

Mariposa Fire Advisory Committee

Minutes, February 15, 2023

- 1. Roll Call:** Melinda Barrett, Barbara Cone, Steve Ward, Wes Smith, Racquel Sandoval, Alison Deak, Glenn Cahill, Dan Buckley, Deron Mills, Hannah Harrison, Hannah Haley, Tara Fouch-Moore, Mike Keyser
- 2. Resolution:** A resolution of the Mariposa County Fire Advisory Committee proclaiming a local emergency, ratifying the proclamation of a state of emergency by the Governor of the State of California on March 4, 2020 regarding an outbreak of respiratory illness due to a novel coronavirus (a disease now known as Covid-19), and authorizing remote teleconference meetings of the legislative bodies of the Mariposa County Fire Advisory Committee for the period January 18, 2023 to February 15, 2023 pursuant to Brown Act provisions.

County Counsel advised us that even with the hybrid style meetings, in person and teleconference, the Committee still needs to adopt the Resolution at the beginning of each meeting in order to be compliant with the Brown Act. The agenda includes the required Resolution.

Motioned by: Barbara Cone, seconded by: Melinda Barrett, *approved unanimously*

3. Approval of minutes: January 18, 2023

Motion tabled until next meeting, no quorum.

Motioned by Melinda Barrett, seconded by West Smith, *approved unanimously.*

4. Public Comments

Lacey Sharp, Happy Goat – Happy Goat Farm would like to collaborate/partner on CAL FIRE grant for browsing and grazing with goats – 6' canopy clearance.

- MCFSC interested in potentially collaborating on fuel break maintenance without chemical application.
- UCCE is applying for grant funds to fund workshops – potential to collaborate on workshops around targeted grazing.

5. Discussion and possible action

a. Update on County Coordinator Statewide Grant Program

Onboarding conference call will occur on 01/16/2023. Position description has been completed and is waiting on HR to establish wage. This will soon be taken to board for approval to begin hiring process. MCFD is also hoping to find out more about the parameters of grant if the position is not filled.

Melinda clarified that it was a reimbursement grant so moneys would likely not be required to be returned and offered to be on interview panel for candidates. Barbara asked if MCFAC members should be keeping in mind candidates that would be interested in the position? Steve W. responded that yes, this person is going to in charge of grant writing and coordination, and

be the chair of MCFAC, lead on CWPP, and Firewise Community Coordinator. The position also doesn't need to stay under county fire and could move to any department within the County. We would like the position to be flown as soon as possible (hopefully by late April) but need to wait to hear back from HR.

- b. Title-III funding** – currently accepting funding requests: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/states/secure-rural-schools/title-3>

Criteria for funding:

- To carry out activities under the Firewise Communities Program
- Reimburse the participating county for SAR and other emergency services, including firefighting and law enforcement patrols
- Cover training costs and equipment purchases directly related to emergency response
- Develop and carry out community wildfire protection plans
- Proved or expand access to broadband telecommunications services.

Federal funds have been approved to come through the county but the amount being offered is unknown. There is a 45-day comment period required so we would like to have an BoS agenda item in March for comment period to be completed by June. County Fire will be apply for funding to purchase radios as emergency equipment and to help out SAR.

Barbara commented that it will be important to understand and emphasize how much of the funding will be used on federal lands for SAR use.

If interested in applying, send applications to Steve Ward by the middle of March.

6. Updates, activity reports, and future items

a. Member updates

- *Barbara Cone, Mariposa County Fire Safe Council:* All acreage plus some additional has been completed on Ferrand fuel break. Contractor is also completing an additional 40 acres on Stumpfield. Alta Vista has been bid into two separate contracts. Currently working with BLM biologist to survey ahead of contracting crew to be able to continue working during limited operating period. Brush and chip program is continuing. Wagoner Ridge is waiting for ground to dry before contractors can finish last 20% of fuel break (beginning of March). Currently working on CAL FIRE CCI Fire Prevention Grant application for fuel break on Bumguardner Ridge and Lushmeadows Ladder Fuels projects. Outreach has already been very successful in Lushmeadows and over half of property owners have agreed to sign right-of-entry. Was also contacted by the Homestead-Boyer HOA because they are interested in extending the Boyer VMP through Homestead and down to Highway 49. Yosemite Sequoia RC&DC contacted Barbara a few weeks ago and offered to apply for a CCI Wildfire Prevention Grant to fund the project.

- *Melinda Barrett, Mariposa RCD:* We could use help getting the word out about two programs. (1) Erosion control project in Jerseydale has ~30 bales of weed-free straw remaining that we are giving away. We want to collect names of people that could use it and are able to drop off bales at the fairgrounds parking lot for those interested to pick up. (2) Home hardening program – We are going to be able to provide site assessments to landowners, provide checklists, and do some installation of ember screen and zone zero clearance. If anyone contacts County Fire about the Firewise program, please have them contact Melinda to sign up for home hardening. Yana Valacovich from UCCE is planning to work with contractor team and lead a workshop on home hardening.

Mariposa RCD also had a meeting through California RCD with Cal Trans. Cal Trans wants to do master agreements with RCDs across the state for fuel breaks along highways. This will be like a pass-through program for RCDs to do grants, get contracts through Cal Trans, and write CEQA. Biomass plant is getting closer to groundbreaking. Previously this had date of January, but county and other agencies needed extra time. New groundbreaking date is mid-April, and it is hopefully a 12-month process. North Fork is accepting biomass but are charging a tipping fee. The Mariposa biomass plant will be paying people for biomass, rather than charging.

- *Alison Deak, UC Cooperative Extension:* We will be soliciting letters of support for Cal Fire CCI Fire Prevention Grant soon. We are coming to the end of our post-wildfire resilience workshop and will be highlighting the available landowner assistance programs, if anybody knows of programs that are not already being highlighted. The PBA has started formalizing through a steering committee. We have a lot of representation from Madera County but would love to have more representation from organizations in Mariposa County, if anyone is interested in joining. We have also begun rolling out a statewide survey focused on understanding wildfire related needs and concerns of community members. Pile burn demonstration will be done in collaboration with Yosemite, but date is still TBD based on weather conditions.
- *Hannah Haley, Sierra National Forest* – We are still assessing road damage. We have piles that we want to burn near Jerseydale (near Footman Bridge) but first need to fix access and for the area to dry out. The opening of Jerseydale Campground continues to be pushed back. Our primary focus right now is pile burning in Bass Lake and about 75 acres have already been burned there.
- *Wes Smith & Racquel Sandoval, Mariposa OES* – We are winding our way through the post-fire mitigation grant and Racquel is leading this. We ran into CEQA, NEPA, and other barriers so we decided to pitch a new project for clearing hazardous fuels along Mariposa Creek Parkway. This has been run by Cal OES and consulting and they are onboard. We are currently working on the grant application with a deadline of this Friday, March 17th, for sub application. We also want homeowners to know that any flood damage caused in the Oak Fire burn scar does not require flood insurance to have repair covered by fire insurance. We are still in the process of getting individual inspections

(hopefully next week) to open revenue streams for SBA and individual assistance. We will not qualify for FEMA declaration for assistance but will qualify for SBA and USDA assistance to businesses, farms, ranches, and individuals. To get access to SBA or USDA, homeowners need to have letter showing that insurance will not cover costs.

- *Deron Mills, PG&E* – We are continuing to do some additional hardening work in Mariposa County including putting in larger poles and where necessary, wrapping poles, especially around major thoroughfares to avoid evacuation issues, and adding tree wires to prevent further ignitions. We are in the planning phase for first large scale undergrounding program in the county, primarily in Oak Fire burn scar and would like to do more of this in the future. If any agency or related partners are conducting broadcast or pile burns, please reach out to Deron with any concerns about powerlines being impacts or may be a hazard.
- *Hannah Harrison, Mariposa Planning Department* – We have been working on guides for community members to use for community wildfire assessments. This is getting close to completion, and we are hoping to take to BOS soon.
- *Tara Fouch-Moore, Southern Sierra Miwok Nation* – We are continuing grant programming around cultural fire and hoping to plan a burn on Mariposa Creek Parkway in April. Yosemite NP has offered to sponsor tribal members' red cards and this will be an ongoing program. We need to strategize on how to set up crews to do work. We have been approached by several different organizations, but we first need the infrastructure to safely and legally manage a crew and overcome barriers with nonprofit law.
- *Glen Cahill, Sierra Tel* – Clean up continues in Oak Fire. This is about 50% complete in terms of repairs. We are trying to not work in areas where a lot of other work is already going on. Fiber to home crews will begin working next week.
- *Mike Keyser, CAL FIRE* – Four equipment grants have been approved for fuel break maintenance. I have not seen any grants for fuel break maintenance specifically, but this doesn't mean that it isn't possible. Locally, MMU has a contract for fuel break maintenance through herbicide application and are planning to treat Lushmeadows and potentially Stumpfield. We could use goats instead of herbicide, but this would be a hard contract to write. Mike will look into this.
- *Steve Ward, County Fire* – We are getting close to finishing the fee survey for mandatory building inspections; County has never had a fee schedule for this before. FEMA SAFER grant is open and is due in March. We have been approached about staffing on the grant, but the County doesn't have a plan to continue funding staffing long-term. This money could be used to pay for equipment though and we would be interested in potentially replacing ladder truck and radios. The CCI grant was approved for county for reimbursement of tractor purchases. Type-3 engines were delivered: one in service and other two are being configured (hope to be in service by summer). Three or four type-I

engines have been sold or donated. Four reserve firefighters have been hired to keep quota of 6-8 firefighters on staff. We are at seven days a week staffing now and hoping to continue and expand program next year. Communities are interested in being Firewise recognized throughout the county. Steve Ward is the point of contact for communities and is currently acting as "coordinator," but we would like to make a recommendation for funding to be routed through RCD or FSC for coordination. In the future, we could make a MCFAC agenda item for appropriate placement of Firewise coordinator. There would need to be arrangements for routing funding/revenue for RCD or FSC if this was the case. *Barbara could hire a position for Firewise coordinator at FSC if funding was available. Many community members feel like we're putting "cart before the horse" with Firewise outreach. Steve responded that the County is giving clear guidelines and the resources required for communities.*

Steve Ward will be out of town for next MCFAC meeting. For letters of support from board of supervisors, MCFAC members will have to work with the board directly since this wasn't an agenda item.

b. Future agenda items

- Discuss appropriate organizational placement and board recommendation for Firewise Coordinator (Supervisor Smallcombe will be invited to this conversation).
- Approval of January MCFAC meeting minutes

Discussion also occurred about scheduling a special meeting to vote on a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for letters of support for MCFAC members applying to the CAL FIRE CCI Fire Prevention Grant and for approving the January MCFAC minutes. A date for the special meeting was not scheduled due to not being to meet quorum.

7. Adjourn