BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEETING MINUTES

Sacramento, CA

January 24, 2024

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEMBERS**

**Present:**

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

**Absent:**

**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
* Macie Yates, Staff Services Manager I, Land Use Planning
* Katie Harrell, Joint Institute for Wood Products Innovation

**DEPARTMENTAL STAFF PRESENT:**

* Matthew Reischman, Deputy Director Resource Management, 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 items on the agenda, and no reportable actions were taken.

**Consent Calendar Items:**

1. Review of Rulemaking Matrix
2. Approval of December 2023 minutes.
3. Effectiveness Monitoring Committee
   * Approval of the funding recommendations for EMC project proposal EMC-2023-002: Assessing Fire Hazard, Risk, and Post Fire Recovery for Watercourse and Lake Protection Zones and riparian areas of California.

**01-24-01 Chairman Gilless moves to accept all items on the Consent Calendar as noticed. Member Forsburg Pardi seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Election of the Vice Chair**

**01-24-02 Chairman Gilless moves to approve Elizabeth Forsburg-Pardi as the Vice Chair for the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Member Blake seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Gilless: Aye**

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

Chairman Gilless shared how he has enjoyed the time he has served on the Board as a Board member and as Chair.

**Executive Officer Report, Edith Hannigan**

* Staffing Update:
  + The Land Use Planning AGPA and the Regulations Program Manager are currently open.
* Annual Report:
  + Working on reviewing draft to send Annual Report to the Board members for consideration in March.
* Board 2024 Travel
  + The Department of Finance issued a budget letter earlier this month directing agencies to cease non-essential travel until further notice. The Board will not be traveling this May or July. Travel in September will be pending the budget.
* Executive Officer extended her gratefulness to the Chairman for his service on the Board and as Chair.

**Report of the Director, Matthew Reischman, Deputy Director of Resource Management, CAL FIRE**

Forest Practice Program

Watershed Protection Program

* On December 12, 2023, program staff led the first meeting of the Monitoring Working Group, which seeks to establish common principles for the design and implementation of monitoring programs between the various CAL FIRE Resource Management Programs.

Forest Practice Enforcement and Timber Operator Licensing (LTO)

* The CAL FIRE Information Technology Research Development and Innovation Program has automated the LTO Training Class certificate issuance process. It is expected this new application will decrease the time interval between student training completion and certificate receipt and save the LTO Program Coordinator several hours of data entry and mail processing.
* The LTO Program is moving ahead with a zero-dollar contract for online credit and debit card payment for LTO licensing renewals and new applications. This change is expected to provide expedited payment options for the public and a more efficient process for the Department.

Resource Protection and Improvement Program

Urban and Community Forestry

* California will host the Council of Western State Foresters Urban Forestry Coordinators annual meeting in Sacramento from February 27-29, 2024.
* Green Schoolyards grant agreements were delivered to 29 applicants which will allow activities on approximately 180 K-12 public school campuses statewide. Green Schoolyards Childcare Facilities grant applications have been evaluated and awards are in process.

Demonstration State Forests

Jackson

* Mastication work continues on Fire Fuels Mitigation Research Project. Two contracted crews, Iron Response and T. Bloyd Excavating, are simultaneously working on the twelve mastication units.
* Recreation Program Manager Erik Wahl continues to assess pygmy forest habitat with State Parks staff for restoration, including introduction of beneficial fire. Consultations with Fish & Wildlife are being scheduled to determine eligibility for the project to fall within the recent addition to PRC Section 21080.56, providing a new Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects (SERP), part of CDFW’s “Cutting the Green Tape” Program.

Prescribed Fire and Environmental Protection

Prescribed Fire Program

* Prescribed fire projects continue to be accomplished taking advantage of the good weather and vegetation conditions.

Environmental Protection Program

* The next 5-day California Licensed Foresters Association Archaeological course will be offered in March 2024 and the class is already full.

Cultural Resources Program

* There are two Senior Environmental Scientist positions for Cultural Resources that are in the final stages of hiring. Look for an announcement in the next month’s report.

Wildfire Resilience Program

Reforestation Services Program

* 267,613 conifer seedlings have been grown for Reforestation Center clients. In addition, approximately 25,000 excess seedlings are now available.
* The seed bank acquired 126.23 pounds of processed seeds from a total of 210 bushels of cones collected Statewide this season. Next season is expected to have a much larger cone crop.

California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP)

* CFIP closed 2023 with 132 open grants. Of these:
  + 83 new grants funded in 2023.
  + 49 grants were still open from prior years.
  + For the 83 new grants funded in 2023, $8 million was encumbered to accomplish the following:
    - 14,802 acres contracted for management plans.
    - 3,573 acres contracted for reforestation and forest health treatments.
* CFIP continue to fund individual projects, with ongoing application selection happening every two months.

Climate and Energy Program

Tribal Wildfire Resilience

* A Tribal Wildfire Resilience grant solicitation is under development for Spring 2024. Tentatively, applications will be due in late spring. Program staff are working with California Natural Resources Agency Assistant Secretary Geneva Thompson on the solicitation updates and timeline.

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force

* A public workshop will be help on February 9, 2024, to gather feedback on a list of proposed Core Metrics that will be used to track and report progress toward resilient landscapes.
* The next Task Force Meeting will be on April 4-5, 2024, in Southern California.

Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP)

Forest Health Research Grants

* CAL FIRE (FRAP) has released our next Forest Health Research Grant solicitation. The solicitation is open for concept proposals until January 31, 2024. Up to $4.5 million dollars from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund will be awarded from this solicitation. Research proposals from this solicitation will lead to scientifically rigorous studies that help us evaluate climate impacts on forests and understand the effectiveness of management actions designed to promote wildfire resilience.

Forest and Rangeland Assessment

* FRAP is targeting the second quarter of 2024 for completion and public release. Expect draft chapters to be completed by the end of January.

Fire Protection

Law Enforcement/Civil Cost Recovery

* In 2023, CAL FIRE Law Enforcement officers made a total of 248 arrests and issued 544 citations.

Aviation Management Unit (AMU)/Tactical Air Operations (TAO)

* New South Wales Rual Fire Service requested assistance with airspace management strategies in response to fire activity and complexities experience in October and November. Collaboration occurring through a series of virtual meetings.
* State of California has taken ownership of seven C-130H aircraft, allowing for CAL FIRE AMU to take lead on the next phase in the process of acquiring the tanks.

Cooperative Fire Protection

Academy Training Program

* 2024 Academies began on January 8, 2024, in Ione – Law Enforcement Regular Basic Course (RBC), Company Officer Academy, Firefighter Academy, and Emergency Command Center Academy.
* RBC has 32 students in the class, a record number for the course.
* Training Center North began an 11-week Fire Control Training Academy on January 15, 2024.

Office of the State Fire Marshal

Wildfire Preparedness

* Defensible Space
  + Statewide SRA Total for Fiscal Year-to-Date 2023-2024: 136,416 inspections completed, 55% of the goal (250,000 goal)

Home Hardening

* CAL FIRE staff have released a new Wildfire Home Hardening website which includes a Home Hardening Self-Assessment Application.

Wildfire Planning and Statistics

Pre-Fire Planning

5-year SRA review will begin summer of 2024, to be concluded June 2025.

Community Wildfire Mitigation Assistance

NFPA Firewise USA

* Currently 784 communities in good standing. This number may fluctuate over the next few weeks as we work with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to finalize the yearly renewals.
* The Wildfire Prevention Grants Solicitation was opened from November 1, 2023, through January 10, 2024.

**Board Comment:**

* Chairman Gilless commented regarding the Firewise community’s issues that were brought up in the Resource Protection Committee meeting yesterday that it would be useful to ask FRAP to do a quick overlay of the population in areas where there has been good adoption with the boundaries of the community. It would give us a good metric for how it is penetrating in the state.
* Member Lopez state that the Home Hardening website is user friendly and very informative.
* Member Chase asked if there is an update on Direct Protection Area Boundary revisions?
  + Chief Reischman does not have an update but will make sure there is an update at the next Board meeting.

**Public Comment:**

* Matt Dias, CalForests, asked if the budgetary necessity of the department is to get C130 airplanes online and if the department has current resources necessary to pull those airplanes into the fleet.
  + Chief Reischman stated he appreciated his question but will have to follow up later.
* Richard Gienger, Forests Forever shared his view on the Director’s Report regarding Jackson.
  + Chief Reischman stated that at this time he cannot give an update on the re-writing of the update of the management plan. Hoping to have a solicitation out soon to bring in someone to assist with that.
* Karen Pitts shared her views on the Jackson Management Plan.

**Report of the Regulations Coordinator, Jane Van Susteren**

There are no Rulemaking actions to report currently.

**Report of the Standing Committees**

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

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

**Management Committee, Chris Chase, Chair**

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

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

The Resource Protection Committee had two items on the agenda.

**01-24-03 Member Lopez moves to authorize Board staff to submit the Rulemaking regarding Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone Amendments, 2024 for noticing of the 45-day Comment Period. Chair Gilless seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Public Comment:**

* Richard Gienger, Forests Forever shared his thoughts on the Joint Policy on Hardwoods and stated it was nice to have Member Blake in on discussion.

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

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

The Effectiveness Monitoring Committee met on January 18th and the following was discussed:

* Approved the EMC Proposal Accessing Fire Hazard Risk and Post Fire recovery for Watercourse and Lake Protection Zone which the Board approved this morning.
* Appointed Dr. Engre and Dr. Connor to the committee.
* Approved the prioritization of the critical monitoring questions for this year’s request for proposals. There were four prioritization areas. In response for the request from the Forest Practice Committee we voted to include one additional critical monitoring question to address concerns around rare, endangered plants. This will come to the Board for approval in March.
* The EMC will be meeting again on June 17, 2024.

**Range Management Advisory Committee, Dr. Marc Horney, Co-Chair**

The Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) had its meeting on January 16, 2024:

* The Committee re-appointed Stephanie Larson Chair and a Dr. Marc Horney Vice-Chair to one-year terms.
* Also reappointed was Andree Soares and Rich Ross to their seats on the RMAC representing organizations that represent Range Landowners.
* Discussed planning for the next steps of the finalization of a prescribed herbivory fact sheet for publication produced by the members of the RMAC. This will come before the Board in March.
* Discussed the production of an updated prescribed herbivory publication building upon the white paper that RMAC produced in 2015.
* Discussed the development of a technical guide for prescribed herbivory for fuels management in California and the finalization of a grazing license and grazing management plan template.
* RMAC is working with YG Gentry and Rochelle Hedges to partner with the CLFA to develop a collaborative training workshop on Forestry and Rangeland specialists.
* 2023 Annual Report and Workplan and 2024 Annual Priorities will be ready for the Board in April.
* The next meeting for the Range Management Advisory Committee will be March 19, 2024.

**Professional Foresters Licensing, RPF-CRM Vital Statistics and October 2023 Exam, Dan Stapleton, Assistant Executive Officer**

**01-24-04 Member Chase moves to certify as licensed Registered Professional Foresters and Certified Rangeland Managers those individuals recommended by the Professional Foresters Examining Committee as fulfilling all qualifications required under the Professional Foresters Law. Member Jani seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

Registered Professional Foresters (RPF) 2023 notable passing

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Edward A. Tunheim RPF #79 | Kenneth Melvin Vroman RPF #938 |
| Ben Stone RPF #3163 | William Solinsky RPF #2297 |

**Joint Institute for Wood Products Innovation, Katie Harrell, Board Staff**

The Joint Institute for Wood Products Innovation is pursuing two projects this fiscal year. We have the following presentations for the Board today.

* “Mixed Species Cross-Laminated Timber Layup Tests Using Western Wood Products Association White fir Species Group” Draft Final Report. Iain Macdonald and Byrne Miyamoto, Oregon State University and Tail Wood Design Institute.
* “Measuring Transport Properties for Concrete Containing Cellulose Nanocrystals: Porosity, Resistivity, and Chloride Ingress” Draft Final Report, Jason Weiss, Oregon State University.
* “Procurement of Forest-Derived Renewable Natural Gas to Meet California Public Utility Commission Targets” Draft Final Report, Dan Sanchez, UC Berkeley and Institute.

**PRESENTATIONS**

* Exemption and Emergency Report Post-Fire Salvage Emergency Notice Monitoring Will Olsen, Drew Coe, CAL FIRE

**Board Comment:**

* Member Delbar asked about the 7% that never harvested, what happened to their plan? Did they not end up having a home for their lumber? Did they not have someone that would come and remove? Do you know why it was not harvested?
  + Drew Coe, CAL FIRE, stated that he does not have specifics but there was a lot of wood on the market which made it difficult to move the wood.
* Member Delbar commented it would be interesting to know the cost of the loss of the future of that property. What is the cost to that landowner who must maintain that land?
* Member Chase stated regarding the Post-Fire Salvage Monitoring Report is different than the Forest Fire Prevention Exemption Report where you can compare it to operations under THP and the performance relevance to that. Has there been an attempt to establish a baseline of unharvested burn areas and sediment discharge plug crossings, unstable areas that were revealed by the fire?
  + Drew Coe stated that would be a great study but it is out of the scope of work that we do.

**Public Comments:**

* Matt Dias, President, California Forestry Association shared his views and frustrations with CAL FIRE not having a completed Post-Fire Salvage Emergency Notice Monitoring Report to the Board. He asked why the report wasn’t not provided to the Board today along with the presentation. Who made the decision? Mr. Dias also is formerly requesting a copy of the report pursuant to government Code 7920 – 7931 et seq.
  + Eric Huff, Assistant Deputy Director Forest Practice stated we received request from Resources Agency to give our agency partners a chance to review the report before it is publicly released.

**CONCLUSION**

**Public Forum**

**Public Comments:**

* Steve Turner commented on the letter that was submitted last meeting and his views against logging Jackson State Forest.
* Ellen Horstman shared her views on Jackson Forest Demonstration that there should be a halt on all the logging and road building until there is a new Management Plan in place.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:





Edith Hannigan J. Keith Gilless

Executive Officer Chairman