



**Minutes  
Council Meeting**

Wednesday, May 11, 2022 | 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Recording Available: <https://youtu.be/AXHpFGO71WE>

**Welcome/ Agenda:** Allison Thomson welcomed attendees, both on Zoom and in person, and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

**Public Comments:** no comments

**Special Presentation:**

**Brownsville & Oregon Ridge Fuelbreak Projects: Progress Update** Allison Thomson

- Parts of the Oregon Ridge Fuelbreak were worked on about 20 years ago.
- In around 2019, a YWA grant proposal to Cal Fire pitched the Upper Yuba Fuelbreak Collaborative project including Oregon Ridge and other fuelbreaks. This proposal was not funded.
- That same year, the Yuba Foothills Healthy Forest Project was funded, and a lot of progress has been made on it.
- YWPFSC found funding for parts of the Upper Yuba Fuelbreak Collaborative through the Forest Service Stevens Fund, to do work near Brownsville (~200 acres) and along most of Oregon Ridge (~500 acres). The work is mostly on private land.
- Allison heard from Jason Vermillion said that another \$300,000 is being awarded for the project, which will extend the Brownsville Fuelbreak
- Close to 400 acres have been completed to-date (mastication, creating shaded fuelbreaks). There were hopes to do biomass thinning, but that hasn't worked out given the biomass market these days.
- The project has been able to revisit some sites that were addressed previously (in 2009)
- Steve Andrews added that within the Stevens Fund work, the proposal included mostly maintenance of treated areas in the Oregon Ridge Fuelbreak section and new treatment areas in the Brownsville Fuelbreak section.

**Partner Reports:**

- **USFS-Plumas NF** – Erik Apland
  - Erik has been taking photos on NF lands involved in the project Allison presented on. Some sites are unrecognizable after treatment, mainly north of Challenge towards Woodly, north of La Porte Road. A lot of it was slap jack work that occurred 15-20 years ago and had filled in completely. Plans are to keep working on mechanical treatments, especially on NF lands near Forbestown. This work will continue until fire season takes hold, and occurs whenever it is not too wet.
  - Plumas NF is looking for opportunities to do a prescribed fire program next fall. They're opening a couple thousand acres in the Challenge area for burning through inclusion in a burn plan, and they'll be preparing another burn plan for the area, so all of that will be open for burning when conditions are right.
  - FS fire staff have been sent out to help with fire in other areas, so staffing is light locally until it gets warmer and drier in Northern California.

- **USFS-Tahoe NF** –Gabe Foster shared a fuels update about work occurring in Yuba County:
  - 76 acres of hand cut handpile and invasive scotch broom removal (including some herbicide use) was just completed near the hotshot base at Bullards Reservoir. They found herbicide worked well to keep the scotch broom back.
  - 150 acres of handcut handpile are almost complete in the Pendola area, and a spotted owl PAC there will be done in the fall.
  - Within the Pendola fire scar, 320 acres are being treated on Garden Valley Road, known as the hardwood culturing project, which involves thinning from the dominant stems of the tan oak to leave canopy cover and minimize resprouting.
  - To address blow down from December, cleanup piling and mastication has been occurring near campgrounds to work towards reopening them, and most of the piles have been burned.
  - 1300 acres of fuels units are being laid out in the Trapper area, and this may be done around July, so the contract could be awarded relatively soon, leading to handcut handpile treatments and mastication. An additional 1500 acres of fuels units within that Trapper area (near Camptonville) will be laid out, working with the same registered professional forester.
  - Infrastructure bill money (\$6.8mil in FY22, \$9.35mil for FY23&24) and CFLRP funding (\$3 mil this year and \$4 mil for the next 2 years) is coming to the North Yuba. They will be looking to use some of the money as subsidies to get timber off the land quicker once timber sales are signed. The season is getting late, and burning windows have been pushed back by rains. Some non fed Stevens Fund money is going to the Trapper area in Sierra County. In the near future, there's a good opportunity to do more work in the Trapper/ Camptonville areas since CEQA and NEPA are already done.

Eric Rice:

- shared that this year the district's prescribed burning (hand piles, machine piles, and broadcast burning) is at about 1,000 acres. This is lower than typical, but there has been catch up on a backlog of hand piles. Don't anticipate more prescribed fire this year. Road damage is a part of what drew the district's focus away from prescribed fire, dealing with damage from the storms during the winter. There will still be issues with side roads, and the FS would appreciate any information about side road statuses.
- They've been supporting all parts of the country, such as Region 8 (the South) and now the Southwest.
- All 4 engines in the district are staffed (1 is actually overstaffed, while another is still looking to fill a few positions). Additional positions have been added; the hotshot crews have more positions (this is the national direction not just the Tahoe NF).
- Tree mortality is showing up a lot, especially in ponderosa pine plantations, which we've seen slowly moving up the Sierras. There has been rapid increase in fir mortality at higher elevations, predominately white fir, due to drought, snowpack, and disease. There's been Douglas fir mortality seen at low elevations, even in healthy large trees.

Rani Isaac asked about pay increases for seasonal employees. Eric answered that the Tahoe NF has not had any adjustment to the payscale, and that issue is stuck in congress. The agency is not looking good in California; staffing levels could easily drop and an engine staffed 7 days dropping to 5 days would be a significant loss; there are a lot of other work opportunities in the state. There's still work being done at the federal level to potentially change the whole structure of FS staffing. Jim Mathias expressed the value of the work FS staff area doing.

- **Cal Fire** – Jim Mathias shared that in salary offerings, they can't compete with the competitive salaries offered by private industry and local government partners.
  - On May 16<sup>th</sup> they'll move on to level 3 staffing. The second rehire academy is occurring. All of their fire stations will be staffed and 3 dozers will be staffed per day will be staffed on May 16<sup>th</sup>. They're behind on maintenance after last year's long fire season and supply chain issues, but tankers will be back up in Grass Valley within a month. On May 16<sup>th</sup> Yuba County will have a dedicated battalion chief again.
  - Burn suspension will probably occur quickly, but they don't have a prediction of when the burn ban will occur. Still no date on staffing the fire lookouts, which will occur when the burn ban does. Fuel breaks are being worked on along roads. Loma Rica finished installing their 30,000 gallon water storage tank. Grant decision making will be made soon.
- **Board of Supervisors** – Bob Bagley shared on behalf of Randy Fletcher that a federal grant proposal is being submitted to study broadband feasibility. The tarp project is now getting support from Marysville, so loads coming in to Recology will be required to be tarped so that debris doesn't fly off into the roads, lowering fire risk. There is an effort to widen part of Willow Glen/ La Porte Road for bike and pedestrian safety.
- **Yuba County Office of Emergency Services** – John Stone shared that OES just met with Cal OES about what notifications will look like in the case of a fire. They also won a state grant for HF radio communications. FS firefighters don't get paid enough- John knows from personal experience and suggested contacting your congress people to ask them to support FS staff.
  - The Be Prepared Fair will be May 19<sup>th</sup> here at the Alcouffe Center, and we hope to see lots of people here 5:30-7:30pm.

Frank Denatale, Fire Prevention Officer, is settling into his new position and welcomes anyone to contact him to work on issues such as defensible space.

- **Yuba Water Agency** – Creighton Avila said that there are no updates.
- **Camptonville Community Partnership** – Cathy LeBlanc shared that CCP is working to bring back "Camptonville Prepared" after dealing with the storm in December.
  - Volunteers will be organizing to help neighbors. They held a meeting in April to meet with OES and others. Camptonville plant sale will be this Saturday- come talk to CCP if you want more information and Camptonville Prepared
  - The forest biomass business center will be going forward on 100 acres that will be purchased from SPI. Ken Freidman is helping with the project's carbon lifecycle analysis, and CCP is working on putting together a financial package.
  - CCP has been facilitating meetings between the FS and the community, talking about how the FS will retain a presence in Camptonville. There is a housing shortage which is part of why jobs are hard to fill, so if you have a rental or room

that would be suitable to rent to a FS employee, contact Cathy at 530-288-9355 or cathy@theccp.org

- PG&E has not yet said if they are awarding a grant for the Special Needs Defensible Space program.
- **The CHY Company** – Madison Thomson shared more about the Stevens Fund work, which has been actively happening since last November. Within CHY parcels, about 270 acres have been completed and the rest should be completed next week. CHY is also doing work on the Yuba Foothills CCI grant with the YWA. A biomass chipping program is occurring in Forbestown. Ongoing mastication operations are occurring near Dobbins.
- **Siller Brothers** – Nick Knipe shared that they’ve been salvaging from the North Complex for the past year and a half, but are now getting into Stevens Fund work. They were also awarded a CCI grant to work north of Forbestown in the footprint on the North Complex.

### **YWP&FSC Reports:**

#### **Outreach-Education Committee** – Allison Thomson

- We tabled at YES Charter Academy’s Earth Day event in April and several people signed up to get involved as potential volunteers. It was a practice run for the Prepare Fair.
- We launched a scavenger hunt/ bingo game for Community Wildfire Preparedness Day and are encouraging folks to prepare for wildfire season around their home and then visit us at the Prepare Fair to enter our raffle. Bingo card available on our website.
- Beverly recently obtained some more retired fire hose for tow chain covers.
- We are looking for photos and volunteers to help with the calendar for next year. There is *a submission form* linked on the website where we would love to see any photos you have.
- There has been a big uptick in requests for mitigation reviews, and we are planning a training for more volunteer advisors to help address the demand. A training date will be shared soon.

#### **Board Report** – Sean Griffis

- Numbers at these meetings are slowly starting to climb – it would be great to get attendance up to 40-50 people like before the pandemic.
- The board is standing by to see what grants are awarded.

#### **Executive Director Report** – Allison Thomson

- The Stevens Fund was shared about earlier
- Willow Glen roadside clearing work has picked back up (it paused last fall) and it will be completed in the next few weeks before everything dries out because they are masticating
- Roadside PSA (project specific analysis) under Cal VTP will allow us to do roadside clearing with further set back from roads; the PSA is still in review. This will allow for the project we proposed in the Fire Prevention Grant that we are getting final word on funding soon.
  - Allison will be presenting about the project at the Yuba IRWM meeting next week – get on the IRWM list by talking to JoAnna at YWA.
- The cost shared programs are slowly growing, please keep spreading the word.



- During the board meeting we will be beginning discussions about possibly taking certain months of the year off from meetings, potentially with evening community gatherings in the off months.

Gretchen shared that she went to a FEMA training presented by the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium yesterday, and would recommend the training.

**The next meeting is scheduled for June 8, 2022 @ 9:30 - 11:30 am**

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## **Regular Board Meeting**

Present: Board Members Sean Griffis, Pamela Cook, Creighton Avila, Steve Andrews; Executive Director Allison Thomson; Project Coordinator Jannike Allen; Bookkeeper/HR Dewaina Edens; Curtis Canfield

Absent: Board Member Stephen Heter

Director Griffis called the meeting to order at 11:28am

- ❖ Consider approval of minutes from the April 13, 2022 Regular Board Meeting.
  - Director Cook moved to approve the minutes as written and Director Andrews seconded it. The motion carried.
  
- ❖ Consider approval of new budgeting software expenses
  - Allison shared her follow up research and found that several local nonprofits and firesafe councils use a mix of Excel and QuickBooks, and they said they spent years developing their systems. Some for example have a full time finance employee on staff to deal with their 50 program budgets - we have around 20 programs currently, but the complexity is up there. They are interested in whatever we come up with and warned that their current systems are still very time consuming.
  - Director Cook asked if the proposed software company shared any clients we could get testimonials from. Allison answered that the reviews and shared testimonials look good and that the software would help free up time. Allison estimated that she spent about 30 hours since December on developing the 2022 annual budget.
  - At \$239/month for the software, it would be cheaper than having Allison and Dewaina deal with the budget in spreadsheets.
  - Director Griffis mentioned that the software will save time in future onboarding situations.
  - Allison confirmed that data can be exported from the software to Excel if we wanted to shift away from the software in the future.
    - Dewaina clarified that the data is still also stored in QuickBooks. This new software just provides a new way to view and analyze the data.
  - Director Cook made a motion that we go forward signing up for this software. Director Andrews seconded. The motion carried.
  
- ❖ Discussion of council meeting frequency
  - Allison asked the board to continue the discussion that began over email.
  - Director Cook said that she's open to some schedule changes.
  - Director Griffis said that a less formal evening gathering some months could involve valuable exchanges between agency folks and community members.
  - Director Andrews likes the idea of a hybrid schedule based on the season, perhaps skipping a meeting or two in the winter, and also perhaps during fire season. He likes the idea of picnic/ potluck meetings to involve the public. It would be more

complicated, but could work well if a schedule was made up, perhaps meeting outdoors in May for wildfire preparedness month.

- Curtis shared that the Alcouffe Center will have a lot of the community in attendance on July 4<sup>th</sup> in the evening.
- Director Avila shared a goal to have smaller scale community groups/ Firewise communities coming together at council meetings to communicate and collaborate
- Amidst internet issues, Digital Path was recommended as an internet provider.
- Director Griffis suggested that at the next council meeting we propose a plan with dates.
- Director Andrews volunteered to help come up with something to propose to the council.

❖ Discussion of mission statement

- Director Andrews said that solidifying the mission statement feels very timely and useful.
- Allison asked what key ideas the board wants to see in the mission statement.
- Director Andrews suggested not overselling and submitted option “New 4” ahead of time.
- Director Avila said that “facilitates collaborative planning” is an important line
- Director Andrews said that the original wording was focused on natural resource protection, which was the focus 20 years ago, but now we’ve had many more fires and are much more concerned about those additional issues.
- Jannike mentioned that specifying that we are a community-based nonprofit helps signal to people that we are not a government entity.
- Director Griffis shared that option “New 2” should say “promotes” instead of “builds,” and should also be accompanied with a list of goals. “New 4” is a good length at 4 lines. The whole council should be asked before adopting.
- Approval should be sought at a future council meeting.

❖ Discussion of Conflict of Interest Policy

- Allison shared that this came up due to grants that require us to have a Conflict of Interest Policy. Within our bylaws we have a section on transactions which addresses this. The IRS suggests we have a separate Conflict of Interest Policy. Adopting a policy could help us have clarity for how to deal with potential issues.
- Director Cook noted that Allison could be seen as being in a bullseye due to connections with CCP and Madison Thomson who works as a local forester. She said that we seem to need a policy, and that the board should be the entity voting on contracts that Allison suggests.
- Allison said that what is in the bylaws could be used as a starting point and added to, in order to create a Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Director Avila said that if Madison submits a proposal when we have a request for proposals, the board and other staff could review the proposals, removing Allison from the process.
- Director Andrews summarized that we should have a Conflict of Interest Policy built and expanding upon the current bylaw language.

- Allison added that there are templates, and we would also adopt a form for the board and all staff to disclose any potential conflict of interests.
- Allison elaborated on the provided documents where she disclosed her potential conflict of interest and the potential for working with AFM for upcoming YWPFSC projects. She is proposing a general services agreement with AFM to have them do work for YWPFSC as needed and by request. She pointed out that we don't have a specific procurement policy. This agreement became an idea because of the Willow Glen project.
- Director Avila said that in this situation we should put out a call for proposals before deciding to work with AFM. The request should be advertised widely/ logically, ie to all local registered foresters.
  - Director Andrews agreed with Director Avila
- Director Avila shared another option where multiple people could be put on a contract if we do a request for qualifications. On-call contractors can be listed based on ratings that we make without involving Allison.
- Allison added that we may benefit from having a procurement policy/ procedure; this is something contractors have asked about
  - Director Cook suggested finding out what other firesafe councils are doing
- Director Avila shared that YWA has outward facing policies for folks who may want to propose work or apply to work for them. Borrowing from other firesafe councils would be a good way to go.
- Director Griffis summarized that Allison is directed to do research and move these ideas forward so that the board has policies to vote on later.
- Allison shared that if we get the Cal Fire grant we will need to have surveys done right away so that work doesn't get behind. Director Avila said to go ahead and make an RFQ for this, and pick other people to grade qualifications, to create an order to call people for on call services.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:52pm by Director Griffis

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