



Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 8, 2023 | 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Recording available: <https://youtu.be/kGNzjxhluss?t=2>

Welcome/Agenda: Allison Thomson welcomed attendees in-person and on Zoom. Allison introduced Sandie Marotti-Huckins, the newly hired Firewise Coordinator, who is starting today. She also shared that Jannike Allen will be leaving to take a new job at the beginning of April, and her work at the Fire Safe Council has been greatly appreciated.

Public Comments:

Jonathan Fair Oaks, a local arborist, brought up concerns around the roadside clearing projects and arboreal friends along the road. He hopes landowners can have input on spraying/not spraying, what to remove, and when to plant more suitable vegetation, and offered his assistance. Allison clarified that the roadside clearing project is flexible/voluntary and we would like to work with everyone towards wildfire risk reduction outcomes – reach out to yubahfr@masonbruce.com for more info.

Special Presentation: *Forest Business Alliance: Capacity & Peer-learning for Yuba Forest Health*

Keri Rinne presented an overview of a new project funded by Yuba Water Agency, which is part of a larger state-wide effort supported by CALFIRE. This project is a partnership with YWPFSC (as the fiscal agent) and offers capacity-building support to small businesses, organizations, Tribes, and other entities involved in forestry-sector work.

- Keri shared that the project is being led by a small group of consultants, and her specialty is in grant writing. Her colleague Vance Russell also has extensive experience in forest related work.
- The overall project goal is to support healthy, resilient forests and the people and ecosystems that depend on them, by supporting the workforce through business development technical assistance and by providing trainings. Trainings will include grant writing, and help people navigate programs within CALFIRE. Workshops will focus on business planning, proposal writing, forest and sawmill management, and other topics depending on feedback they receive. A peer-learning network will also be established.
- The current step is conducting a needs analysis and outreach to underserved businesses/communities.
- These efforts in Yuba County will be integrated in the statewide project.
- If you would like to get more information or know someone who might benefit, please contact the consultant team: Keri Rinne (Keri.Rinne@gmail.com), Vance Russell (Vance.Russell@outlook.com).
 - JoAnna Lessard (Yuba Water Agency) added that the timing couldn't be better for increasing a restoration economy. The bottleneck for increasing implementation is workforce. There are grants that can help buy equipment, and training for use of equipment, etc. Yuba Community College also has a grant from YWA for a watershed resilience certificate program.
 - Charles Sharp asked how much was awarded from YWA
 - Keri answered that \$100,000 was awarded for the next several years, as a match to pair with the statewide CALFIRE efforts.
 - Cathy LeBlanc thanked YWA, Keri, and JoAnna for these efforts and said that the timing is great because a peer-learning network is very needed.

Partner Reports:

- **Bureau of Land Management** –Jason Schroeder
 - Jason shared that there is very little BLM land in Yuba County, but as he is the fire mitigation and education specialist, he tries to make it to as many of these types of meetings as possible. Please reach out if there are wildfire related comments, or if there's a particular meeting it would be great to have him at.
 - Rani asked Jason which part of the county BLM has lands and if there are any socioeconomic/ master plan revisions in the works.
 - Jason shared that the master plan is being reworked this year. He works out of the Mother Lode Field Office in El Dorado, and covers 11 counties, and has been in the position for about a year. There are a lot of vacancies in the BLM, and his position was vacant before he took it. His job is to interface with Fire Safe Councils.
 - Contact Jason Schroeder at the Motherload Field Office (call 916-350-1443, or email JSchroeder@blm.gov)
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service** – Diego Camacho Molina, Soil Conservationist based in Yuba City, shared that more funds will be coming in for forestry through the Inflation Reduction Act. Reach out if you have questions:
 - 1511 Butte House Rd #B
Yuba City, CA 95993
(530)-216-5870 (Direct line)
(530)-902-5393 (Work Cell Phone)
(530)-671-0850 ext. 5870 (Office)
- **Cal Fire** –Sean Griffis shared for Landon Haack that most of their resources are committed to assisting with snow issues, especially in neighboring counties.
 - The CALFIRE website has been updated, which will soon have online burn permit applications for larger scale landowner burns. If you're interested in doing prescribed burns on your property, apply to show there is a need locally.
- **CA Dept of Fish & Wildlife** –Brianna Pinto shared that the North Central Region oversees 17 counties.
 - In Yuba County there are a lot of grazing permits at Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area, and the grazing manager shared that grazing is going well, with 6 different active grazing permits. More grass is expected in the late season due to all the rain we've been receiving. Many permits will expire this year so they will be putting out requests for proposals, to continue grazing to keep fuel loading in check. The cattle will be out until ~ May or June, so hunters should continue closing gates.
 - They are working on a shaded fuel break near Collins Lake/Regent Way, maintaining large heritage oaks and removing ladder fuels. California Conservation Corp has been helping with the project.
 - Their firebreak on Marysville Rd is complete.
 - Reach out if you have questions: Brianna.pinto@wildlife.ca.gov
- **Board of Supervisors** – Jon Messick shared that this is his first official meeting. OES is not here, likely because they've been very active the past week with the storms.
- **Yuba County Office of Emergency Services** – Frank DeNatale shared on behalf of OES. OES staff have been very busy and are likely still meeting with PG&E and Sacramento OES about restoring power to Camptonville. Oscar Marin has been on family leave and will be back tomorrow.

- **Yuba County Fire Prevention** – Frank DeNatale
 - Frank has been working on the new state minimum fire regulations which go into effect April 1st, making sure Yuba’s regulations are in alignment or better (adding 0-5 ft zone).
 - He’s also doing a lot of new building inspections, and inspections for the City of Linda.
- **Yuba Water Agency** – JoAnna Lessard shared that the Yuba Foothills Healthy Forest Grant is over half complete, with most of the fuels reduction treatments complete, and the plan is to finish in the next 18 months. They also applied another Forest Health grant, the New Bullards Bar Healthy Forest Project, which will cover ~4,000 acres if funded. It would also include a regional CEQA document, to make more projects shovel ready in the upper part of the county.
 - Madison Thomson clarified that ~3500 acres would be treated in the new grant proposal. The CEQA analysis would cover around >175,000 acres.
 - A request was made for sharing maps to visualize these projects.
 - Forest Stewardship Workshops for private landowners are available from [UC Cooperative Extension](#).
- **Oregon Peak Lookout Tower VIP Program** – Bill High shared that there is a lot of snow at the Lookout now. They’re looking for more volunteers, and more coordinating needs to be done with CAL FIRE when they’re not so busy.
- **Yuba County RCD** – Allison shared a note from Gary Fildes – YRCD will be announcing the new Executive Director around March 17th.
- **Camptonville Community Partnership** – Cathy LeBlanc shared that Camptonville is deep in the snow, with at least 4 ft on the ground around her house.
 - CCP will have a Saint Patrick’s Day dinner fundraiser on March 18th at the Community Center in Camptonville.
 - The Forest Biomass Business Center (FBBC) would love to make use of the CEQA project and workforce development efforts mentioned today. The 100-acre purchase from SPI is nearly complete; thanks for the financial support from YWA. The FBBC is a C-Corp and they have a USDA grant to develop and engineer plans for a co-located sawmill. Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s board will soon be approving a grant to provide \$2 million for equipment. This will help increase the local share of ownership of the FBBC. Having more ownership within the community will help the community continue to have a say in what goes on.
 - The time is ripe to take care of the Yuba watershed – one of the last green watersheds in the state.
 - Cathy said good luck to Jannike, we will miss you. Welcome Sandie. Also, Cathy also plans to retire (though will continue working on the FBBC until that is complete), so reach out (cathy@theccp.org) if you know anyone interested in becoming the Executive Director of CCP.
- **Sierra Pacific Industries** – Ben Raynal shared that they will continue Stevens Funds work when things thaw out. Ben is filling in for Ryan McKillop, and will be taking on more of the fuelbreak and grant projects.
- **The CHY Company** – Madison Thomson shared that implementation on the Stevens Fund Fuelbreaks and Yuba Foothills Healthy Forest Project is on hold due to the weather. Mastication will likely start in the Brownsville and Dobbins areas in the next month or so. Project planning has been the focus lately. Between all partners, ~3,000 acres are completed on the Yuba Foothills Healthy Forest Project to date.

YWP&FSC Reports:

- Outreach-Education Committee – Allison shared on behalf of Beverly Cameron-Fildes
 - ABC Sprout Preschool Class invited Beverly to speak, and the parents were interactive as they covered firesafe topics using the 2023 calendar “Four Facets of Wildfire Preparedness.” We are already thinking about the 2024 firesafe calendar, so if you take photos throughout the year, we’d love to share them in the calendar. [Link to submit photos](#). We need volunteers to help develop the calendar, please let us know if you’re interested.
 - Beverly is happy to come to your group to present on wildfire safety and preparedness (luvadragonfly@yahoo.com or 530-701-5152).
 - Consider volunteering - with the Oregon Peak Lookout (contact Bill High: hibill56@yahoo.com), and with YWPFSC – for example, help with reflective address signs, tabling, and distributing tow-chain covers. Reach out to Beverly (luvadragonfly@yahoo.com) or Allison (allison@yubafiresafe.org).
 - May is Community Wildfire Preparedness Month and Day (Saturday May 6th). Are any groups planning events? We have some ideas and would love to get everyone’s input.
 - We could host a workday with our new tool trailer, and would need volunteers and a community building as a host site. Please fill out [this form](#) if you have a site in mind.
 - We are also considering doing a green waste drop off day.
 - We can also cross promote events that others host. The intent is to catalyze people to act for wildfire season preparedness.
 - Cathy responded that Camptonville Prepared is interested in being a part of the May 6th plans. Community workdays for each of the 5 fire districts would be great. A green waste day would be great to have in each location as well.
 - Cathy added that a scotch broom pulling day could be a great volunteer event, and PG&E might be willing to provide weed wrenches.
 - YWPFSC will start conducting outreach at local farmers markets about once a month to share about programs and recruit more volunteers. Let us know if you have other events you’d like us to table at. We will table at Earth Day at YES Charter.
 - Cathy shared that the May 20th plant sale at the Lost Nugget or Saturday morning coffees at the Community Center in Camptonville 10-12 would be good for tabling.
- Board Report – Sean Griffis
 - Sean shared that they are still looking for people interested in becoming board members.
- Executive Director Report – Allison Thomson
 - Fuels Projects:
 - Not a lot is going on currently for Stevens Fund fuelbreaks due to the weather.
 - We’re also still waiting on a grant agreement to extend those projects.
 - The CAL FIRE-funded roadside fuel reduction project north of Marysville Rd in the Dobbins/ Oregon House area is beginning with landowner outreach conducted by the forester, and biological and cultural surveys will begin soon, pending landowner access agreements. There was a community meeting February 22nd, where we received many great questions and concerns. More information can be found on the new project webpage: yubafiresafe.org/roadside-fuel-treatment-project and the new [FAQ document](#)

- To clarify on some common concerns:
 - This is not a PG&E project, it is overseen by the Fire Safe Council and will be handled very differently. Landowner participation is voluntary (unlike PG&E's mandated utility clearance work).
 - Landowners are welcome to opt out of the herbicide application component if the project and still have the fuels reduction work completed. Herbicide is a useful tool to control resprouting and increase the long-term effectiveness of the project, but we understand people's concerns for not wanting it applied on their property.
 - We are currently planning a demo site on one landowner's property, so that people can drive by to see the treatment end results.
 - Reach out to the forester with any additional questions (yubahfr@masonbruce.com or 530-786-0650).
- Residential Programs:
 - The [Defensible Space Cost Share \(DSCS\) program](#) closed in November, but has reopened due to a grant extension, until July 31st. It provides 50% cost share up to \$2,000 on documented defensible space expenses done in 2022 or 2023. We have around \$25,000 left, but get your application in early in case we run out before July 31st. There is an [interest form](#) we ask you to submit before completing the work so that we can reserve funds, giving you piece of mind that you will receive the reimbursement.
 - We are applying for additional funds to support the overall Home Resilience Program (Home Hardening and Defensible Space Cost Share, Special Needs Defensible Space, Community Work Days).
 - [Wildfire Mitigation Review](#) requests are slow, but it is a great time to [sign up](#) for a review. They are free, and are required to be eligible for the Cost Share program.
 - [Reflective Address Sign](#) requests have been slow. There were 6 new signs requested in January and February. We are still trying to get people to pick up signs.
 - [Residential Chipping](#) has been slow because we need enough requests to give the contractor a full day of work each time they go out, and we have not been receiving many requests. The contractor is planning to go out soon to catch up on the handful of requests that we have from the past months. We might change the program in the future, [so use it now while it is still 100% free](#).
- YWPFSC just hired a new Firewise Coordinator: Sandie Marotti-Huckins (sandie@yubafiresafe.org). She'll be a resource to support communities as they establish themselves as Firewise Communities.
- Grants:
 - The Community Wildfire Defense Grant for the CWPP update is still pending.
 - We applied to the CWSF WUI Grant to fund additional home hardening and defensible space cost share, special needs assistance (paying 100% of work for residents who are low income, disabled, or elderly), and community workdays.
 - We are applying to the CALFIRE Wildfire Prevention Grant (due next week) for similar work as the CWSF WUI Grant, but focused specifically on defensible space.

- The California Fire Safe Council Capacity Grant was not funded, which would have supported miscellaneous admin and staffing needs.
 - The CAL FIRE [Fire Hazard Severity Zones](#) map is open for comment now until April 4th.
 - Cathy added that PG&E opened a grant application for defensible space work, due at the end of March.
- We will skip an April meeting, and have an evening meeting in May. The CA Department of Insurance will be sharing about the [new insurance regulations](#) regarding wildfire risk reductions.

The next council meeting will be May 10th at 6:30pm at the Alcouffe Center and on Zoom.

No Board Meeting this month.