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## Tree Mortality Task Force

### Tree Mortality Task Force Meeting Minutes November 14, 2016

#### 1. Opening Comments

- a. Chairpersons (Saul Gomez/Janet Barentson)
- b. Task Force Leader (Gabe Schultz)  
Goal before December meeting: create a calendar for all working groups for 2017

#### 2. Agency Updates

- a. United States Forest Service (Chris Fischer)  
Very close to releasing data from latest aerial detection surveys; collaborating with Public Outreach Working Group to disseminate cumulative numbers from 2016  
Public Outreach Working Group: completed list of year accomplishments
- b. Caltrans (Darold Heikens)  
25 active projects in CA; approximately \$100 million Statewide  
Starting to add projects in Yuba & Sierra Counties  
Going back to Fresno County along Route 168, previously identified 2,000 trees, adding 13,000 to the list; averaging \$1,000 per tree removal; hope to complete projects by beginning of December  
Janet Barentson: Have you resubmitted for Federal funds?  
Darold Heikens: Not yet, but we are planning to soon
- c. PG&E (Matt Plummer)  
Forecast for removal is up to 220,000 trees; removed about 190,000; plan to complete removal before end of December  
Completed redundant (secondary) patrols for 2016, first patrol for 2017 is 80% completed  
5 debris sites open for operation, working on getting additional sites  
4,200 customers signed up for the program, approximately 1,200 are approved  
Mortality is concentrated in Sierra area  
PG&E can't remove downed trees unless they are within 100 feet of a structure or 20 feet of a roadway

#### 3. CAL FIRE Re-engagement to Tree Mortality projects (Thom Porter)

Fire season is coming to a close in the Northern Region, but not in the Southern Region  
Started to move into fuels treatment projects; completed about 1,500 acres that impact tree mortality areas  
Brittany Dyer: Status of air curtain burners?  
CAL FIRE: We only have a limited number of days the burners can be used, the employees have to be specially trained, there are a limited number of employees who are trained, and the burners themselves are difficult to transport



#### **4. Regulations WG Update (Matthew Reischman)**

##### **a. Insurance Issues**

Largely in regard to people losing their insurance or not being able to get insurance based on the models being used; the creators of the Public Protections Classification (model that assesses the ability for a community to suppress a structure fire) and Fireline (model that evaluates fire risk, driven by slope, access, and vegetation) are willing to meet with the Regulations Working Group to assess how these models are being used to categorize structures

Hoping to have meeting with creators by end of the month, then host a meeting with counties and members of the public to educate about insurance regulations and to look into options

Individuals filing appeals through Department of Insurance have had some success

#### **5. Bioenergy WG Update - SB 859 (Angie Lottes/Sandy Goldberg)**

Expanded the amount of forest biomass to 125 megawatts, hope to sign by December

##### **a. MOU with CPUC**

Working with CPUC and CAL FIRE on MOU

##### **b. Clearcutting Definition**

Clearcutting is clearly defined under the Forest Practice Rules as even-aged management, but the definition doesn't apply during emergency situations; looking to redefine clearcutting to include emergency situations

##### **c. Feedstock Efforts**

#### **6. Utilization/Market Development Update**

##### **a. Forest Products Working Group (Claire Jahns)**

SB 859 directed a working group to be established to expand wood products markets and submit a report to the Legislature next year. Some reps have been pulled from the Tree Mortality Task Force and they are working on completing a list of recommendations by March

##### **b. DGS and use of woodchips on State facilities (Evan Johnson)**

DGS Procurement has researched the mulch market and submitted a request for information from the mulch industry; no response to/interest for transporting wood chips

#### **7. Grants Update (Rick Carr)**

##### **a. CAL FIRE**

\$11 million has been allocated for tree mortality; completed ranking for grants last week, expect to approve 60 grants and will notify grant awardees in early December

##### **b. NRCS EQIP Grant Update**

\$4 million has been designated for hazard tree removal of trees more than 100 feet from a residence, and the parcel must be at least one acre in size with at least 20 percent death. Deadline to apply is December 9, and there is a 50% match.



## 8. County Updates (if time permits)

Tulare: private landowners continue to be an issue, still having CDAA funding issues, insurance issues, concerns that since Winter is coming, storms will knock these trees down, one already hit a propane tank; concerns that the TMTF is losing momentum, and it's important to keep institutional knowledge and energy moving forward

Madera: Nervous about the transitions ahead, need to continue to educate decision makers, with the transition of personnel, we think another push on public outreach would be beneficial

Mariposa: At least four of the counties are hiring full time tree mortality coordinators, that's based on the level of commitment received at the TMTF

Amador: CDAA has been approved, in the process of hiring a Registered Professional Forester

El Dorado: Similar issues in Tulare; concerned about continuity based on personnel transitions; tomorrow the Board of Supervisors will vote on the hire of an RPF, completed lots of mapping, positive that the work with PG&E will be effective

Calaveras: have local tree mortality committee, have a full-time tree mortality coordinator; Caltrans and PG&E have been crucial

## 9. Closing Comments

Saul: We don't want to lose momentum due to personnel transitions, we are committed to continuing to work and to keep the Tree Mortality Task Force in place until tree mortality is no longer an issue

Follow-ups:

1. Work out issues on air curtain burners
2. Follow up with CPUC on Julia's questions concerning bio-mat
3. Caltrans emergency designation – get something out before end of November
4. Follow-up on insurance issue, possibly focus on public education

Janet Barentson: talk to your local units about defensible space inspections; traditionally dead and dying trees would be identified as a violation, but that will not be treated as a violation this year due to the issues with tree removal. If violations are issued, notify CAL FIRE

Whitney Bray is not leaving the department, and she will be available as a technical resource