BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEETING MINUTES

SACRAMENTO, CA

December 11, 2024

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEMBERS**

**Present:**

* Terrence O’Brien, Chair
* Elizabeth Forsburg-Pardi, Vice Chair
* Dawn Blake
* J. Lopez
* Rich Wade
* Chris Chase

**Absent:**

* Katie Delbar
* Mike Jani
* 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 VanSusteren, 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:**

* Matthew Reischman, Deputy Director, Resource Management, CAL FIRE
* Anale Burlew, Chief Deputy Director, CAL FIRE
* Eric Huff, Assistant Deputy Director, Forest Practice, CAL FIRE

**Board Members Roll Call:**

Member Lopez Present

Member Wade Present

Member Jani Absent

Member Chase Present

Member Blake Present

Member Delbar Absent

Member Forsburg-Pardi Present

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 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:**

**12-11-01 Member Chase moves to accept items on the Consent Calendar as presented. Member Lopez seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg Pardi: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Jani: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Jahangiri: Absent**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

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

Chairman O’Brien stated that last week the Governor announced the appointment of two new Board members. Elicia Goldsworthy and Ryan Hilburn will be at our January Board meeting. The Board is losing two outstanding Board members Professional Foresters, Chis Chase and Mike Jani. Chairman shared that he enjoyed working with Member Chase and Member Jani. Also, stated he has enjoyed a lot from both of them and will miss working with them.

**Report of the Director, Matthew Reischman, Deputy Director, Resource Management, CAL FIRE:**

Natural Resource Management

Forest Practice Program

Watershed Protection Program

* The Mountain Fire Watershed Emergency Response Team (WERT) evaluation was completed in Ventura County.

Forest Practice Administration

* Staff are working on inserting new Forest Practice Rules and statue changes into the forthcoming 2025 edition of the Forest Practice Rulebook.

Resource Protection and Improvement Programs

Urban and Community Forestry Program

* Matthew Reischman attended the Council of Western State Foresters annual meeting November 4-8, 2024, as chair of the Urban and Community Forestry Committee. The committee develops strategies for assistance to urban constituents, interacts with federal counterparts on grants and programs and coordinates interstate collaboration.

Resource Improvement Programs

Forest Entomology and Pathology

* A new infestation of invasive shot hole borers has been found in Santa Cruz County near the town of Felton, Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, and along the San Lorenzo River. DNA analysis has shown that this invasive shote hole borer is a different species from the two previously known in California. This insect and its associated fungus are from south and southeast Asia and have been established in the southeastern United States and Argentina. Work is ongoing to determine the host range, the extent of the infestation, and the potential impacts of the pest.
* A single invasive shot hole borer was found in a trap in San Mateo County. So far, no infested trees have been found, but surveys and monitoring are on-going.

Demonstration State Forests

Jackson

* Five public and three Tribal meetings have been held in Ukiah and Fort Bragg to start the review of the Forest Management Plan. Three additional meetings are planned on December 12, 13, and 16, 2024. CAL FIRE, with the support from Clifton Environmental, will then produce a draft plan in early 2025 before seeking additional public and Tribal feedback.

La Tour, Ellen Picket, Big Bend, Miller, and Noble

* On October 29, 2024, two Trinity County school groups attended the 2024 Capital Christmas Tree Harvest. Both groups received training on the purpose of a DSF, cone/tree identification, what tools foresters carry and what they should focus on if they think this is cool job that they might want to do when they grow up.

Prescribed Fire and Environmental Protection Programs

Prescribed Fire

* There are currently 82 projects covering 10,823 acres enrolled in the Prescribed Fire Claims Fund.

Vegetation Management (VMP)

* The program has accomplished 15,850 acres of prescribed fire since July 1, 2024. This will vary from Cal Mapper reported numbers, as VMP numbers are only for VMP projects.

Environmental Protection

* There are currently six Good Neighbor Authority Agreements in various stages of development. Details will be reported when agreements are executed.

Wildfire Resilience Programs

Reforestation Services

* Seed processing operations continue steadily because of a banner cone collection year that brought in 4,630 bushels of cone primarily of ponderosa pine sources from the central and northern Sierra.
* The second of three rounds of seedling lifting will occur during the second week of December 2024 comprising, in total, nearly 300,000 containerized conifer seedlings for planting by landowners during the fall 2024-spring 2025 timeframe.

Forest Legacy (FLP)

* 2024 State Forest Legacy solicitation awarded funding to four new Forest Legacy Projects for a total of $8.5 million. This brings the total number of Forest Legacy projects currently in development to 16.
* The United States Forest Service has announced the funding of the Arrowhead Ridge #2 Forest Legacy project. This small strategic tract project in San Bernardino County is funded by the Inflation Reduction Act.

Climate and Energy Programs

Forest Health

* Forest Health Program opened 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. For more information, please visit the Forest Health grant website at [www.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/grants/forest-health](http://www.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/grants/forest-health).

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force

* On December 13, 2024, the Task Force will host a meeting in Sacramento <https://wildfiretaskforce.org/meetings/> that will highlight recent research guiding California’s efforts to respond to increasing wildfire risks in a changing climate. The Task Force’s Science Advisory Pane will provide key findings on reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire, impacts of wildfire to ecosystems and public health, post-fire restoration, and new technologies and innovations to accelerated progress toward resilience. These findings will help inform the Task Force’s 2025 Action Plan. The meeting will also feature a preview of CAL FIRE’s 2024 Forest and Rangelands Assessment.

Fire and Resources Assessment Program (FRAP)

Forest Health Research Grants

* FRAP is currently soliciting concept proposals for the Forest Health Research Grant Program. Concept proposal applications closed on November 14, 2024, FRAP received 101 concept proposals. Awards are expected to total at least $4 million. We anticipate awarding approximately 15 research grants in total.

Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA)

* There are three contractors working throughout the state and the 2024 field season concluded on November 15, 2024. We are at approximately 97% of completion of plots with access granted, or 83% of all plots.
* Through FIA Intensification, California is moving from a 10-year to a 5-year remeasurement cycle. Through we haven’t yet fully achieved 5-year intensification, we are at about 6-7 years on re-measurement. This is better than much of the country which is at 12-13 years due to several challenges the FIA program has been facing in recent years.

Risk Modeling

* Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Modeling for Local Responsibility Area (LRA) has been completed with review edits confirmed. Final Model outputs are under quality assurance review and are on target for December data finalization. The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and FRAP staff are working on map and web products needed for LAR outreach and data delivery.

Fire Protection

Fire Protection Program

Law Enforcement/Civil Cost Recovery

* Through November 2024, CAL FIRE Law Enforcement Officers have made 267 arrests and issued 682 citations. 140 of these arrests are for Arson.

Fire Protection Operations

* In 2024, CAL FIRE Incident Management Teams (IMTs) have been deployed 16 times to 13 separate incidents.
* On December 4-5, 2024, CAL FIRE Incident Management Teams (IMT) Incident Commanders along with the California Wildland Coordinating Group (CWCG) IMT Incident Commanders met to conduct an after-action-review on this past summer fires, specifically to cover areas of cooperative success and any areas where improvement is needed during co-managed incidents.

Cooperative Fire Protection

* A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is under revision between the United States of America, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Department of the Interior and the State of California, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The BOR has multiple water resource management projects for purposes such as irrigation, flood control, and electricity generation. Considering the need to protect these facilities and public lands from wildfires, Reclamation aims to manage its lands effectively to mitigate fire risks but lacks sufficient staff and resources to do so. Given that many of these lands are adjacent to private and State properties, a partnership with CAL FIRE is the most effective and efficient way of meeting this need. This collaboration focuses on implementing pre-fire Management activities on Reclamation lands, providing mutual benefits in reducing wildfire occurrence and severity.
* A MOU is being developed between the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and CAL FIRE to enhance emergency response and resilience against wildfire threats while promoting sustainable management of California’s natural resources. This MOU establishes a collaborative framework between both agencies. The agreement outlines the joint mission of the Participants to safeguard communities and improve wildfire management and prevention efforts through the exchange of expertise in operational response, disaster risk, technology, community awareness, and research. Key objectives include strengthening wildfire response capacity, promoting prevention initiatives, coordinating flood emergency responses, and ensuring effective management of multi-agency responses during natural disasters through established systems like the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS), recognizing the necessity for coordination between the agencies in managing their respective responsibilities.

Hand Crew Program

* CAL FIRE continues to experience a fluctuating number of available CAL FIRE Type I Hand Crews statewide. As of November 27, 2024, 142 of 236 CAL FIRE Hand Crews are staffed and available for statewide response. The number of available Hand Crews significantly impacts wildland fire suppression, conservation work, prescribed fire activities, and fuels reduction work. The available Type I crews include the following Hand Crew Models: 66 of 152 authorized California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) Incarcerated Persons Hand Crews, 29 of 32 California Conservation Corps (CCC) Hand Crews, 13 of 14 California Military Department (CMD) Hand Crews, and 34 of 38 CAL FIRE Firefighter I (FFI) Hand Crews. Hand crew numbers may fluctuate due to staffing and crew typing certifications.
* The hand crew program to date has provided 4,130,567 hours assigned to emergency incidents. This includes the CDCR, CCC, CMD, and CAL FIRE FFI Hand Crew models.
* CAL FIRE hand crew program has a request from Germany to attend and audit the hand crew supervisor training. We will continue to coordinate the details to support this request.

Training Program

Statewide Training

* The Training Officers Conference was November 4 to 8, 2024, at the Natomas Training Center, with over 110 attendees and participants.

CAL FIRE Training Centers

* 2024 Company Officer Academy (COA) students graduated is 514, with current Firefighter Academy (FFA) students continuing into COA in January 2025 for 80 additional trained Company Officers, for a total of 594.

Office of the State Fire Marshal

Utility Wildfire Mitigation

* There have been 19 PSPS events this year. Several PSPS and red flag events were completed before recent precipitation storms across the state.

Wildfire Preparedness

* Burn Permit Application has become such a success some Air Resources boards have joined our application process, which allows us to streamline their permit process with ours. This is a great opportunity to continue our outreach to encompass all the ARB to use our application.
	+ Permits issued since May 1, 2023: 137,056

Defensible Space

* Inspection Totals Year to Date: 282,826

Wildfire Planning and Statistics

Wildfire Planning

* Held annual Fire Plan Workshop in November 2024 with over 60 attendees from CAL FIRE Units, Region and Program
* Fuels Treatment Effectiveness (FTER) public dashboard is available on the CAL FIRE website.

Communications

* Total Incident Response for 2024: 555,349
* As of November 25th, we have had 12 new fires. 9 were within CAL FIRE’s jurisdiction.
* Year to date: 2024: 7,830 fires, 1,045,204 acres. Last year at this time 2023 we were at 6,607 fires, 308,890 acres.
* 5-year average is 7,445 fires at about 1, 393,548 acres.

Tribal Affairs Program

* Tribal Wildfire Resilience is preparing to open a grant solicitation this winter with up to $5 million total available. We plan to post draft grant guidelines for public comment in December and have applications due in March. This grant funds tribal projects in planning, implementation, and workforce development related to wildfire resilience and traditional ecological knowledge.

**Board Comments:**

* Member Wade asked about the forest inventory analysis and the role of CAL FIRE - is it just a transition from once in 10 year sampling to once in 5 year sampling that CAL FIRE is providing resources to make it happen? What percentage is being done by CAL FIRE vs National Forest?
	+ Director Reischman stated that CAL FIRE has right now in contract with the Forest Service. We are hiring the contractors and then the information they collect is going to the forest service and they are validating that information.
* Member Chase asked about the THP return rate, we are at 98 out of 193 plans submitted and 51% have been returned. He urges that the Department and the RPF community do what they can to address these issues to streamline the process.

**Public Comments:**

* Richard Gienger commented on CAL FIRE’s Management Plan and voiced his displeasure with how the Jackson State Forest is being handled.
* George Gentry stated he wanted to make the Board aware of the FRAP assessment is not a report for the Task Force. It was first put out as the Forest and Rangeland Resource Assessment and Policy Act of 1977. The only body in that law that has an affirmative duty to do something with that report is the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. It is incumbent upon the Board to take that assessment and write forest policy and assess research needs for the State of California. It is the Board’s report. He stated he assumes that CAL FIRE has a schedule to present the report to the Board in the near future.

**US Forest Service Annual Report, Kara Chadwick, Deputy Regional Forester**

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

The Executive Officer stated there is a draft of the Annual Report in Board binders. Executive Officer acknowledged Chris Chase and Mike Jani of their last meeting. She stated that both were instrumental help to her during her transition into the Executive Officer role and they both will be missed.

**Report of the Regulations Coordinator, Jane VanSusteren**

**12-11-02 Member Wade moves to approve the Final Statement of Reasons for the Rulemaking entitled “Licensing Fee Amendments, 2024”. Member Chase seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg Pardi: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Jani: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Jahangiri: Absent**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**12-11-03 Member Wade moves to adopt the draft regulatory text for the Rulemaking entitled “Licensing Fee Amendments, 2024”, and authorized staff to take all actions reasonably necessary to have the adopted regulations go into effect, including making appropriate non-substantive changes to facilitate OAL review and approval. Member Lopez seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg Pardi: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Jani: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Jahangiri: Absent**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Report of the Standing Committees:**

**Forest Practice Committee and Joint Forest Practice and Management Committee, Rich Wade, Chair**

The Forest Practice and Management Committee met yesterday in a joint meeting and discussed the following two agenda items:

* Consideration of Rulemaking for Emergency Forest Resiliency Exemption and Oak Woodland Exemptions.
* Discussion of the 2025 Rulemaking Priorities. There is one actionable item that came out of that meeting.

**12-11-04 Member Wade moves to adopt the finding of emergency and rule text for the Rulemaking title “Emergency Forest Resiliency Exemption and Oak Woodland exemptions” and authorize staff to take all actions reasonably necessary to have the adopted regulations go into effect, including making appropriate non substantive changes and any changes to facilitate OAL review and approval. Member Lopez seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg Pardi: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Jani: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Jahangiri: Absent**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

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

The Committee met in a separate session in the afternoon with a few agenda items.

* One very informative presentation received from Matt Nannizzi, from Green Diamond
* Discussed the concerns of overlapping Harvest Documents Exemptions, overlapping other exemptions, THP’s or any other kind of Harvest vehicle.
* Discussed the Committee’s Rulemaking Priorities for 2025.

**Public Comment:**

* Richard Gienger shared his views on Forest Practice Committee Priorities for 2025.
* Kimberly Burr stated she is very concerned that no trees be taken out of the watercourse and lake protection zone.

**Management Committee, Chris Chase, Chair**

The Management Committee met yesterday and discussed the following items:

* New hardwood seedling prices at LA Moran.

**12-11-05 Member Chase moves to approve the hardwood seedling prices at L.A. Moran Reforestation Center as presented. Chairman O’Brien seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Forsburg Pardi: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Wade: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Blake: Aye**

**Jani: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Jahangiri: Absent**

**O’Brien: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

* Second item on the agenda was an update on the status of the Utility Right of Way Exemption.
* Updated from the Uneven-Aged Working Group from George Gentry. The committee took no action at this time.
* Discussed the 2025 Rulemaking Priorities and made no significant changes from where they were last month.

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

The Resource Protection Committee met yesterday and discussed the following:

* Discussed the Land Use Planning Program Report from CAL FIRE. The Firewise Community in California is approaching 1,000 communities.
* Discussed the Wildland Urban Interface Planning Training. There are four classes scheduled for next year that you can attend if you are a planner or fire official.
* Discussed four safety elements for the City of Camarillo, City of Ventura, City of La Verne and City of Glendora.

**Public Comment:**

* Eric Carleson, Associated California Loggers comment is regarding the priorities for 2025. He stated he is pleased that the priority that he brought has been assigned to the Forest Practice Committee.
* Larry Hanson commented on a previous presentation regarding his views that CAL FIRE need to reevaluate the independent evidence of treating wildland outside communities so money can go where it is effective.

**Report of Board’s Advisory Committees:**

Effectiveness Monitoring Committee, Liz Forsburg-Pardi, co-Chair

The Committee met in November and discussed the Charter, the Strategic Plan and heard multiple project updates. All are available online, in the meeting materials and project tables on the EMC website.

* The EMC discussed the Charter which is revised on a five-year cycle. It is a higher-level document that describes the mission, the vision and the over arcing priorities for the committee. That charter was approved by the Board this morning.
* The EMC also discussed the Strategic Plan which is in the process of being revised.

**Public Comment:**

* Richard Gienger stated if the Strategic Plan is being revised you should rethink the whole relationship of AB14 92 to the purpose and effect actions.

**Joint Institute for Wood Products Innovation, Katie Harrell, Board Staff**

* “Assessment of State Purchasing Protocols Related to Innovative Wood Products” Draft Final Report, Tad Masson and Richard Harris, TSS Consultants
* “California Infrastructure Viewer,” an Online Mapping Tool, Thomas Crimmel, CAL FIRE

**California Forest Pest Council**

* Southern California Committee Activities and Pest Updates, Rachel Burnap, Los Angeles County Agricultural Commissioner, Weights, and Measures, and Adrian Poloni, Inland Empire Resource Conservation District

**CONCLUSION**

**Public Forum**

**Public Comments:**

* John Anderson wanted to thank departing members Mike Jani and Chris Chase for all their years of devotion to the Board. Thank you for improving the Forest Fire Prevention Exemption.
* Phyllis Aguilera commented on Management Plan Process by sharing that she is not happy with the process. She feels that the public is not being heard.
* Larry Aguilera shared he does not understand why the tribe’s participation in meetings need to be confidential.
* Richard Gienger shared his views on CAL FIRE and the Board on how they handle business.
* Elicia Goldsworthy, RPF shared her view on Jackson. She stated that the leadership at Jackson is very important. She shared she would like to see an update on the status of the forest manager position maybe in January from the Department. Also, she thanked Mike Jani and Chris Chase for their years of service on the Board.
* Kimberly Burr wanted to share she is concerned that those working in the forest may have lost their way, because she feels we are sacrificing our forest in fear of fire. She states that logging is not the only solution.
* Larry Hanson shared his views on the statewide ineffective mechanical thinning outside communities with the associated waste of millions of dollars that go to the effective program that targets home hardening and defensible space. He feels CAL FIRE needs to take a proactive role in the way forest grow with a main goal of sequestering carbon and evaluate logging effect by changing the way it is done.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:



Edith Hannigan Terrence O’Brien

Executive Officer Chairman