BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEETING MINUTES

Sacramento, CA

June 14, 2023

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEMBERS**

**Present:**

* J. Keith Gilless, Chairman
* Chris Chase
* Rich Wade
* Mike Jani
* J. Lopez
* Katie Delbar

**Absent:**

* Dawn Blake
* Elizabeth Forsburg-Pardi
* Jeremiah Hallisey

**BOARD STAFF PRESENT:**

* Edith Hannigan, Executive Officer
* Jeff Slaton, Senior Board Counsel
* Robert Roth, Board Counsel
* Jane Van Susteren, Senior Environmental Scientist
* Dr. Kristina Wolf, Environmental Scientist
* Anna Castro, Executive Assistant
* Andrew Lawhorn, Forestry Assistant II
* Alexandra La Plante, Administrative Unit Manager

**DEPARTMENTAL STAFF PRESENT:**

* Joe Tyler, Director, CAL FIRE
* Eric Huff, Staff Chief, Forest Practice Program, CAL FIRE

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

Jeff Slaton, Senior Counsel for the Board reported that during executive session the Board discussed the following matters, but no reportable actions were taken.

* California Chaparral Institute, et al., vs California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Case No. 37-2020-00005203)
* RCRC vs Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Case No. 22CECG00123)

**Consent Calendar**

**06-14-01 Chairman Gilless moves to adopt the Consent Calendar as noticed. Member Chase seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Absent**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Absent**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Hallisey: Absent**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passes.**

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

Chairman Gilless extends the Board’s sympathies to the families of the 14 fire fighters that died last week.

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

Forest Practice Program

Forest Practice Administration/Forest Practice GIS/CalTREES

* 2023 Forest Practice Rulebooks have arrived and are being distributed to Region and Unit offices.
* There is new functionality in CalTREES for Review Agencies requesting to attend a pre-harvest inspection (PHI) through First Review. An improved section is now allowing input of available PHI dates for the 10-day window from plan filing, as required by the Rules, when the attendee selects the mutually agreeable option.

Resource Protection and Improvement

Urban and Community Forestry

* The CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Program’s Green Schoolyard Grants request for proposals closed on April 28, 2023, with 68 applications requesting $355 million in grant funds. $117 million is available to award in Fiscal Year 2022-2023, with an additional $33 million proposed for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.
* Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding of $43,200,000 was allocated from the United States Forest Service for CAL FIRE’s Urban and Community Forestry Program. This money will fund some of the program’s statutorily required activities including urban tree planting and establishment, improved urban forest management, and urban forestry workforce development. The IRA funds have a heavy emphasis on serving/prioritizing disadvantaged communities. This requirement is closely aligned with the State’s goals and with how the program has been focusing for the past 10 years.
* Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding of $43,200,00 was allocated from the United States Forest Service for CAL FIRE’s Urban and Community Forestry Program. This money will fund some of the program’s statutorily required activities including urban tree planting and establishment, improved urban forest management, and urban forestry workforce development.

Demonstration State Forests

Jackson

* Prescribed fire operations continue throughout May 2023 in the Chamberlain Creek area. This included the opportunity to work alongside local Tribal partners to learn from their traditional ecological knowledge regarding the role of fire in maintaining important natural resources.
* Jackson Advisory Group met on June 6, 2023, and took a deep dive into the New Vision and learned how to incorporate those principles into project level review as the management plan is updated.

Mountain Home

* A widespread, multi-agency press release was issued on May 23, 2023, to inform the public that due to storm damage, all access to Mountain Home DSF and Batch Park County Park is restricted to authorized vehicles only. There is currently no estimated data for the roads to be made safe for public access.

Soquel

* The storm damage related forest closure since January 3, 2023, remains in effect. Forest Manager Angela Bernheisel updated the SDSF Facebook page with this information.
* VIA Magazine (AAA’s travel magazine) published an article “The Top Mountain Bike Trail Centers in the West” that featured SDSF and the Flow Trail.

Prescribed Fire and Environmental Protection

Prescribed Fire Program

* The SB 926 pilot program to establish a prescribed fire burn boss liability claims fund is close to accepting applications for enrollment into the program. Look for an announcement on the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force website soon.

Wildfire Resilience

Reforestation Services Program

* Efforts are ongoing to replace and improve the infrastructure and build new greenhouses at the Lewis A. Moran Reforestation Center (LAMRC). Staff are working with CAL FIRE Technical Services to plan and implement capital outlay and deferred maintenance projects according to the Master Plan.

Seed Bank

* Cone survey efforts are ramping up for the 2023 season with staff finalizing the cone survey memo which seeks assistance from all CAL FIRE Units. Staff are also finalizing survey plans with various contractors and grantees across the State.

Nursery

* Seed sowing operations have completed for the 2023 cycle and all seedlings grown in 22/23 cycle have been distributed.

California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP)

* CAL FIRE will be releasing approximately $1.5 million in CFIP grant funds for the successful May 2023 applications.

Forest Legacy Program (FLP)

* Plans are being finalized to offer a Forest Legacy Grant solicitation in early summer of 2023 with $9.25 million, plus a new opportunity for applicants to request due diligence funding only. This new funding is provided by the United States Forest Service and allows applicants to request funding that would be used solely for the purpose of making potential projects ready for an application.

Climate and Energy Program

Wood Products & Bioenergy

* Program staff attended the Groundbreaking Ceremony for Sierra Pacific Industries, Conifer Seedling Nursery in Gazelle on April 28, 2023. The nursery’s first phase, which is estimated to cost over $10 million, leverages a $3 million CAL FIRE grant from our program.

Forest Health

* Tribal Wildfire Resilience grant review is ongoing. Hoping to get $19 million to various tribes. There were just over $22 million in requests for $19 million in available funds.
* Tribal Wildfire Resilience grant agreements totaling $1 million of Early Action Funds were added to current Forest Health grant awards. These grant funds will go towards expanding a shaded fuel break for the Hoopa Tribe, planning and workforce development with the Yurok Tribe, and two more years of supporting the Karuk Indigenous Women’s TREX event.

Fire and Resources Assessment Program (FRAP)

* FRAP continues to assist in the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) in making Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) model revisions and in response to public comments. A total of 91 map-specific comments for technical review have been received and we are working through the review process to implement map revisions. FRAP is also assisting with planning for the upcoming FHSZ development for Local Responsibility Areas (LRA).
* Fire season as of this week, just over 1600 fires for 4,056 acres. Fires and acres have decreased compared to last year 2,721 fires for 12,095 acres.

Fire Protection

Fire Protection Program

* CAL FIRE Law Enforcement has made 25 arson arrests in 2023.

Fire Protection Operations

* As of June 5, 2023, CAL FIRE is staffing 262 engines statewide. On June 19, 2023, CAL FIRE will move to peak staffing with 365 engines staffed statewide. The Department will continue to see upticks in new initial attack fires and increased activity as the grass crop continues to dry.
* CAL FIRE will be partnering with Alert California to trial a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool that has been developed to assist in identifying anomalies detected by the cameras that may be early warning of fires. Four CAL FIRE Command Centers received training on this new tool the week of June 5, 2023, and will begin assessing the accuracy and reliability of the technology. This tool will be limited to trained emergency personnel and will not be available to the public.

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

* 11 of our 12 helicopters are in service and 4 more are on order.
* Original intent was to fly 5 of those helicopters 24 hours a day. By this summer 3 bases will fly helicopters 24 hours a day in the following counties: Butte, Riverside and San Bernadino County.
* Staff continue to work with the United States Air Force on potential National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) adjustments to consider transfer of ownership of the C130H’s stated for retardant delivery systems to the State of California.

Cooperative Fire Protection

State/Federal Programs

* CAL FIRE and the United States Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) have started a MOU agreement rewrite/update. This agreement currently allows CAL FIRE Crews to do fuels management work on BOR land. CAL FIRE receives reimbursement for the work performed under this agreement.

Camps and Crews Program

* The current statewide strength of Type I Handcrews is 107 staffed of the 233 total funded crews. That includes 57 California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) crews out of 152 funded, 24 California Conservation Corps (CCC) crews out of the 32 funded, 13 of the 35 funded CAL FIRE Firefighter I Crews and 13 of the funded 14 California National Guard Crews.
* All of CAL FIRE’s hand crews have either completed or are nearing completion of the Annual Readiness Exercises.

Safety/EMS Program

* The Safety Program has begun creating the Annual Focus on Safety, with the topics approved by the Executive.
* The Safety Program continues to work with Cal/OSHA on the development of a wildland firefighter respirator. The group has changed direction and will now do a field evaluation with no live fire in LA County in August 2023. The study will involve work capacity parameters and metrics used by Dr. Rahn in his 2010 Initial Attack Effectiveness Study that involved CAL FIRE and looked at three-person vs four-person staffing. A survey is also being created to determine what types of cultural or other barriers may exist with firefighters using a wildland respirator.

Training Program

* Had 2 graduations over the last 2 weeks.
* We are running 2 classes simultaneously with 96-students at a time, every 11-weeks.
* In addition to the academies in Ione and Riverside, we have opened a training academy in coordination with Shasta Community College.

Office of the State Fire Marshal

* The Office of the State Fire Marshal provided fire and life safety services to our public locations and public events including fireworks displays.
* The Office of the State Fire Marshal will take the lead on making sure that the supplier, vendors, and public are safe at those events.

Wildfire Risk Reduction

Wildfire Preparedness Defensible Space (D-Space)

* 297,392 Defensible Space inspections performed this fiscal year which is 119% of the goal.

Home Hardening

* Work continues on the Joint Powers Authority with CalOES in the initial three pilot communities. San Diego County, Shasta County, and Lake County. Staff continue to expand pilots beyond the initial three locations to include additional communities in San Diego County, Tuolumne County, El Dorado County, and Shasta County.

Burn Permits

* Since January 1, 2023, we have issued 45,883 burn permits throughout the state using the new electronic on-line burn permit issuance system.

Wildfire Planning and Statistics

Pre-Fire Plan (Fire Plan)

* Over 1,100 comments were received during the public comment period for Fire Hazard Severity Zones in State Responsibility Area. Staff have been reviewing public comments and anticipate another public comment period.

Wildland Fuels Reduction Reporting as of May 17, 2023.

* Fuel Reduction Projects: 526 projects, 105% of the goal.
* Combined Fuel Reduction:
  + 54,208 acres treated
  + Unit Projects-28,673 acres
  + Grant Projects-22,848 acres
* Prescribed Fire (also counted in fuel reduction)
  + 21,502 acres treated

Firewise

* 687 National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Firewise USA Communities in good standing.

Wildfire Prevention Grants

* 227 applications received for $433 million dollars requested.

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

CAL FIRE + LinkedIn

* CAL FIRE + LinkedIn Career Page is live. The DEI Program will continue to collaborate with Workforce Planning and Recruitment Program (WP&R) to build upon and promote DEI initiatives along with additional resources and career opportunities available through CAL FIRE.

Staffing Update

* Making an announcement soon on the Assistant Deputy Director Climate and Energy.
* Working with HR on filling Dennis Hall’s position in Forest Practice.
* Deputy Director of Tribal Relations is still opened and hoping to fill it soon.
* Kerry Garcia has been moved from being the Deputy Director of Fiscal Services to Deputy Director of Management Services.
* New Deputy Director of Fiscal Services is Christy White.
* Fire Protection Program is now filled by Mike Parkes.
* Deputy Director of Co-op Fire is Bret Gouvea; he will be retiring this summer.
* In the next 6-8 months expecting movements in units and regions.
* Chief Deputy Director Chris Anthony will be retiring at the end of June.

**Board Comments:**

Member Chase would like to know if there is a problem with the timber harvest plans because 52% of the submitted plans so far this year have been returned. Is there feedback given back to the plan submitters on what the issue is?

* Director Tyler will follow up on that question.

Chairman Gilless echoed the praise for Chris Anthony. Also, commented on the larger training classes. What is the replacement rate given the age and demographics in the workforce?

* This is the reason for opening Shasta College. Had we maintained the training programs in Ione and Riverside we would have had only maintained the necessity of the workforce that is retiring through attrition, voluntary retirement, or otherwise. We needed to move to another facility to really meet the expanding growth of this department.

The Chairman complimented the number of defensible space inspections and acres treated so far this year.

Chairman Gilless said there has been lots of federal and state dollars going to respirator research – are those studies concluded or still ongoing?

* The studies are still ongoing. The last effectiveness study was done in 2010. The program is in its infancy but still making progress on this. The research is working on both urban and wildland fire environments.

The Chairman asked about the qualifications to be part of the new prescribed fire liability claims fund.

* Qualified CAL FIRE Burn Boss through the Office of the State Fire Marshal

Chairman was glad to hear the home hardening pilots are moving forward. Is CAL FIRE doing a collective report on the experience there?

* Director Tyler stated that they are joined with Cal OES and FEMA to address this.

Chairman Gilless asked why did UC San Diego split from ALERTWildfire?

* The Director couldn’t speculate on why they might have left.

Member Lopez thanked Director Tyler for his support in the California Conservation Corps. Member Lopez has seen firsthand how the kids are impacted in a positive way.

**Public Comment:**

Karen Maki asked how close to completion are you on the home hardening and what will happen when you finish the pilot and is there someone else on staff that I can speak to about this in more detail.

* Director Tyler stated that there are 3 pilot projects that are being considered and are working closely with FEMA on meeting those requirements to release those funds. You can get additional information on the internet at [www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov) and look for the program path for the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

**US Forest Service Annual Report, Gary Church, Acting Deputy Regional Forester**

Chairman Gilless asked what is the current status of the litigation regarding the use of fire retardant in air drops?

* That’s not in our program area but we are still able to use it. No change to the status right now.

The Chairman asked about the use of satellites for real time detection – are those military satellites or a different set of satellites?

* Mr. Church said he’ll have to get back to the Chairman on the specifics regarding the types of satellites being used.

Member Chase appreciates Mr. Church’s Region VIII perspective. He mentioned Mr. Church predicted a three fold increase, year over year, in acres treated, yet projecting a decline in timber sales over that same time. Are the timber harvest numbers achievable?

* Mr. Church mentioned stewardship agreements that will help increase the number of treated acres.

Member Delbar asked about livestock permits and allotments on the forest. Is there any progress in opening more permits and allotments?

* Mr. Church will have to get the numbers for Member Delbar.

Member Delbar also asked about staffing range-specific folks on the forests and getting hiring to move faster to hiring more range professionals.

* The federal hiring process can take months. They are doing what they can to make the hiring more efficient for HR to process. In Region V they are trying to do more work with tribes in inter-governmental agreements and veterans to build staff. There are challenges with hiring but there’s no way to get around the backlog.

Member Delbar asked about agreements with Mendocino County to improve the main road leading to Lake Pillsbury. She doesn’t expect an answer but wanted to bring it to Mr. Church’s attention.

Member Wade mentioned the reforestation task force Mr. Church brought up and asked if there was some way to follow that effort. He’s also concerned about having a sufficient tree replanting workforce as well as other issues that arise if replanting takes too long to happen, such as brush regrowth, that complicates replanting.

**2024 CAL FIRE Strategic Plan, Phyllis Banducci, CAL FIRE**

**Executive Officer Report, Edith Hannigan, Executive Officer**

**Report of the Standing Committees**

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

**Management Committee, Chris Chase, Chair**

L.A. Moran Reforestation Center Seed Price Change Proposal presentation by Denia Troxell, Seed Bank Manager.

* + Proposing a 28% increase across the board on all services and seeds to account for inflation.

**06-14-02 Member Chase moves to approve the proposed price change as distributed over seed processing and storage of the L.A. Moran Reforestation Center. Member Jani seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Absent**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Absent**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Hallisey: Absent**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passes.**

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

**Report of Board’s Advisory Committees**

**Effectiveness Monitoring Committee, Edith Hannigan, Executive Officer**

The Effectiveness Monitoring Committee discussed the initial concept proposals that were received for funding.

* The committee requested full proposals from all 4 initial contact proposals that were submitted.
* The committee voted to approve Drew Coe as their co-chair.
* Loretta Moreno from the Resources Agency is leaving the committee. Her service to the EMC was appreciated.

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

RMAC Updates:

* CAL FIRE has a published fuel reduction guidance pamphlet which is available online to the general public.
* RMAC has organized a committee that produced an addendum to that which included targeted grazing practices for fuels management. This has been provided to CAL FIRE and awaiting feedback from them.
* The State Lands Grazing License subcommittee have created templates for the new grazing licensing agreement for use by State of California agencies. This is awaiting review by Department of General Services.
* RMAC continues with outreach and education work we have had two more field days since our last meeting one was in Ojai on the grazing program. The second one was in Paso Robles where the City of Paso Robles has been using sheep and goat grazing in the Salinas River.

**CONCLUSION**

**Public Forum**

**Public Comments:**

* Richard Gienger, stated he was at the recent JAG meeting and commented on the Directors report regarding Jackson Demonstration State Forest.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:





Edith Hannigan J. Keith Gilless

Executive Officer Chairman