BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEETING MINUTES

SACRAMENTO, CA

November 6, 2024

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEMBERS**

**Present:**

* Terrence O’Brien, Chair
* Mike Jani
* J. Lopez
* Rich Wade
* Katie Delbar
* Chris Chase

**Absent:**

* Elizabeth Forsburg-Pardi, Vice Chair
* Dawn Blake
* Ali Jahangiri

**BOARD STAFF PRESENT:**

* Edith Hannigan, Executive Officer
* Dan Stapleton, Asst. Executive Officer, Foresters Registration
* Jeff Slaton, Senior Board Counsel
* Robert Roth, Board Counsel
* Dan Craig, Regulations Program Manager
* Jane Van Susteren, Regulations Coordinator
* Kristina Wolf, Senior Environmental Scientist
* Alexandra La Plante, Administrative Unit Manager
* Marcie Yates, Land Use Planning Manager
* Alex Vest, Wildfire Planning Specialist
* Mazonika Kemp, Records Administrator
* Anna Castro, Executive Assistant

**DEPARTMENTAL STAFF PRESENT:**

* Joe Tyler, Director/Fire Chief, CAL FIRE
* Anale Burlew, Chief Deputy Director, Forestry & Fire Protection, CAL FIRE
* Eric Huff, Assistant Deputy Director, Forest Practice, CAL FIRE

**Board Members Roll Call:**

Member Lopez Present

Member Wade Present

Member Jani Present

Member Chase Present

Member Blake Absent

Member Delbar Present

Member Forsburg-Pardi Absent

Member Jahangiri Absent

Chairman O’Brien Present

*Quorum established*

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

Jeff Slaton, Senior Counsel for the Board reported that during executive closed session the Board considered the two litigation matters on the agenda. With respect to the two litigation matters the Board discussed and took no reportable actions.

**Consent Calendar Items:**

1. Review of Rulemaking Matrix
2. Approval of September 2024 meeting minutes

**11-06-01 Member Wade moves to accept items on the Consent Calendar as presented. Member Lopez seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Absent**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Absent**

**Jahangiri: Absent**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Report of the Chairman, Terrence O’Brien:**

Chairman O’Brien shared his view regarding the pending propositions on the California Ballet regarding funding for wildland and compression issues. Chairman stated that there are significate challenges and need all the resources that we can get to address the significate problems facing our wildlands and forest.

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

Director Tyler informed the Board that the State is in red flag warnings across the Sacramento Valley and the coast all the way down to Southern California. Director thanked Chief Huff’s team for providing the Watershed Emergency response team assessments of all the large fires.

Resource Management

Forest Practice Program

Watershed Protection Program

* Staff have assisted with the completion of the Bridge and Airport Fire Watershed Emergency Response Team (WERT) assessments and are continuing to assist with the Line and Coffee Pot Fires WERT assessments.

Resources Protection and Improvement Program

Urban and Community Forestry

* A contract to develop a statewide strategic plan to increase urban tree canopy cover is being routed for signatures. The contract between Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and CAL FIRE will solicit input from stakeholder groups, reference tree canopy cover assessment data, and recommend strategies to the California Legislature as required by AB 2251 (2023).

Demonstration State Forests

Boggs Mountain and Las Posadas

* Boy Scout Troop 45 of Pleasant Hill created a new portion of trail named Nates Cutoff on September 17, 2024. This was part of the ongoing Boggs Mountain trail reconstruction efforts.

Jackson

* The Jackson Advisory Group (JAG) met at the Camp 1 day use area on October 4, 2024, to review fish habitat restoration projects in the Noyo River, the Fire and Fuel Mitigation study, and the proposed Camp One Timber Harvesting Plan (THP). The JAG found the Camp One THP in conformance with the Management Plan and the New Vision. This THP will be a source of large logs for additional fish habitat restoration and provide a ridgetop shaded fuel break near a popular camping and day use area.
* The public meeting schedule for the initial Management Plan review has been released and is available on the Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) website.
* Prescribed fires to support the Fire and Fuel Mitigation study began on October 22, 2024. Researchers for this study and the associated wildlife monitoring were on hand to gather information and protect their equipment during operations.

Soquel

* The Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District contracted with Community Tree Service to treat an additional 71 acres on Soquel and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park along the common boundary. This work ties into a larger 200+ acre forest and fuels managed project. This larger view of forest health and fuels reduction across multiple landowners with high levels of collaboration can be seen as a huge success. Thank you to the Resource Management staff in the San Mateo/Santa Cruz Unit for all the work they are doing in Soquel.

Prescribed Fire and Environmental Protection Program

Prescribed Fire Program

* As wildfire conditions have moderated in recent weeks, there has been an increase in the planning and conducting of prescribed fire projects by CAL FIRE Units
* There are currently 68 reservations in the Prescribed Fire Liability Claims fund already this year. That represents about 8,600 acres of prescribed and cultural fires planned. This is about twice as many this time last year.

Cultural Resources Program

* CAL FIRE has been invited to participate in three cultural burn events.
	+ October 28, 2024, in Tulare County near Camp Nelson on Save the Redwoods property with Cultural Burner Ron Goode, Deputy Director Helen Lopez and Staff Chief Len Nielson attended the event.
	+ November 8-10, 2024, in Mariposa at the Kirk Estate with Cultural Burner Ron Goode.
	+ November 8-10, 2024, in Woodland at the Cashe Creek reserve.

Wildfire Resilience Program

Reforestation Services Program

* On October 8, 2024, staff hosted facility tours and a program overview of the Lewis A. Moran Reforestation Center in Davis, CA for the CAL FIRE Executive Team and a delegation from the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP)

* The CFIP program has opened a funding selection for October 2024 which will fund up to 20 applications for approximately $2 million. 12 applications have been received so far with a total ask of $1.7 million. The batch will be submitted to the Grants Management Unit on October 31, 2024. We are excited to have CFIP up and running again after a long pause due to budget restrictions.

Forest Stewardship

* The two remaining block grants from the 2024 Wildfire and Forest Resilience Block Grant solicitation have been executed. These awards were put on pause due to the budget freeze in spring of 2024.

Forest Legacy Program (FLP)

* The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is in the process of making final award selections for the 2024 FLP Grant Solicitation. Seven full applications were received for a total funding request of approximately $12M. FLP has approximately $8.5M to award.

Forest Health

* Forest Health Program will open their FY 24-25 Forest Health grant solicitation on November 13, 2024, with up to $70 million available for grant projects. All applications will be due on January 15, 2025. Awards are scheduled to be announced in Spring 2025.

Tribal Wildfire Resilience

* Planning is underway to open a Tribal Wildfire Resilience grant solicitation for $5 million in late 2024, with applications due in early 2025. We expect an extended public comment and tribal consultation period for the grant guidelines to receive input from tribes and stakeholders.

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force

* On October 10, 2024, nearly 500 people gathered in South Lake Tahoe (and over 300 joined online) for the Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force’s Sierra Nevada Regional meeting. During the meeting the Task Force and CAL FIRE unveiled new tools that revolutionize how California tracks and communicates the states significant progress in improving wildfire and landscape resilience. Meeting highlights and panel recordings are now available.
* The next meeting of the Task Force will be in Sacramento on December 13, 2024, where the agenda will focus on a synthesis of the latest science available on many topics relating to landscape health and wildfire resilience. 2025 meeting dates have been announced, with the next Regional Meeting set for March 27-28, 2025, in Marin County.

Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP)

Forest Health Research Grants

* FRAP is currently soliciting concept proposals for the Forest Health Research Grant Program. Concept proposal applications are due November 14, 2024, at 3pm. Awards are expected to total at least $4 million. This year’s solicitation is dedicated in memory of Ryan Tompkins, California Registered Professional Forester (RPF) #3108.

Fire Protection

Fire Protection Program

Law Enforcement/Civil Cost Recovery

* Through September 2024, CAL FIRE Law Enforcement Officer have made 232 arrests and issued 594 citations.
	+ 109 of those arrests are for Arson.

Fire Protection Operations

* Seven new micro weather stations and 22 new portable Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) have been received in Sacramento. CAL FIRE Intel staff will be working with CAL FIRE Units on placement.

Hand Crew Program

* CAL FIRE continues to experience a fluctuating number of available CAL FIRE Type I Hand Crews statewide. As of October 23, 2024, CAL FIRE can staff 148 of 236 Hand crews available for statewide response. The number of Hand crews available significantly impacts wildland fire suppression, conservation work, prescribed fire activities and fuels reduction work. With the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Hand Crew model, there were 68 of 152 authorized incarcerated Persons Hand Crews, 28 of 32 California Conservation Corps Crews, 14 o14 crews from the California Military Department, and 38 of 38 CAL FIRE Firefighter I Crews are hired. Hand Crew numbers may fluctuate due to staffing and crew typing certifications.

Training Program

CAL FIRE Training Centers

* Company Officer Academy (COA) (2024) students graduating is 514, with current Firefighter Academy (FFA) students continuing into COA in January for 80 additional trained Company Officers, for a total of 594.

Office of the State Fire Marshal

Wildfire Preparedness

* Utility Wildfire Mitigation
	+ Several Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) events have been initiated in the last few weeks effecting serval thousand customers.
* Defensible Space
	+ Program staff continue to provide training to “Qualified Entities” which are non-profit organizations that are trained by CAL FIRE to perform defensible space assessments.

Wildfire Planning and Statistics

* Wildland Fuels Reduction Reporting
	+ As incident activity diminishes and weather conditions change to a cooler environment, we anticipate an increase in fuels reduction and prescribed fire completed acres and personnel hours to be entered into CalMAPPER.
* Fire Plan
	+ The Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Reporting (FTER) public dashboard was released on the CAL FIRE website on October 10, 2024.

Community Wildfire Mitigation Assistance (CWMA)

* Land Use Planning
	+ NFPA Firewise USA
		- Currently, there are 959 communities in good standing, with 34 new applications in the portal for review.
	+ FY 2023-24 Wildfire Prevention Grants Award Notification on August 20, 2024
		- 94 Awards totaling just over $90 million.

Communications

Year to Date Wildfire Statistics (CAL FIRE and Federal)

* We have burned slightly less acres across the State than the 5-year average, just over a million. But there have been more fires 7200 compared to 6900 in our 5-year average.
* On November 19, 2024, the CAL FIRE Communications program, alongside CalOES, and the San Diego Unit and County Staff will support an Office of the State Fire Marshal California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP) media event in San Diego County. The event will highlight a home that has been retrofitted with home hardening features as part of the CWMP. This is the second media event of this kind for 2024. The first occurred in June in Lake County.

**Board Comments:**

* Member Chase thanked the Director for his report and the Department’s engagement in the Butte Fire in Shasta County. Also, he stated that at the end of the federal fiscal year on September 30 the Forest Service laid off number of seasonal firefighters nationwide due to budget issues. How will that affect the Department’s planning and engagement as we are still in fire season? How has that impacted California?
	+ Director Tyler stated CAL FIRE’s relationship with Region 5 California Forest Service in 2024 has been outstanding. Stated there has not been a time that CAL FIRE has not engaged early this year. Director Tyler explained that Region 5 understood that we were still in fire season and asked for contingency funds and were approved. They kept all their resources on duty.
* Member Lopez commented on the positive response on the Defensible Space Training.
* Member Delbar commented that she noticed Christmas Tree in front of the Capital and was wondering where it was from.
	+ Director Tyler stated that the tree is a White Fir from the La Tour Demonstration State Forest in Shasta County and is 64 feet tall. It was transported by the Shasta Trinity Unit.

**Public Comments:**

* Richard Gienger shared he would like to see a public report on explaining the Biometrics program and what they are doing. Regarding Jackson Demonstration State Forest, he shared his views on how he feels that CAL FIRE is not handling the forest properly.

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

Edith Hannigan reported that progress has started on the 2024 Annual Report collecting the data and working on a first draft of report. A copy of the draft report should be ready for review in our December’s Board Meeting.

**Report of the Standing Committees:**

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

The Forest Practice Committee met yesterday and discussed the following four agenda items:

* Discussed the Committees ongoing effort to craft the Standard Rules for allowance of heavy equipment operations within the WLPZ to treat fuels. Changes that had been made to the language in the September meeting were reviewed and no substantial comment about the most recent changes were made. The committee is ready to direct Board staff to begin to create the documentation for the 45 day Notice Initial Statement of Reasons and proceed with Rulemaking process.
* Discussions on draft language that had been prepared by Board staff to incorporate requirement of the newly chaptered AB 2246 which made changes to forest fire prevention exemption.
* Continued to discussed correspondence received as the result of the Board’s annual call for Regulatory Review. Board staff itemized the content of correspondence received and provided information to the Board.
* Discussion continued on the overlapping harvest permits. This was an issue that was raised by CAL FIRE. Committee will continue to work on these issues and try to provide better information to the public on what is happening in the woods with respect to acres being treated under these exemptions.

**Management Committee, Chris Chase, Chair**

The Management Committee met yesterday and discussed the following four items:

* Discussed the financial impacts of the Utility Right of Way Exemption. No changes to the draft have been made since the August version. Discussed Board staff to work with utilities and other stakeholders to work on a draft by looking at the financial impacts. A draft for review should be ready by March 2025.
* Received update from the Uneven-Age Working Group. They are working on a couple different issues. Stocking standards in the Southern subdistrict and looking at variable retention. The committee should be receiving a report in January.
* Committee discussed the Oak Woodland Restoration Exemption, precipitated by AB 2276, and only had a couple of decision points on this that the Board has potential input. Committee to likely advance the existing language that’s currently in the plea for the Emergency Rulemaking, most likely to decide in December and bring that in front of the Board in concert with Forest Practice whose looking at other elements of that same legislation.
* Discussed the 2025 Rulemaking Priorities.

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

The Resource Protection Committee met yesterday and discussed the following:

* The Land Use Planning Program gave an update on program.
	+ There were two safety elements that were reviewed.
* 715 Firewise Community renewals applications to be submitted for review.
* The Wildland Urban Planner training which is an excellent training for planners and people in the fire business will have four more sessions in February. Registration will begin in early January.
* Grant Manager Natalie Burke gave a Wildfire Prevention Grant Presentation to the Committee. This presentation is available on the website for viewing.
* The committee discussed the Fire Risk Reduction Community List Regulation and would like to discuss authorization to submit the rulemaking regarding the 2025 Fire Risk Reduction Community of List for Noticing of 45- day comment period.

**11-06-02 Member Lopez moves to authorize Board staff to submit the rulemaking entitled “2025 Fire Risk Reduction Community List” for noticing of the 45-day Comment Period and take all appropriate actions consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act for this purpose, including preparation and submission of the Notice of Proposed Action and Initial Statement of Reasons. Member Jani seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Absent**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Absent**

**Jahangiri: Absent**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**11-06-03 Member Lopez moves to authorize Board staff to submit the rulemaking entitled “Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone Amendments, 2024” for noticing of the 45-day Comment Period and take all appropriate actions consistent with the Administrative Procedure Act for this purpose, including preparation and submission the Notice of Proposed Action and Initial Statement of Reasons. Member Jani seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Delbar: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Absent**

**Forsburg-Pardi: Absent**

**Jahangiri: Absent**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Presentations:**

**California’s Timber Harves Permit Process: Deploying Lean Six Sigma Processes to Evaluate Effectiveness and Efficiencies, Jeannette Kamalski and Zachary Burger, NIVACK Group**

**Francis H. Raymond Award, posthumous presentation of the award to the family of Ryan Tompkins, RPF#3108**

**Chumash National Marine Heritage Sanctuary, Paul Michel, Regional Policy Coordinator, NOAA Sanctuaries West Coast Region**

**CAL FIRE Strategic Plan, Christine McMorrow, Deputy Director, Strategic Communications, CAL FIRE**

**RMAC’S Role in Wildfire Resilience: Bringing Prescribed Grazing to the Forefront, Cole Bush, owner-operator Shepherdess Land & Livestock, as well as the Grazing School of the West; Dr. Stephanie Larson, Director, U.C. Cooperative Extension Sonoma County.**

**CONCLUSION**

**Public Forum**

**Public Comments:**

No public comments.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:



Edith Hannigan Terrence O’Brien

Executive Officer Chairman