

Mariposa Fire Advisory Committee

Minutes, April 19, 2023

1. **Roll Call:** Hannah Haley, Steve Ward, Mike Keyser, Melinda Barrett, Russ Marks, Alison Deak, Chris Bernard, Wes Smith, Dan Buckley, Gary Colliver, Racquel Sandoval, Barbara Cone, Hannah Harrison, Tara Fouch-Moore, Eric Holly, Mike Weiss, Christina Decko, Erin Capuchino

Others in attendance: Robert Latham, Will Fassett, Lacey Sharp

2. **Approval of Minutes: February 15, 2023, March meeting was cancelled**
Motion by Melinda Barrett, Seconded by Alison Deak, Approved unanimously
3. **Public comments**
Albert Boyd expressed concern about buildup of hazardous fuels on the ground due to storms

4. **Discussion and Possible Action:**

- a. **Presentation of grant services available by Robert Latham – Consultant**

Promethean Fire works with businesses, organizations, and other vendors in rural areas to help them secure grant funding for fire prevention and preparedness, fuels reduction, etc. Promethean has experienced grant writers, GIS analysts, contractors, and others to help organizations and agencies through an MOU write and administer grants. They are also available to work with organizations that may not have the capacity to meet the requirements of an existing grant. *Reach out to Robert Latham at 559-760-7732 or roblatham59@gmail.com if interested in working with Promethean Fire*

DISCUSSION:

- Promethean Fire will charge the grant for admin costs and it would require a contract if pursuing a grant funded through CAL FIRE. Generally, contractors are not compensated for grant writing unless the grant is funded.
- The rate is dependent on the service being contracted – if interested in the service, must reach out to Rob to get a more detailed presentation with rates.
- The company is based in Oakhurst
- Promethean can help with environmental planning and compliance.

- b. **Title-III Funding update: 45-day comment period open - Ward**

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/states/secure-rural-schools/title-3>

Comment period closing May 8th or 9th. To date, no public comments have been received. Once comment period has closed, the contract agreements will then need to be revised and approved by the board. Organizations requesting funding may want to be present at the board meeting to show support but it won't be necessary to receive funding.

- c. **Discussion of unofficially released updated Fire Safe Regulations**

Link: govt.westlaw.com/calregs [PRC 23 something – articles 1-5](#)

The new Fire Safe Regulations are much more reasonable and less cumbersome for rural counties than the first draft in terms of workability but it is a higher standard. These were

adopted by the Board of Forestry but are still waiting for legislation to codify. For more information, see link on Board of Forestry webpage.

d. Update on CWPP community appendices - Ward and Hannah Harrison

Each community has an appendix requiring communities to do assessments. The original CWPP assessment seemed to be too technical. The new assessment is similar to a Firewise requirements in some ways, but it is no longer planned to be fully combined with the Firewise assessment. The draft is now broken down into sections (total environment, structures, vegetation, emergency access, signage, and water resources) with check boxes that will be easier for community members to evaluate visually. It also includes a section for communities to identify areas of high risk and to make recommendations so that they are engaged in finding solutions to the issues identified by them. The more technical aspects that requiring county-provided data will not be required for communities to fill out but will be available in an appendix. It is planned to have two templates available so that anyone can use it: an online survey and a hard copy. The community boundaries have also been updated to be more aligned with the boundaries that residents associate with.

DISCUSSION:

Russ Marks commented that the data being collected seems subjective. Will there be a review process for assessments completed by communities? Steve Ward responded that the data included by the county will help it be more objective. Melinda Barrett added that it will be really interested to compare the subjective and objective data. Steve Ward also commented that it will help MCFAC make recommendations about the priorities

Dan Buckley asked how this will work in conjunction with Firewise communities and whether we should have residents do the CWPP assessments prior to Firewise assessment. Steve Ward responded that we don't want to mix the two other than being able to recognize Firewise communities in the CWPP assessment, especially since these don't necessarily follow the same geographic boundaries. The order that they are done doesn't matter. Melinda Barrett added that it will be a good nexus for Firewise community outreach and identification of community leaders. Gary Colliver also commented that coordination and integration with these programs and others is good, especially for fire-related education and engagement.

e. Update on County Wildland Mitigation Coordinator [Final CWPP is available here: http://www.mariposacounty.org/2448/Community-Wildfire-Protection-Plan](http://www.mariposacounty.org/2448/Community-Wildfire-Protection-Plan)

The County Wildland Mitigation Coordinator has been approved by the board and posted. As of the meeting, three applications were currently on file. The next step is interviews and 1-2 people were requested to help put together interview questions that will be vetted through HR. Will Fassett will be in charge of this and be a part of the interview panel.

Email Steve if interested in helping draft interview questions

5. Updates, Activity Reports and Future Items

a. Member updates

CAL FIRE – There were seven applications for Wildfire Prevention Grants and two have been denied. He is hoping to be able to add some money back into grant money that is available. Paperwork was mailed out last week to landowners for the Guadalupe fuel break. CAL FIRE crews are working now to prepare area in Midpines for training camp in May. CAL FIRE is meeting with Cal Trans to reestablish relationship for fuel break projects.

Mariposa County Fire – CCI grant for masticators is ready and County Fire is waiting to go pick them up. Operators are currently working on grading projects, then will begin working on projects. If anyone needs work (FSC, RCD), they may be able to be used to help with projects but would need to coordinate with Battalion chiefs for maintenance projects. Once they're on project, will work with Mariposa Gazette to publicize work. Welcome to Captain Mike Weiss in County Fire. Cathey's Valley, Hornitos, and Coarsegold stationed are not staffed yet, but will be May 8th. Annual training has begun for firefighters.

Mariposa Fire Safe Council – Submitted two applications for Fire Prevention Grant: for fuel breaks and ladder fuels removal. The Ladder Fuels Project has been changed to a phased approach. Two additional grants have been submitted for storm cleanup, defensible space clearance, and hazard tree removal beyond the brush and chip program within the vicinity of driveways. The Fire Safe Council might be applying for Bureau of Land Management funding to connect fuel breaks in Coulterville. Wagoner Ridge Fuel Break is being worked on. Ferrand Fuel Break is completed. The final 18 acres of the Stumpfield Fuel Break is also being work on. Alta Vista has been delayed but will be started soon. It has been split into two sections with separate contractors. Fire Safe Council had hoped to have a bid walk on the Bullion Ridge Fuel Break but has run into access issues with road. PGE is currently working with contractors to bid the road repair. Brush and chip program is busy.

Share any materials with Barbara if you want them included in packet shared with landowners participating in Fire Safe Council programs

Mariposa RCD – Main focus is on home hardening program right now. Recently had three-hour home hardening and defensible space training with Yana Valacovich. There are about 65 people signed up for the home hardening program and assessments/implementation has begun this week. The program will be focused on Firewise groups initially so will be an opportunity to interface with county assessments process. It will also help people that are looking to get hours for Firewise while they are thinking about fire prevention. RCD is hoping to keep this program ongoing. Currently wrapping up other grants. CEQA documents have been filed and public comment period is closing for pollinator plant project.

UC Cooperative Extension – Hoping to plan a home hardening workshop for the community in the early summer with Yana Valcovich. We are tentatively going to the Board of Supervisors on May 2nd for approval of funding routed to UCCE to hire a prescribed burn association coordinator.

Mariposa Planning department – Main relevant project they are working on is the community wildfire assessment (see above).

Public works – The county has 30+ commercial development projects in progress. County maintained roads are mostly accessible at the moment with maybe two exceptions (Chowchilla Mountain Road, two contractors have tried to fix this but had issues; Miami Mountain Road in Fish Camp, don't know how to maintain until dry). Spring grading at the reservation has begun and access is an issue. No fire protection water in Yosemite West due to significant loss of water line. It is unknown when this will be fixed and up to 1000' feet of water line may need to be replaced. Short-term fix may be available for residents but not for fire protection.

Southern Sierra Miwuk – Held cultural burn past week and it was very successful. Will be joining Yosemite for prescribed burns in Wawona on Wednesday. Yosemite is sponsoring tribal members' red cards. They are hoping to build up the crew over next year and they will be administrative hires through the park. The tribe was offered a small grant to continue cultural burn program. Bureau of Indian Affairs just signed CEQA documentation for Sarah Priest project and should have funding in June. Currently focusing on capacity building. They may or may not be able to do the planned burn on Mariposa Creek this spring.

Yosemite National Park – 150-acre prescribed burn in Wawona starting today and more mechanical treatments and pile burning planned. Dispatch has been expanding.

SWIFT – no comment

Yosemite Sequoia RC&DC – Submitted CCI grant for fuels break project in Homestead neighborhood. YSRC&DC is available to provide support with contracted grant writer that can be used by partners.

Will Fassett – Introduced himself as new grants analyst for Mariposa County and is looking forward to collaborating with MCFAC and the new county fire coordinator when hired.

OES – Currently busy with storm recovery. FEMA here opening disaster recovery centers (open Monday through Saturday for 30 days). Individuals with road damage on non-county maintained roads, if there are multiple landowners sharing without funds, should apply with FEMA to cover private driveway, culvert, and road repair. Single homes and anyone in Oak Fire scar without insurance is also eligible. Final FRI for post-fire hazard mitigation grant submitted for hazard fuel reduction between Bumguardner ridge to creek to clear 500 acres. No cost-share for the county.

Sierra National Forest – Forest is currently running incident management organization for storm damage across forest due to significant damage across all forest roads. All prescribed burning has been delayed due to this. Contractors and engineers are beginning to work on roads. GIS team is working on a public facing map to update public on repairs, hopefully will be out next week. CAL FIRE is able to assist with burn piles by Bass Lake – need to coordinate.

Gary Colliver – no comment

We need to do annual MCFAC report to board to be compliant with policy – this was submitted to the board and will be on agenda.

b. Future agenda items

Send any that you have in mind to Steve

6. Adjourn

Motion by Russ Marks, seconded by Tara Fouch-Moore, approved unanimously