



Minutes Council Meeting

Wednesday, June 8, 2022 | 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Recording available: https://youtu.be/xG_YT5JkMQM

Welcome/Agenda: Allison Thomson welcomed attendees and went over Zoom and in person technology logistics. Attendees introduce themselves and Allison announced that YWPFSC is looking to make our meetings more accessible to community members by having several evening meetings each year, so to try this out our July 13th meeting will be at 6:30pm, still at the Alcouffe Center.

Public Comments:

- Frances Ankers, local resident, brought up an article that acknowledges that the southwest corner of Oregon House is has a wildfire trap where she lives, with high threat of ignition and access issues along the one way in and one way out road. Cathy LeBlanc said that those concerns may be good to bring up at the evening meetings, which could be used as an opportunity to have residents identify areas of concerns on maps.
- Rani Issac reported that the [Mitigation in Rating Plans and Wildfire Risk Models](#) regulations that the Department of Insurance has been working on will be open for public comment soon after the revisions are posted. The regulations should be in place in September. As a result, insurance companies will be giving everyone a wildfire score, and people will have the opportunity to find out how to lower their score.

Discussion about Prescribed Fire

- Jannike Allen opened by explaining we are having this timely discussion since Forest Service (FS) [Chief Randy Moore announced](#) a 90-day pause of prescribed fire operations on national forest system lands on May 20th, 2022. This pause happened around the time an escaped prescribed fire in New Mexico destroyed homes and other structures. During the pause, the Forest Service will be conducting a national level review to evaluate the FS's prescribed fire program and put in place any lessons learned before resuming prescribed burning.
- Jason Vermillion shared that as land managers they don't take this decision lightly. He acknowledged that it's unfortunate that a wildfire occurred after a prescribed fire in New Mexico, and hopefully positive reflections and changes are made. He, Gabe Foster, and Erik Apland, were not happy about the pause since it slows down progress, but hope that something good comes out of it. The pause will mean being backed up a little with projects in the fall and the winter. For individual projects on the ground, there is always a routine of comparing plans with what actually happened, and assessing what can be done better the next time. Hopefully this national pause will lead to more support and increased workforce. There is a lot of pressure on the Forest Service politically to increase their acres burned, and that needs to be backed up with an increased workforce within the agency to accomplish an increase in pace and scale. He'd like to see dedicated incident management teams that manage prescribed fires, complete with burn plans and implementation during appropriate burn windows.
- Jason also brought up [TREX \(Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges\)](#), a movement which is working to change perceptions of fire. [TREX](#) events train people to safely apply beneficial fire on public and private lands. There's work going on in Butte and Plumas Counties to build a community

around prescribed fire, and Yuba County does not yet have a Prescribed Burn Association. He'd like to share a presentation from TREX organizers soon.

- Gary Fildes said that escaped burns are not new and its important to follow each burn plan as closely as possible.
- Cathy LeBlanc was at the recent [SCALE conference](#), and shared that an indigenous presenter pointed out that our government has been managing the forest for 175 years, while indigenous people have been stewarding the land for 20,000 years.
- Chris Dallas from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) shared that their agency is mainly focused on expanding the use of broadcast burning, not just pile burning. The big problem they're running into is how limited the burn windows are. They have a project they hope to do in the fall, so they hope the moratorium ends in time. The issue with burning in the spring is the need to monitor the land all year until the next snow ensures it is fully out.
 - Jason replied that all land managers struggle with the burn windows, and the Clean Water and Air acts are great, but limit burn opportunities.
 - Chris added that climate change is creating new conditions that are even outside of tribal ecological knowledge
- Jason also mentioned that the destructive megafires of recent years create momentum for the public to demand policy changes for better forest management.
- Allison mentioned the [Yuba Bear Burn Cooperative](#), a Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) which focuses on the Yuba and Bear watersheds, but as of yet hasn't had the capacity to do much in Yuba County.
 - Jason heard from TREX leaders and would like to see connections made to get this work going in Yuba County.
- Jim Mathias from Cal Fire said that prescribed fire is a very good tool if used correctly. He wanted to clarify that fire on FS lands is a setting where the FS can do what they deem to be ok. On SRA and private property there isn't a moratorium, there is currently a burn ban. Cal Fire is focused on protecting your property, and burning on private property makes him nervous, since the wildland urban interface is now dotted with homes. Prescribed fire can't be used during a burn ban, and is not safe when drought conditions combine with coming wind events. Therefore, the windows to use prescribed fire are very small, so you have to prep your land, and then wait for the right time. Cal Fire's job is to regulate actions so that what you do on your property doesn't threaten what happens on your neighbor's property. He pointed out that we have to consider the current environment, so Cal Fire instigates their burn ban during certain times of year, and they want you to use the tool of prescribed fire only when the timing is right.
- Debbie Aseltine Neilsen– wondered how a landowner goes about getting ready for a prescribed burn.
 - Jason said that the most important thing is to talk to your local fire managers.
 - Landon Haack from Cal Fire explained that communication must occur with his agency, and what you are allowed to do on your property depends on timing. During the burn ban/ summer, no fires are allowed. We are currently in a burn ban, and he expects we'll come out of fire season when there has been about 2 inches of accumulated rain with more coming in the near future (likely sometime between Oct 15-Dec 1). When the burn ban is lifted, property owners preparing to burn can ask for agency staff to help consult and give suggestions. After May 1st, permits are required, and suggestions from agency staff become requirements/ terms of the burn permit. Get ahold of the local battalion chief to find out what is required to be allowed to burn. You may also need air quality permits.

- Jannike said that there are a growing number of resources for landowners to learn about how to implement prescribed fire, and it's their responsibility to get educated before burning on their land. Debbie said it would be great to have that sort of topic presented on in the future.

Partner Reports:

- **USFS-Plumas NF** – Jason Vermillion
 - Fire danger is currently low at 2500 ft elevation
 - 1000hr fuels (larger dead and downed logs and branches) have historically low fuel moisture content and will be ready to burn soon.
 - At a weather station in the Challenge area there has been 41 inches of rain since last July. 60-80 inches used to be typical.
 - FS staff are already supporting incidents in the southwest.
- **USFS- Tahoe NF** – Jim Mathias from Cal Fire shared what he knows the Tahoe NF, about Jason will retire as Chief 1 on the Tahoe, Eric Rice will move over to Chief 2 on detail for 3-4 months. Gabe Foster will be working Division 3 in the Camptonville area.
- **Cal Fire** – Jim Mathias/ Landon Haack
 - For Cal Fire, all stations are staffed in the Yuba Placer unit.
 - They're hurting on number of hand crews.
 - Air tech base is up and running.
 - They're caught up on the maintenance cycle, and tankers are back on base.
 - Please help tell as many people as possible that we are in a burn ban. Landon has had to run around dealing with unsanctioned burns. Even after a rain, the fine fuels dry out and are ready to burn in 1 hour. Instead of pile burning, your neighbors should chip fuels or put them in green waste bins to get rid of them.
 - Lookouts are up and running throughout the area
 - Fire prevention grants are out. None of the recipients got as much money as desired, but they fought to get Yuba as much money as possible.
 - There have been less vegetation fires and acres burned compared to this time last year.
- **CA Dept of Fish & Wildlife** – Mario Klip
 - Mario CFW said that they just hired seasonal staff to help with fuels reduction, and they are looking for a room to conduct their chain saw training in.
 - They are also trying to hire a Forrester 2 to help with fuel resiliency efforts, if you have leads, please send them Mario's contact info (530 258 7582) and the posting <https://www.calcareers.ca.gov/CalHrPublic/Jobs/JobPosting.aspx?JobControlId=308310>
- **Yuba County Office of Emergency Services** – John Stone
 - Approx. 500 attendees at the May 19th Prepare Fair
 - Ag Pass Training occurred on June 4th for ranchers and livestock owners
 - Looking for funding and getting more evacuation tags
 - Working with Nevada County OES and Yuba County Sheriff's Office dispatch to coordinate notices and alerts
- **Yuba County Fire Prevention** – Frank DeNatale
 - Meeting with various departments, and met with Allison last week
 - Yuba Water Agency is putting in their power agency headquarters down the road by the post office
 - Working with code enforcement issues
 - Email if you need help with something fdenatale@CO.YUBA.CA.US

- **Yuba Water Agency** – Creighton Avila
 - Just went through latest grant cycle, and there will be another in the fall
- **Oregon Peak Lookout Tower VIP Program** – Gary Fildes
 - Opened last week
 - Short staffed after losing some long-time members
 - Still some open periods – can get new people trained through Cal Fire if you know anyone interested
- **Yuba County RCD** – Gary Fildes/ Debbie Aseltine
 - Finished a needs assessment
 - Need to fill some more board positions
 - Establish base funding and hire staff
 - Clearing junk out of orchards
 - Debbie is working on a brochure about different vegetation types in the foothills
- **Camptonville Community Partnership** – Cathy LeBlanc
 - There was a fire in Camptonville about 3 weeks ago, which burned about 25 acres and was then put out by an aircraft from LA. A fundraiser spaghetti feed was planned for that evening, so it also fed the fire fighters.
 - Biomass business facility- Almost finalizing the land ownership piece, full construction will likely begin in spring
 - Have not yet heard back from PG&E about the \$100,000 requested for special needs defensible space treatments.
 - Camptonville Prepared program is being revived, and a core group meeting will be occurring this Thursday.
 - Camptonville Country Faire from 2-5 on June 25th in Camptonville will be at the community center and include a parade at 2, as well as 3 open museums. CCP will be posting information on [their Facebook page](#).
- **Sierra Nevada Conservancy** – Chris Dallas
 - They have a new wildfire recovery and forest resilience grant round, concept proposals due July 29th. Reach out if you have a potential concept proposal you'd like to submit. Chris will be out most of June and back July 5th.
- **Siller Brothers** – Nick Knipe
 - Finished Oregon Ridge fuelbreak work recently, and did another piece near Bullard Bar
 - The problem is finding a home for the materials that are being taking out.
 - Jason said that the FS is similarly trying to deal with burned trees that don't have a place to go and will eventually rot in place. He asked Nick if he sees a reprieve in the future. Nick said it takes so long to get additional processing facilities up and running that forthcoming projects are not likely to help with currently salvageable trees.
 - Siller Brothers got a CCI grant to work on burntover ground near Forbestown. They'll be getting funding to treat more green land around Forbestown in the future.

YWP&FSC Reports:

- Wildfire Mitigation Review program – Gary Fildes
 - 26 reviews since April 1st, 98 since January 2021
- Outreach-Education Committee – Beverly Cameron Fildes
 - 2023 Calendar production has begun and we're looking for more pictures from people, which will also be solicited through a photo contest
 - Prepared Fair went well and we gave out a lot of tow chain covers and information

- The recent Golden Fire reminded people to be proactive about fire preparedness
- YWA awarded a grant for 400 sets of tow chain covers, and Gabe Foster helped supply the reclaimed fire hose. Whenever you have fire hose destined for landfill, give it to us. We need more volunteers to help cut, band, and drop off tow chain covers.
- Executive Director Report – Allison Thomson
 - Last month the board discussed officially updating the mission statement. Several attendees shared input.
 - Jim Mathias said that the word “resilience” can be perceived as being limited to the forest, or post-fire work, which leaves out the residential work YWPFSC is doing.
 - Allison mentioned that adding “preparedness” might help portray the mission.
 - Debbie suggested elaborating by saying “landscape and community resilience”.
 - Gretchen pointed out that if we wanted to specify defensible space and home hardening, we could avoid limiting ourselves by saying we promote “various strategies such as...”
 - YWPFSC was recently awarded almost 1.5 million through Cal Fire’s fire prevention grant for roadside work in the Dobbins - Oregon House area; grant agreement and paperwork will happen in the next few months. Match portion from YWA will allow us to get started right away, including finding a forester to start surveys and landowner outreach; Project Specific Analysis (PSA) is still in review but will be completed this summer.
 - Willow Glen roadside mastication project finished yesterday
 - Stevens Fund work has slowed down a little but is still ongoing. Additional \$327,000 will go toward continuing the Brownsville-Oregon House Fuelbreak.
 - Residential programs-
 - Several cost share applications have come in and we’ve handed out about \$9,000. We still have over \$100,000 that must be used by November, so tell everyone you know in the Yuba foothills to get to work on home hardening and defensible space and apply for partial reimbursement. Gary added that there has been a surge in Wildfire Mitigation reviews, which is a precursor to being eligible for the cost share; most of the reviews he is conducting now are intending to apply for cost share.
 - Still no news on the special needs defensible space funding from PG&E
 - Did not receive the State Fire Assistance grant from CFSC, and so we are still looking for money to replenish the chipping funds and funding for other projects. Let us know if you have ideas for funding the chipping program.
 - We are going to have a Wildfire Mitigation Advisor Training on June 25th and 26th to train new volunteers for the review program. Email programs@yubafiresafe.org if you'd like to sign up or get more information about the training.
 - Debbie asked if a green waste drop off program with Recology could be pursued in Yuba County.
 - Allison said there have been conversations with Recology about doing that, though no concrete plans are in place.

The regular board meeting was postponed due to lack of quorum.

The next meeting is scheduled in the evening of July 13, 2022 at 6:30 pm