BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEETING MINUTES

Sacramento, CA

November 8, 2023

**BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION MEMBERS**

**Present:**

* Chairman J. Keith Gilless
* J. Lopez
* Mike Jani
* Rich Wade
* Chris Chase

**Absent:**

* Katie Delbar
* Elizabeth Forsburg-Pardi
* Dawn Blake

**BOARD STAFF PRESENT:**

* Edith Hannigan, Executive Officer
* Dan Stapleton, Asst. Executive Officer, Foresters Registration
* Jeff Slaton, Senior Board Counsel
* Robert Roth, Board Counsel
* Andrew Lawhorn, Forester Assistant II
* Dr. Kristina Wolf, Environmental Scientist
* Anna Castro, Executive Assistant
* Alexandra La Plante, Administrative Unit Manager
* Katie Harrell, AGPA
* Mazonika Kemp, Office Technician

**DEPARTMENTAL STAFF PRESENT:**

* Joe Tyler, Director, CAL FIRE
* Eric Huff, Assistant Deputy Director, Forest Practice Program, CAL FIRE

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

Jeff Slaton, Senior Counsel for the Board reported that during executive closed session the Board discussed the following matters:

* California Chaparral Institute, et al., vs California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Case No. 37-2020-00005203)
* RCRC vs Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Case No. 22CECG00123)

During closed session the Board took no reportable actions.

**Consent Calendar Items:**

1. Review of Rulemaking Matrix
2. Approval of September 2023 minutes.

**11-08-01 Chairman moves to accept the items on the Consent Calendar as listed. Member Lopez seconds the motion.**

**Roll Call:**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Forsburg Pardi: Absent**

**Blake: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

**Report of the Chairman, J. Keith Gilless**

Chairman Gilless thanked CAL FIRE, Board of Forestry, License Foresters, and all that helped the Society for American Foresters on the annual convention last week.

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

Resource Management

Staffing Update

* Anale Burlew, Chief Deput Director
* Daniel Berlant, State Fire Marshal
* Matthew Sulley, Deputy Director of Cooperative Fire Protection
* Deputy Director of Tribal Affairs position has been approved. (Open position)
* Jake Sjoulund, Assistant Deputy Director of Mobile Equipment and Aviation
* John Messina, Assistant Region Chief, has retired. George Huang has been appointed as his replacement.
* Bob Frias from Tehama Glenn Unit has retired, and Monte Smith has been appointed as the new Unit Chief.
* Luke Kendall, Mendocino Unit Chief, will retire shortly, and Brandon Gunn his Deputy Chief has been appointed as the Unit Chief in Mendocino Unit.
* Mark Kendall Staff Chief of Operations, North Region is retiring and will be replaced by Dennis Nolan, currently Deputy Chief of Operations in Redding.

Forest Practice Program

Forest Practice Administration/Forest Practice GIS/CalTrees

* Notifications to the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration are now automated from CalTREES, eliminating the need for regular mail distribution.

Resource Protection and Improvement Program

Urban and Community Forestry

* The USDA Forest Service announced 2023 Urban and Community Forestry Grant awards. CAL FIRE was awarded $43.2 million, of which $30.8 million will be awarded as pass-through sub-grants.
* The Green Schoolyards grant solicitation opened on October 13, 2023, for non-profit childcare facilities receiving government funding. Applications are due by December 1, 2023, $30 million is available.

Demonstration State Forests

Jackson

* The last Jackson Advisory Group meeting of 2023 will be held in Fort Bragg on November 15, 2023.
* A Forest Health Research Grant was awarded to Dr. Salli Dymond to expand the plant-soil-water study from Caspar Phase III, as well as explore the combined impacts of thinning and drought on tree productivity, and the potential impact that harvest-induced changes in soil moisture and microclimate may have on fuel and fire behavior.
* On September 9, 2023, the Mendocino Coast Cyclists performed trail maintenance on the Camp 20 Demonstration Trail including completion of a wooden pedestrian bridge, installing earthen steps and trail grooming.

La Tour

* The State Christmas Tree was delivered on October 31, 2023, and is in front of the West steps of the Capital.

Soquel

* Resource Management staff on Soquel have done a great job at re-introducing prescribe fire into a sensitive area to try to meet our goals and objectives regarding Fuel Reduction Forest Health.

Mountain Home

* CAL FIRE Forest Pathologists continue to work on potential bug damage causing old growth giant sequoia mortality at Mountain Home.

Prescribed Fire and Environmental Protection Program

* The prescribe fire season is ramping up with increased activity across California with several CAL FIRE and private landowner projects being completed.

Tribal Affairs/Cultural Resources

* Looking forward to filling the Deputy Director of Tribal Affairs and building those relationships above and beyond what the 21 Unit Chiefs have already done.

Wildfire Resilience

California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP)

* CFIP has approximately $20 million dollars in funding that is releasing in batches every two months. This is expected to last until spring of 2025 based on bi-monthly draw downs.

Forest Legacy Program (FLP)

* A state Forest Legacy Program solicitation is expected to be released in February 2024.

Climate and Energy Program

* Allen Talhelm has been appointed the Assistant Deputy Director of Climate and Energy.

Climate Change

* Coordinating with California State Parks to carry out drone flights pre- and post-prescribed burn at Calaveras Big Trees State Park’s South Grove.

Wood Products & Bioenergy

* The most recent solicitation for business and workforce development grants closed on September 30, 2023, with $15 million available to award. There are 48 applications that requested a total of $66 million.
* Toured a new machinery in operation at the Collins Pine Sawmill in Chester on October 18, 2023. Collins has a business development grant from CAL FIRE for mill upgrades.

Forest Health

* Preparing to open a new solicitation on November 13, 2023, with a close date of January 15, 2024. Draft grant guidelines are currently posted to the website for public comment.
* Forest Health and Post-Fire Reforestation & Regeneration (R&R) grants are fully executed for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2023.

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force

* Over 350 people came together in Redding (with over 200 joining online) for the Governor’s Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force’s Northern California regional meeting.
* Located in the Director’s report are all the dates for 2024 and the general locations, more specific locations will be available.

Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP)

Forst Health Research Grants

* The program awarded 15 grants for $6 million dollars. The program had $38 million in funding requests. The next solicitation will release in late November of 2023.

Fire Protection

Fire Protection Operations

* Staff will be traveling to Portugal and presenting on the CAL FIRE Intel program. The conference is sponsored by FIRE-RES (short for Fire Resilience) which is a group made up of 40 European countries. The FIRE-RES project was initiated in 2020 and is a 4-year project (2021-2025) led by the Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia in Spain and funded under the European Union’s H2020 research and innovation program.
* ALERTCALIFORNIA and CAL FIRE received Time magazine “Best Inventions for 2023” for the use of AI in detecting wildfires.
* The artificial intelligence that is involved in this were able to pick-up real-time vegetation and structure fires in some cases three, five and seven minutes ahead of the first 911 caller.

State/Federal Programs

* The State, Federal, and International Program assisted in coordinating a week-long tour for Costa Rica firefighters to observe CAL FIRE’s operational and administrative process.

Camps and Crews Program

* The Camps and Crews program will be hosting the annual Camps and Crews Workshop in Riverside, CA in the month of January. The workshop includes cooperators from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), California Conservation Corps (CCC), California Military Department (CMD), and all of CAL FIRE, Fire Center leads.

Office of the State Fire Marshal

Community Wildfire Preparedness & Mitigation (CWPM)

Wildfire Preparedness

Defensible Space

* A video is available for real estate agents regarding Defensible Space requirements for home sales.

Home Hardening

* Continuing to work with CalOES and FEMA to address home hardening issues.

Utility Wildfire Mitigation Program

* Work continues Wildfire Mitigation Plan Consultation with the Office of Energy Safety (OEIS).

Wildfire Planning and Statistics

Pre-Fire Planning

* Unit Pre-Fire Engineers are being provided training to update CAL FIRE Direct Protection Area.

Wildland Fuels Reduction Reporting

* CalMAPPER Mobile to make it more successful going from a desktop application to allow for a mobile application to be able to provide inputs out in the field in real time.

CalStats

Redbook (Historical Incident Statistics Report) Update

* 2022 Redbook is complete and approved and posted on the CAL FIRE internet page.

Community Wildfire Mitigation Assistance

Firewise

* Currently 740 communities in good standing across the state.
* Continued efforts working with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Firewise on new mapping project.

The Department recognizes that the department in its safety classification is made up largely of 95% male and 5% female. Director commits to improving those numbers.

**Board Comment:**

Member Chase stated it was an excellent report but is interested in statistics on harvesting documents year to date approvals, percentage rejected for filing.

* Director Tyler stated he will make sure that is added in future Board reports.

Chairman Gilless offered his thoughts on how to jump start the process of recruiting for the Deputy Director of Tribal Affairs.

Member Chase commented that he is really encouraged with the direction the Chief has given to re-evaluate the direct protection areas and the balance of acres.

**Public Comment:**

* Richard Gienger shared that he appreciates Director Tyler and the direction on how he is moving forward with issues.

**Report of the Executive Officer, Edith Hannigan, Executive Officer**

Staffing Update

* Land Use Planning Program Manager position has been filled by Marcie Yates. She has been with the State since 2006.
* Interviews are being conducted for the Wildfire Planning Specialist that will report to Marcie.
* The Forester II/III position the Regulations Program Manager position is currently being flown.

Legislative Update

* Legislature is in recess so there is no update.
* Next month the Forest Practice Committee will be bringing up the issue again of the CNDDB (California Natural Diversity Database). The Board sent a letter to CDFW to ask about some options for subsiding access to that data base for small landowners. There was a promising response from CDFW.

**Report of the Standing Committees**

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

Forest Practice Committee met and discussed the three items on the agenda. There are no actionable items to be presented to the Board.

**Management Committee, Chris Chase, Chair**

The committee met and discussed three items on the agenda. The first item is an action item for this Board.

* Consideration of Rulemaking for “Wet Areas, Meadows and Restoration Activities”
* The committee approved the revised plea and the ISOR and recommended bring before the full Board today.

**11-08-02 Member Chase moves to authorize Board staff to submit the rulemaking entitled “Wet Areas, Meadows, and Restoration Activities, 2023” 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:**

**Wade: Aye**

**Jani: Aye**

**Chase: Aye**

**Lopez: Aye**

**Forsburg Pardi: Absent**

**Blake: Absent**

**Delbar: Absent**

**Gilless: Aye**

**Motion passed.**

* Second item on the agenda discussed was the Joint Statement on Hardwoods. It was discussed to prepare an overview of the various issues and identify some options and potential paths forward.
* 2024 Rulemaking Priorities were reviewed. Requested additional information from staff and others to help inform how we priorities.

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

Resource Protection Committee met and discussed the items on the agenda. There are no actionable items to be presented to the Board.

**Report of Board’s Advisory Committee**

**Joint Institute for Wood Products Innovation, Katie Harrell, Board staff.**

California Forest Biomass Pile Data Collection, Draft Report Presented by Christiana Darlingtion and Camille Swezy, Clere, Inc, Jason Moghaddas and Greg Fanslow, Spatial Informatics Group.

**Board Comment:**

Member Chase thanked presenters and shared his thoughts on biomass conversion facilities and impacts.

Member Wade asked if it’s anticipated to be able to do on going assessments of availability of this material?

* There is a snapshot and there will be new fires that create new material.

Member Wade asked if the 72% of the requested burning vs the actual burning that was conducted, does that reflect some overall capacity of the ability to burn based on air quality policies?

* No, the 72% reflects the percentage of a particular burner’s goal.

Chairman Gilless stated that the issue of definition of ag vs forest burning which would require legislative action to deal with. This steps outside the boundary of the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection authorization but the task force might be the place to move recommendations.

**PRESENTATIONS**

**CalTREES**-Shawn Headley, CAL FIRE, Program Manager, Forest Practice Administration

**Francis H. Raymond Award for Excellence in Forestry: Mr. George “YG” Gentry.**

**CONCLUSION**

**Public Forum**

**Public Comments:**

* Richard Gienger shared his views on AB1492 and the Board of Forestry’s authority to require restoration recovery.
* Larry Camp wanted to clarify that the letter sent by the Board to CDFW regarding the CNDDB that Executive Officer mentioned earlier was from June 2021. He stated there has not been a response in 2 ½ years. Also, requesting the response to the Forest Practice Committee Business to be posted.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:





Edith Hannigan J. Keith Gilless

Executive Officer Chairman