BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEETING MINUTES

Sacramento, CA

December 6, 2023

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEMBERS**

**Present:**

* Chairman J. Keith Gilless
* Mike Jani
* J. Lopez
* Chris Chase
* Elizabeth Forsburg-Pardi
* Rich Wade

**Absent:**

* Dawn Blake
* Katie Delbar

**BOARD STAFF PRESENT:**

* Dan Stapleton, Asst. Executive Officer, Foresters Registration
* Jeff Slaton, Senior Board Counsel
* Robert Roth, Board Counsel
* Jane Van Susteren, Senior Environmental Scientist
* Anna Castro, Executive Assistant
* Andrew Lawhorn, Forestry Assistant II
* Alexandra La Plante, Administrative Unit Manager
* Marcie Yates, Staff Service Manager, Land Use Planning

**DEPARTMENTAL STAFF PRESENT:**

* Joe Tyler, Director/Chief, CAL FIRE
* Eric Huff, Assistant Deputy Director, Forest Practice Program, CAL FIRE

**Announcement of Action(s) Taken in Executive Session:**

Jeff Slaton, Senior Counsel for the Board reported that during executive closed session the Board discussed the following four items on the agenda, and no reportable actions were taken.

**Consent Calendar Items:**

1. Review of Rulemaking Matrix
2. Approval of November 2023 minutes.
3. RPF-CRM Vital Statistics, Approval of Revocations for Non-Payment of Licensing Renewal Fees.
4. Joint Institute for Wood Products Innovation (Institute)
   * Approval of Final Institute Report: California Forest Biomass Pile Data Collection; Clere, Inc and Spatial Informatics Group.

**12-06-01 Chairman moves to accept all items on the Consent Calendar as noticed. Member Forsburg Pardi seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Report of the Chairman, J. Keith Gilless**

Chairman Gilless stated that his term expires in January 2024, as Chairman to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. He will not be seeking reappointment but will stay until a new Chairman has been appointed by the Governor.

**Report of the Director, Joe Tyler, Director, CAL FIRE**

Forest Practice Program

Forest Practice Enforcement and Timber Operator Licensing (LTO)

* There is a waiting list of approximately 820 people for the Licensed Timber Operator training class offered by Shasta College and the LTO Program. The Program completed a class of 43 students recently, and three more classes are scheduled through Shasta College before the end of the year. The Program in cooperation with CAL FIRE Mendocino and Humboldt Unit Forest Practice staff intends to provide more class opportunities in the spring after the LTO license renewal season is complete. There are approximately 100 more active licenses currently compared to last year.

Resource Protection and Improvement

Urban and Community Forestry

* Meetings are being scheduled to encourage collaboration between grant awardees of the Inflation Reduction Act. The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service and national non-profit partners have directly awarded more than $100 million in grant dollars for California projects. Many agreements are being revised to adjust for budget reductions and changes to scope of work.

Forest Entomology and Pathology Program

* CAL FIRE will be hosting the National Forest Health Monitoring Work Conference to be held March 20-21, 2024, on campus at the University of California, Davis. This will be the first in person meeting for the program since pre-pandemic.

Demonstration State Forests

Jackson

* Mendocino Unit Chief Luke Kendall has retired and is replaced by former Deputy Chief Brandon Gunn.

Boggs

* The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection’s Effectiveness Monitoring Committee held a field tour of Boggs on November 16, 2023. Stops included the post-fire bird occupancy study and an insect and disease discussion.

LaTour

* CAL FIRE and the Department of General Services harvested the State Capital Christmas Tree on October 30, 2023, and transported it to the Capitol on October 31, 2023.
* This year’s tree lighting will be virtual.
* Prescribed fire was successfully reintroduced to 120 acres that had previously been thinned and masticated to complete treatment for the Adaptive Management Experiment (AMEX).

Soquel

* Recreational use has remained high since the forest reopened on October 10, 2023. Several complaints were received about e-bikes and conflicts between e-bike riders and other bicyclists.
* Further work and repairs were completed by contractor Holmes Logging under the Storm Damage Repair Contract.

Prescribed Fire and Environmental Protection

Prescribed Fire Program

* Prescribed fire projects continue to be accomplished taking advantage of the good weather and vegetation conditions. Currently the Interagency Treatment Tracker has 96,463 acres completed for prescribed fire from all the cooperating agencies. CAL FIRE is reporting 33,351 acres.

Tribal Affairs/Cultural Resources

Tribal Affairs

* CAL FIRE will be adding a Tribal Relations Executive Deputy Director to the Executive Team. There are 37 applicants originally went through the rating and screening process. We are down to 9 applicants and will be setting up interviews soon for the first four applicants per CAL HR Rules.

Climate and Energy Program

Wood Products & Bioenergy

* Program staff completed initial evaluations of the third quarter 2023 Business and Workforce Development grant applications and presented top applications for feedback from an interagency review committee.

Forest Health and Tribal Wildfire Resilience

* The Forest Health FY 2023-2024 grant solicitation opened on November 13, 2023. Applications are due by 3:00 PM on January 15, 2024.
* There are three Regional Forest Health Pilot Grants in development. The Forest Health program has initiated a grant agreement with Humboldt County for a $10 million regional pilot project supporting the Norther Coast Resource Partnership. The Great Basin Institute is continuing work on a scope of work and budget towards a $10 million grant for the Healthy El Dorado Partnership’s work in the Crystal Basin. Finally, the Southern California pilot will be a cooperative with $5 million form the Forest Health and $5 million from Wildfire Prevention. The Programs are working together and with regional partners on the guidelines for this pilot.

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force

* The Task Force’s November monthly update is available on the Task force website.
* Treatment Dashboard Virtual Public Workshop: On Tuesday, November 14, 2023, the Task Force hosted a Virtual Public Workshop on the CA Wildfire & Landscape Resilience Interagency Treatment Dashboard. The goal of the workshop was to gather input from those using the Treatment Tracking System and Dashboard to improve how data is accessed and displayed and to ensure we are providing transparency and effective planning information on statewide wildfire resilience treatments. The Workshop was recorded, and the Task Force is collecting feedback on the Dashboard via a survey.
* 2023 Task Force Meeting Scheduled:
  + December 15, 2023 - Sacramento (9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.). The agenda will focus on Fire-Adapted Communities.

Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP)

Forest Health Research Grants

* The Forest Health Research Program selected 15 proposals to award for research projects addressing priority topics in forest health and wildfire management. FRAP anticipates releasing the next Forest Health Grant solicitation in early December 2023.

Fire Protection Program

Fire Protection Operations

* This year we sent 67 members to the County of Maui to assist in their disaster.
* The Fire Intelligence Program Staff returned from the speaking invitation at the FIRE-RES conference in Portugal with very positive feedback and as a result, we also were afforded the opportunity to meet with the Deputy Director of Forestry Policy Elsa Enriquez Alcalde and Forest Fires Area Chief Rafael Gomez del Alamo from Spain, where there were discussions on high-level CAL FIRE programs and how we operate.

Cooperative Fire Protection

State/Federal/International Programs

* Through the CAL FIRE International Visitor Request portal recently established on the CAL FIRE public web page, the German Fire Services Association (DFV) has requested CAL FIRE to meet and discuss future collaborations. That meeting occurred November 21, 2023. DFV also extended an invitation to CAL FIRE to attend upcoming Wildland Fire Symposium, hosted in Germany, in June 2024.

Camps and Crews Program

* The Hand Crew Program has an interagency agreement with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) but due to declining numbers we had to increase our cooperation with other state agencies including California Military Department.
* The Hand Crew Program will be hosting the annual Hand Crew Conference in Riverside, CA the week of January 29, 2024. The workshop will be attended by CAL FIRE Camp and Fire Center leads and representatives from cooperating agencies including the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), California Conservation Corps (CCC), and California Military Department (CMD). This workshop allows all programs leads to come together at a single location to share concepts, identify future program goals, and collaborate to solve v

Safety/EMS Program

Statewide Training Program

* The expanding workforce in CAL FIRE in all levels, Administration, Fire Prevention, Fire Marshal, Fire Suppression, Natural Resource, and Protection Resource Management. CAL FIRE has increased the training opportunities and training facilities. The latest in opening is at Shasta College. The newest one is formally known as University of Phoenix building off Garden Highway in Downtown Sacramento.

Academy Training Program

* The 2023 Training Center training cycle concludes on Friday, December 22, 2023, with the completion of a 4-week Firefighter Academy and Company Officer Academy.
* The 2024 Training Center training cycle begins Monday, January 8, 2024, with Law Enforcement Regular Basic Course, Emergency Command Center Academy, Firefighter Academy, and two Company Officer Academies.

Office of the State Fire Marshal

Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee

* The Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee met on November 28, 2023, where the Committee received a presentation from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) on Evacuation and Sheltering Considerations. Assessment Planning and Execution (ESCAPE) document that takes the lessons from Camp 4 and packages them for small and intermediate size communities, specifically to help them develop their evaluation plans.

Wildfire Preparedness

Defensible Space

* FY 22/23, 253,025 properties were visited and completed 313,341 inspections, which included re-inspections.
* FY 23/24 has seen 119,012 inspections completed, 48% of the goal (250,000 goal).
* The online burn permit program has issued over 72,600 burn permits.

Home Hardening

* California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP) Staff continued to review assessments and scope of work documents for the Dulzura, San Diego County Project, Whitmore, Shasta County project, and Kelseyville Riviera of a scope of work document for their approval.
* The Weber Creek/Placerville project in El Dorado County and the Ponderosa Hills project in Tuolumne County personnel continue to work on phase one Environmental and Historic Preservation requirements.
* The West Mount Shasta defensible space only project in Siskiyou County personnel have been conducting defensible space assessments.

Wildfire Planning and Statistics

Wildland Fuels Reduction Reporting:

* CalMapper Mobile:
  + Pushing rollout date to after January 1, 2024, due to feedback received during testing.

Community Wildfire Mitigation Assistance

Firewise

* Currently 743 communities are in good standing.

Wildfire Prevention Grants Program

* On November 1, 2023, CAL FIRE announced the availability of a $117 million in funding for local projects to address the risk of wildfire and reduce wildfire potential to communities, through the department’s Wildfire Prevention Grants Program.
* The FY 2023-24 Wildfire Prevention Grants Solicitation is open from November 1, 2023, through January 10, 2024, at 3:00 PST.
* The Fire Marshal’s Office staff continues to provide webinars and office hours listed in Director’s Report.

Communications

Program and Project Messaging:

* Two new video series are being developed that focus on CAL FIRE staff with the purpose of introducing our audiences to individual staff members across the state. One series, Your Why, is about staff members reasons for choosing a career with CAL FIRE. The other, CAL FIRE Callings, is about staff who are doing extraordinary things outside of work.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program (DEI)

* CAL FIRE completed its (enhanced) Quality Assurance Program (QAP) with the primary goal of this report to ensure a more diverse representation of CAL FIRE Exam Panel members, aligning with the demographic data of California State Service. Diverse panels play a crucial role in promoting equal employment opportunities for potential examination candidates and reducing the possibility of unconscious biases or discrimination during that pre-employment decision-making process.

**Board Comment:**

Member Chase thanked Director Tyler for his report and commented on THP return rate from last month to this month’s numbers. This is a critical issue for landowners, and it is critical to help enable the State to reach its annual acre target.

* Director appreciates comments and will continue to work on those issues.

Member Chase asked if there are any DPA updates.

* Director stated that the units have completed their review, and the region chiefs are reviewing it with the cooperative fire protection program. They will be making a recommendation but before it ever makes it to that level both the State and the Federal partners would have to signed off on that agreement. You should see a few hundred thousand acres in this go around without needing to add additional personnel, infrastructure, or resources.

Member Lopez shared he is pleased with the Interagency Treatment Dashboard activity by category and activity acres by ownership. He shared that it shows all the great working that is being done and that as this becomes more available to constituents it will assure them of the great work that is being done.

Chairman Gilless stated that the workshop on the Dashboard is archived on the Taskforce Website for viewing. Chairman asked if some of chaparral management plans migrate over time or continue to operate under both authorities.

* Director Tyler stated that at this time he cannot answer that appropriately.

Chairman Gilless thanked Director Tyler for his collaboration with his international partnerships and believes that we can learn a lot from those partners. Additionally, Chairman stated that it would be beneficial for FRAP to consider Home Hardening Programs. There has been a lot of interest to the Board in what those programs of assistance will look like and believes that this could be an interesting thing to observe of what is requested and what is being authorized. It would be beneficial for homeowners to see where we do the prioritization so they can better target grant applications in the future.

**Public Comment:**

* Kim Rodriguez thanked Director and Kevin Conway for the position as facilitator for the Jackson Advisory Group. Kim resigned following the March meeting and shared her reasons for resigning were because of lack of collaboration with the process of Jackson between CAL FIRE, Board of Forestry, the State Resources Agency, and the Governor’s Office.
* Andy Wellspring and Michael Hunter shared their views that they are against logging redwoods stating that it is not beneficial for the environment. Also, concerned with the way business is being conducted at JAG.
* Matthew Simmons, Attorney for the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) stated he has concerns with direction CAL FIRE is heading.
* Richard Gienger, Forest Forever and Forest Committee of Northern California, shared that there is a lack of transparency of what is happening in Jackson.
* Edwina Lincoln, Yuki Tribal People, shared that AB52 was never addressed on the Jackson plan being proposed and feels that there is a lack of respect for the Native people and the land.
* Morning Star Galli, California Tribal Community Liaison for the International Indian Treaty Counsel, shared that the indigenous people’s rights are being violated and shared a few of those to the Board.
* Kimberly Berg commented on the Director’s report and the logging. Need to put a break on logging in the WLPZ. The language proposed reads heavy equipment shall not be used except if it’s for fuel fire reduction conducted in the WLPZ. She feels proposed language change in rules should not be approved to increase logging in the WLPZ.
* Jason Franklin expressed the difference between indigenous culture practice and spirituality in western economics. He stated that it would be great to have a point of contact to discuss these types of situations and it would be greatly appreciated. He stated he would like to see better communication between tribal organization, entities, and people in general with the government who has charge over their sacred places.
* Larry Hanson shared his view that it is important when creating policies on Jackson to be inclusive of the tribal communities.

Director appreciates all the comments that were made today and I will be meeting with our program staff next week specific to this topic. Director stated he is looking forward to moving in a positive direction in the future.

**Report of the Standing Committees**

**Forest Practice Committee, Rich Wade, Chair**

The Forest Practice Committee met yesterday with the following three items on the agenda.

* Approved Watercourse Crossing, Significant Existing and Potential Erosion Sites and Emergency Notice Watercourse crossing Requirements.
* Continued discussion of possible addition to the Watercourse protection rules of a standard provision allowing for heaving equipment operations and watercourses for the purpose of modifying fuels including harvesting, increase fire resilience and some revisions to the proposed language were discussed and will continue next month.
* The committee discussed the committee priorities has largely been concluded with possible fine tuning in January.
* The committee would like to bring to the board’s attention one of the issues raised for the Board’s call for regulatory review this last fall was the continuing concern on the part of the California Native Plant Society regarding the protection of Botanical resources in harvest operations. This is a topic that the committee has spent considerable time on over the last few years and unfortunately with little resolution. Board staff reached out to CNPS representatives to suggest that the Board endorse future studies through the Effective Monitoring Committee of data available through the California Natural Diversity Data Base. This would help determine what our effective best management practices with respect to sensitive species. The committee would like to put forward to the Board the idea the Board would encourage the EMC to prioritize this research through allocating funding for that type of research.

**Management Committee, Chris Chase, Chair**

The Management Committee met yesterday and discussed three matters on the agenda.

* Proposed adjustments to the CFIP Cap Rates and the Mini Management Plan Template.

**12-06-02 Member Chase moves to approve the CAL FIRE California Forest Improvement Program Cap Rates for 2024. Member Forsburg Pardi seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

* The second item on the agenda was a discussion of the Joint Statement on Hardwoods.
* The final item on the agenda was discussion of 2024 Rulemaking Priorities.

Public Comment:

* Richard Gienger shared that there were technical difficulties at the committee meeting and hopes the recording of meeting are posted soon.

**Resource Protection Committee, J. Lopez, Chair**

The Resource Protection Committee had the following three items on the agenda.

* Land Use Planning Program staff continues the great work of engaging with local communities and local jurisdictions.
* Subdivision Review Program is reviewing 55 fire safety surveys in Humboldt County and Del Norte County.
* Fire Risk Reduction Communities List 2024 Applications are open and will close on April 1, 2024. The announcement will be made on July 1, 2024, by the Board.
* Discussed the 2024 Rulemaking Priorities

**Report of the Board’s Advisory Committee**

Effectiveness Monitoring Committee, Liz Forsburg-Pardi, Co-Chair

The Effectiveness Monitoring Committee had a meeting and a field tour at the Boggs Mountain Demonstration State Forest on November 16.

* The next EMC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 18th at 9:30 am in Ukiah. Registration is available online.
* Recent EMC funded research project the Effectiveness of Class 2 Watercourse and Lake Protection Zone Forest Practice Rules and Aquatic Habitat Conservation Plan Repairing Prescriptions at Maintaining or Restoring Canopy Closure Stream Water Temperature and Primary Productivity is ending. A second peer review journal article resulting from this research was recently published in Forest Ecology and Management. This peer review journal article will be available for board members today and on our website.

Range Management Advisory Committee, Kristina Wolf, Board Staff

* The Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) had its last meeting of the year on November 27th, at this meeting, the RMAC planned to complete several deliverables over the next few months and will come to the board for its evaluation.
* The RMAC is continuing its annual education workshop this year. Last year’s program on grazing for fuels management was highly successful reaching almost 700 people virtually and in person on field tours. Last year's education series videos are available on the RMAC website.
* RMAC developed a one-page informational document on prescribed grazing for fuels reduction hoping it will be included in future publications of fuel reduction guidance by CAL FIRE to provide information on this treatment activity to the public.
* Board staff and representative of the RMAC will be attending the upcoming Society for Range Management Annual National Conference. There will be a symposium on the topic of prescribed programs in California for Wildland Fuels Management at the end of January. Conference registration is now opened.

**PRESENTATIONS**

**Vision for Future Management in Jackson Demonstration State Forest**, Save Jackson Coalition

Presenters:

Edwina Lincoln, Larry Aguilar, Andy Wellspring, Karen Pickett, Matthew Simmons, Michael Hunter

**Public Comments:**

* Phyliss Aguilar, member of the Nay Nation, (AKA: Navajo Nation) commented that it would be a good idea to include cultural training when working with the tribes. She feels learning from the indigenous people it could help solve some of the problems.
* Craig Peterson thanked the Board for allowing the public to give their input today. He shared that most of the people have concerns over the commercial harvesting of timber in the Jackson Demonstration State Forest. He shared that he would like to see an end to commercial timber harvesting in the Jackson Demonstration State Forest. He stated he would like the Board to work on a legislative change to where the mandate is for preservation of the forest, recreation, and the beneficial ways of caring for the forest.
* Gary Hughes, American Program Coordinator, Biofuel Watch, member of the coalition, and strongly agrees with the demands of the coalition. He stated his views on Jackson Demonstration State Forest is very serious; CAL FIRE has failed to protect public interest and there is very serious dynamics of conflict of interest here with the Board of Forestry when it comes to this topic.
* Richard Gienger, Forest Forever and North California Sierra Club Committee stated that it’s important to work together to make steps in changing Jackson.
* Theresa Morales, Coalition to Save Jackson Forest Member, shared her views on saving Jackson Demonstration State Forest.
* Yulani Moore Westley shared her views on Jackson State Demonstration State Forest.
* Thomas Yates, Sacramento resident shared his view that logging has an impact on global climate change and is in support of the coalition for Saving Jackson Demonstration State Forest.
* Caryn Mackey, resident of San Francisco, the State of California is very committed to addressing climate change which as we know is caused by greenhouse gas emissions from industry, burning fossil fuel and logging. She shared her views against logging commercially in our State Forests.
* Wade Lashine, San Franscico, Representative of the northern California Unitary Universalist Camps and conferences to the Save Jackson Coalition. He shared that written comments have been submitted to the public comments email and that his organization supports the coalition presentation today.

**Board Comments:**

* Chairman Gilless thanked presenters. He stated that what the Board heard here today is very valuable. He stated that he believes the Board will be a good partner with CAL FIRE and other agencies as they try to make good on our state’s commitment to finding what co-management is. The Board is hearing your messages and will try to get better at that that is consist with the law that we get more engaged with this process.
* Member Chase thanked the coalition for their time, energy, and money that it takes to come to a meeting to share your perspective and passion for this issue. We understand, we also come from across the state once a month to Sacramento for a couple of days to discuss these issue that we all care deeply about. He stated as a member of the Management Committee he looks forward to working with you and the department as we work through these issues.

**CONCLUSION**

**Public Forum**

**Public Comments:**

* Dean Cornwall stated he lives near Jackson Demonstration State Forest and wanted to say that this forest provides us with the air we breathe, the trails that we roam and the balance that we need. He strongly disagrees with logging Redwoods and other species for profit in this forest. He believes that this an opportunity for an indigenous, co-managed forest preserve. He supports the coalition presentation.
* Richard Gienger shared his view on what co-management should be and what the new mandate should look like.
* Larry Hanson shared that the presentation was amazing to see and wanted to reiterate his feeling not to log the forest but protect it.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:





Edith Hannigan J. Keith Gilless

Executive Officer Chairman