

MCFAC Meeting, January 18, 2023

- 1. Roll Call:** Michael Seymour, Mike Keyser, Steve Ward, Deron Mills, Russ Marks, Wes Smith, Melinda Barrett, Gary Colliver, Barbara Cone, Tara Fouch-Moore, Glenn Cahill, Raquel Sandoval, Hannah Harrison, Steve Engfer, Pat Laeng
- 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.

Motion by: Russ Marks. Seconded by: Alison Deak. Approved unanimously

- 3. Approval of Minutes:** December 21, 2022
Motion by: Tara Fouch-Moore. Seconded by Glenn Cahill. Approved unanimously
- 4. Public comments**
No public comment

5. Discussion and Possible Action:

a. MCFAC Officers Election Nominations

Chair: Steve Ward

No nominations. Reelected

Vice chair: Melinda Barrett

Motioned by Gary Colliver. Seconded by Russ Marks. Approved unanimously

Secretary: Alison Deak

Nominated by Tara Fouch-Moore. Seconded by Melinda Barrett. Approved unanimously

b. Update on County Coordinator Statewide Grant Project - awarded

Grant has been awarded to fund Mariposa County Wildfire Mitigation Coordinator for 18 months (including hiring and onboarding). Position expected to be flown by April and filled by early summer. Coordinator will be expected to support Firewise community efforts, MCFAC, grant writing, GIS, Oak Fire recovery and hazard mitigation, and other related efforts.

c. Title-III Funding

Rural Schools Title-III funding is available for fuel reduction projects and search-and-rescue. Nonprofits can apply for up to \$76,000 of available monies by sending requests with a project description and summary of how project is relevant to CWPP to Steve Ward. Steve will try to submit requests to board of supervisors by March for approval. Following submission and prior to approval by the board, there will be a 45-day comment period and the board will review comments.

d. Discussion of proposed updated Fire Severity Zones.

Four members of the public attended the public meeting on January 12th about the proposed fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs) map update. A total of 22 public meetings were held throughout the state last week. Currently the map is in the 45-day comment period closing February 3rd. Comments can be left through the website, telephone, or email. A separate phone line is available for questions. Information about FHSZ map update and how it was created is available here: <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/divisions/community-wildfire-preparedness-and-mitigation/wildfire-preparedness/fire-hazard-severity-zones/> Additional information and data can be requested through the website.

Over 50% of previously moderate FHSZs in the 2007 map have been updated from moderate to high or very high in the foothills of Mariposa. They are hazard maps and not supposed to be used by insurance to make decisions. However, elected insurance commissioner Ricardo Lara is concerned that some insurance companies will use map to update rates or drop insurance for homeowners and he wants to know about it. There have been many comments from landowners saying they have been cancelled by insurance companies due to map. Information on how to report changes to insurance based on the map was requested by Melinda and will be shared by Mike Keyser.

DISCUSSION: Individual properties within the FHSZs do not change the overall FHSZ on the map. It is challenging for landowners who are compliant with PRC 4291 and have done fuels reduction work on their properties but do not have this reflected by the maps. FHSZs are required by law and changing this would require legislation. The committee noted that it is misleading that the state is encouraging different treatments but not rewarding those that do the work. The problem is the insurance companies, not the map – the map should help drive restoration, treatments, and grant writing but insurance companies take advantage of the maps. The message should be that we should be doing treatments to save homes, not to save your insurance.

Expected legislation will require insurance companies to do parcel-by-parcel assessment rather than an area assessment such as the FHSZ map and offer homeowners opportunities to upgrade/change their assessment before their

insurance can be dropped or raise the rate of their insurance. Concern was raised that insurance companies are taking action before legislation is passed to drop/raise the rates of customers.

6. Updates & Activity Reports

Mike Keyser. No updates. Cal Fire Grant closes March 15th and Mike has been working with some people to get applications submitted.

Steve Ward. County Fire is continuing to work on getting wildfire mitigation coordinator for county hired. New equipment continues to come in and the county is selling some Type-1 engines. More volunteer applications have been accepted and six new volunteer firefighters will begin training soon (two firefighter and four medical responders).

Barbara Cone. Alta Vista Fuel Break Bid Walk was held on January 13th. Ten contractors were in attendance and Barbara spoke to group about upcoming UCCE workshops and Southern Sierra Miwuk Hand Crews. MCFSC will be putting out email for letters of support to partners for Cal Fire Fire Prevention Grants (Lushmeadows Ladder Fuels Project and Fuels break project). Bullion Ridge Bid is likely going to be delayed due to access.

Melinda Barrett. Erosion control work was stalled due to storms and some work may have been damaged by the storm. Mariposa RCD is hoping to get back out for erosion control work soon. Four projects have been completed. There is currently no way to get additional funding for the project. Mariposa RCD will begin rolling out home hardening soon.

Alison Deak. Pile burning workshop will be held January 31st and post-fire forest management workshop series will begin February 1st. UCCE is continuing to organize pile burning demonstrations following the workshop, likely in Yosemite West or Wawona. UCCE will send out requests for letters of support for Cal Fire Fire Prevention Grant funding the PBA at end of month/beginning of February.

Steve Engfer. No comment

Russ Marks. Damage from storm was mainly due to debris flows and culverts being plugged. The status of the water tanks grant unknown.

Tara Fouch-Moore. Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation is continuing cultural burn program and will be hosting a TEK and cultural burn workshop at the end of the month for tribal members, followed by a cultural burn. Their grant to SNC has been recommended for funding.

Wes Smith. Welcome aboard to Racquel Sandoval. Oak Fire burn scar recovery has been stalled since December 27th due to storms. All home sites are completed; they are sending in samples and there may be a possible rescrape of 30 properties. About 1400 trees are required to be felled in burn scar still but challenges with nesting season soon approaching.

NOI for FEMA grant for \$1.5 million for oak fire post-fire restoration that will expand ability for fuels reduction and recovery on properties. Leftover money can be used for fuel break maintenance. Multiple roads, bridges, and crossings were impacted by flooding but public works did great job of keeping traffic flowing. OES is looking to apply for FEMA funding for disaster assistance related to flooding for \$5.7 million to repair roads and bridges. Initial damage assessments are ongoing for landowners and OES is hoping to get included in federal emergency declaration to open up funding for those impacted by flooding.

Glenn Cahill. Sierra Tel just opened bid for contractor to get “fiber to the home” and construction will begin throughout Mariposa County soon.

Pat Laeng. On Groveland Ranger District, Texas Hill Road up almost to Dogtown Road area has been masticated and from Ponderosa Way to J-132 masticated (150' each side of road). In cooperation with Yosemite National Park, Groveland Ranger District is working to treat the North Merced Area from Pilot Ridge to Soapstone Ridge and from Anderson Valley up to Moss Creek to provide protection for the Merced Grove. Scoping is in progress for the El Portal Forest Restoration Project for fuel breaks along ridges in El Portal to protect Foresta area. Unsure of the impacts of the flooding/snow currently but did have issues with vehicles being stuck. Staffing is expected to be lean for the Stanislaus National Forest and Groveland Ranger District is likely to be down two engines and a 10-person wildland fire use module. Information will be sent to MCFAC about hiring event and applications will be streamlined if they have applied prior to hiring event. HUD work is done on Tuolumne County side and hoping to burn piles on Wagoner Ridge. (Fire Safe Council is 80% done with Wagoner Ridge fuel break project and will complete once dry.)

Mike Seymour. Mike is now the Fuels Battalion Chief for the Mariposa side of Sierra National Forest. Current challenges include getting NEPA in place on Mariposa County side of forest for fuels projects and many specialists have been redirected to deal with emergency Sequoia response. Currently trying to get plan of work in place for repair, recovery, hazard tree removal, etc. Sierra National Forest is still receiving applications for AD crews (have 74 applications but usually need 80). Staffing will include 2 engines out of Jerseydale – one 5-day staffing and one 7-day staffing. The two engines out of Oakhurst are unsure of staffing. There are openings for fuels and specialist positions on the Forest. Damages from Oak Fire caused loss of 25 road to Chowchilla due to washouts. Worman Road also is impassable. Able to pass from Midpines to Plumber creek. Pond at triple Ranch took in a lot of sediment and this is a concern because it is an important water source for fire operations. Sunny North and Sunny South piling has been completed and will burn once access is available. Mike was able to complete the burn plan for piles around Bass Lake. The Bass Lake piles and Nelder Grove project are highest priorities. Fisher spotting in Mariposa Pines may have future impacts in the Jerseydale area. Stations are staffing year-round now and are available for response by request from county.

Deron Mills. Weather enabled PG&E to disable sensitivities on their safety devices on overhead equipment, making system more reliable for customers and will be reevaluating

the criteria for those settings prior to upcoming fire season. PG&E has been engaged in storm response; private utilities have mutual aid and have brought in crews from across state and from Canada. Mariposa County did fare fairly well during storm. PG&E is currently offering first responder workshops about electricity and natural gas safety for public safety agencies.

Gary Colliver. No comment

Hannah Harrison. Merging of CWPP and Firewise assessments is going well, and planning department will send to Steve Ward once ready to go.

Future agenda items – none noted

7. Adjourn

Approved unanimously.