PHDI. By the end of 2017, the PHDI should be positive. As a result, tree mortality will decrease. However, beetle killed trees will continue to present themselves throughout the summer due to the lag time between beetle attack and mortality. Additional mortality is guaranteed.

Farther north there is more white fir, and higher levels of mortality. Jeffery Pine beetle outbreaks have been prevalent in the past, but have not been notable during this drought.

A "tree" is counted during the aerial flights if it can be seen from an airplane. Counts are an estimate.

Sue McCourt – What messages should we be sharing with the public this year? Mr. Cluck – We are in a better position now, but there will still be mortality to deal with. Now is the time to address risk factors before the next drought.

John Reynolds – What is the target number of trees per acre? Mr. Cluck – It depends on where you live. A professional can help make that decision. John Sheehan – The Quincy Library Group had a definition for stand density that referenced historical conditions. Ryan Tompkins – There is a myth around fuel reduction that removing small trees is sufficient for fire resilience. Forest health and managed density should be the focus. Recent models suggest low numbers of trees per acre.

Sue McCourt – What need for action is there now? Mr. Cluck - If a dead or dying tree is not a hazard, there is no rush. The beetles are often gone by the time the tree is identified as dead. Now is the time to identify beetles if you want to remove them from a property. Claude Sanders – In that case, why is it necessary to go to great lengths to treat slash? Mr. Cluck – It's not. If you have the ability to remove beetles, and if you're very proactive, it may spare neighboring trees - but beetles are very mobile.

Lynn Campbell – Does it help to water trees? Danny – There are options for increasing the survivability of trees. Insecticides exist. If you have the ability to water trees, it can help. Steve Wathen – Trees use water at different times of year. If you water when it is dormant, you can create other risks for the tree.

Sue McCourt – Public messaging should center around: tree density matters, periodic inspections are needed, call a professional if you have concerns.

5. Initial Public Outreach Timeline – Mike Callaghan

Steve Wathen from Plumas News present; there is a plan to publically announce activities of the Plumas County TMTF in the paper.

Mr. Cluck – The press should introduce task force, present the current situation in Plumas County and direct readers to additional information.

Shane Vargas – W we can provide press releases to the newspaper if we have additional content we would like to focus on.

Meeting adjourned – next meeting April 13th, 2017

**This meeting is jointly sponsored by:
Plumas County Office of Emergency Services &**



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