



Tree Mortality Task Force

Tree Mortality Task Force Meeting Minutes October 10, 2016

- I. Opening Comments
 - a. Chairpersons (Ken Pimlott)

Ken: We have had a busy fire season and skipped meeting last month. Lots to talk about today. A lot happened with the budget in the last two months. We will end with a roundtable. Not agenized on purpose. We took advantage of the Tahoe Summit to talk with politicians about tree mortality: Feinstein, Reed. Saul Gomez is the new Governor's Office representative for the TMTF. Spent a day with Saul, fly over and ground perspective. He got to see the enormity of the challenge.
 - b. Lisa - OES: grants update:
 - i. In order to use fed funds, entities have to go through a federal environmental review, can take up a long time (10 years) – based on that a lot of the grants were not approved. Some of the grants should have approved equipment/etc. for tree mortality. This 'bucket of money' may not have been the right bucket of funds for this purpose
 - ii. Madera: We heard none were funded. OES responds some equipment but no vegetation management. Question- Anyone at the table get one? No one here got funded.
 - c. Ken: Question: Have a workshop for the counties to help with the application process for this grant? Longer term discussions, enforced health, cap and trade, might not impact immediate public safety, asks OES if there is value moving forward with this 'bucket' A- federal review is tough and long. Doesn't mean we can't make it work for longer term projects.
 - i. OES – Application process closed for this year
 - ii. Ken: Does the group see value in following up on this 'bucket'?
 - iii. Mariposa: Can we pursue a categorical exclusion for the federal environmental review?
 - iv. OES: Would have to work it out with the feds- state can only waive state rules not fed.
 - v. Ken- Challenges – after Oakland fire pursue a hazard-mitigation grant- 10 years later still ongoing. Is there bang for your buck in pursuing this 'bucket' as a strategy?
 - vi. Calaveras: If there is a workshop make sure that FEMA is there.
 - vii. Mariposa: Thinks there is value, especially for far NorCal counties
 - viii. County: A lot of resources went into this application, it was disheartening that all applications did not qualify – should have known that ahead of time. Lisa/OES says moving forward they will be more careful to understand what the requirements are before recommending.
 - ix. Madera- SRA funds prioritization without this 'bucket' makes their strategizing for SRA prioritization not work out. Could have applied for equipment if they knew that was the deal.
 - d. Task Force Leader (Gabe Schultz): This month no large group meeting but lots of working group meetings.
- II. End of Legislative Session Update (Caroline Godkin)



- a. 3 main Items: SB 859, AB 1613, SB 840, SB 1122
 - i. Cap and Trade, biomass requirements, new reporting requirements.
- b. FOREST SERVICE: Utilities have already begun bidding the biomass- can enter contracts quickly. Bill also applies to the publicly owned utilities (POUs) also; he says POU's are working together on the biomass contracts.
- c. MARIA Satero (CPUC) Agrees they have been working well with POU's
- d. BioRAM 1, BioRAM 2, bilateral agreement.
 - i. PG and E – BIORam1 and bilateral are better options.
 - ii. By end of October utilities have to let PUC know what their track is
- e. Total is 170mw generated by biomass statewide (new requirement and past requirement)

III. Grant Applications Update (Gabe Schultz/Rick Carr)

- a. SRA – 10 million
- b. Tree mortality grant program – 6 million general fund
 - i. 11 million of 16 was directed towards tree mortality.
- c. CALFIRE received 200 plus applications, total of 39 million dollars requested.
- d. Ken: Stakeholder outreach (25 million of cap and trade funds) – larger projects. Leverage this with other funds.
 - i. CAP AND TRADE: cap and trade funds must have measurable emissions reduction. Not just cutting trees- replanting/forest management aspects.

IV. United States Forest Service Update (Chris Fisher and Stephanie Gomes)

- i. Dropping about 160,000 trees in high hazard zones
 1. NEPA- creating new NEPA using categorical exclusions as best we can. Farm bill/watersheds. Up to 85/86 million available for that.
- b. Wildfire Funding Fix: Chris
 - i. Director OMD Donovan came out and had a call – fires are getting more complicated. Forest service is reaching firefighting budget before the end of the year- must borrow resources and abandon other duties.
 - ii. 1.6 billion spent on fire suppression – has been over budget for 6 of last 10 years.
 - iii. Director Donovan looking for a fix on fire suppression that funded federally. Director thinks something can be done before the end of the year.
 - iv. Ken- Without this funding fix, other things can't be done/other monies can't be leveraged. Secretary Vilsack (US agriculture). Governor is supporting this- support at high levels.
 - v. Both sides of the federal aisle are interested in helping with this.
 - vi. ES number
- c. Log Exports – Evan asks if there is more info on this
 - i. Option: Strict timber sales- if there are no bids, then could offer different rates. Legislative action could change the rates, make more viable for export.
 - ii. Opportunity for product excess: too much available product, could harm the market
 - iii. Pines are succumbing to lack of water.
 - iv. Calaveras: Where is timber being stored?
 1. Response – mostly by the side of the road, some stacked. Small amount is sold.



2. Calaveras asks – would forest service being interested in looking at the decking sites?
 3. Regulations group/Matt R. CALFIRE – has been working with forest service evaluating sites.
- d. ADS Flight and Mortality Number

V. CAL FIRE Update (Thom Porter)

- a. Re-engagement after fire season
- b. Northern 1/3 state of fire season is winding down. 27% increase in fires in 5 year average (acreage) Fire season is not over.
- c. Can start working on proscribed burning. New equipment is heading out to the woods. Tree mortality tree removal and fuels removal projects. Are pushing crews towards that maintenance while there is a lightening of fires.
- d. Got some new funding– staffing the equipment. And purchasing new equipment which will help with using the equipment. (a few things were still missing once they started using the new equipment).
- e. Agency to agency agreement for a temporary assignment of that equipment. - still working through the details of how those agreements will work.
- f. There will be more resources available for fuels reduction, memo from Pimlott to all CAL FIRE units raising the bar, expectation placed on units for specific goals in fuel reduction, defensible space inspections) 20000 acres of proscribed burning, 15,000 acres fuels – mechanical or hand cutting. 250,000 defensible space inspections. Is contingent on having augmentation of resourced. Jan1-end of June.
- g. At least a month -2 months left of fire season. JU asked for focus: he answers October in SoCal. Tells counties- a lot of the acres will be in your counties.

VI. Closing Comments

- a. Counties –
 - i. Mariposa – legislature seems unaware of the magnitude of the issue.
 1. Private lands still an issue – funding is the problem. Roads are an issue, access and egress (public and private lands/roads).
 2. 25% match is a problem – especially when it is a district issue (only one district within a county). Will run out of money before run out of problem. Appreciate Caltrans efforts.
 3. Feel like they should be going after federal highway funds. – CA has to be at the table. Thinks CA federal delegation should help. Counties say this is a good time to approach the federal legislators. He doesn't think they see an emergency – long term issue. Their tree estimates have been way low 2,000 to 20,000 – might help their case.
 - a. Work that is being done already is great. We can also show that the funds being spent are increasing safety of the roads and demonstrate success.
 4. Insurance issues for private land owners is an issue – lots of people not getting insurance renewed or get insurance. Legislature should get involved.



- a. Meeting set-up with Fair Plan, DOI, CAL FIRE – evaluating risk management/underwriting piece.
- b. Placer: seems like the Fair plan is out of date, not a great plan for the current situation. Advocate for an update to the Fair Plan would be good.
- ii. Amador says: State legislature should understand that tree mortality is a 58 county issue. Tourism issue, tourists want to look at pretty not dead trees
 - 1. Saul asks: Are there specific legislators needed? County says, only rural reps have been involved, need others, especially urban.
- iii. Calaveras: Lots of private landowners, big problem is: What to do with trees once they are felled AND financial relief for the homeowners – maybe write it off? Saul asks for proof it would make a difference. Every tree is a hazard, if we don't take them down, then they will come down on their own.
- iv. Ken: Can we gather some bad cases of trees falling (power lines, houses) – Madera says – not lots of problems yet, preventative has been helping.
- v. Angie Lottes: Does PG & E have data on trees falling on power lines – PG & E says it is mostly branches not trees but they may have some information. He will look into it.
- vi. Madera: How do we show the progress we have made after a year – who should release this information?
- vii. Ken: agrees – 19 elements of Governor's executive order, lots of progress has been made. How can we use this opportunity? Staff put together a matrix, he wants to share it back after executive review. Some items still need aggressive action.
 - 1. Make this not just another meeting, but continuing actionable/coordination role. Keep assessing effectiveness of the task force structure.
 - 2. Group should discuss this next meeting – hand out matrix.
 - 3. He throws it back to the room: best Public Discussion.
 - 4. US Forest service: thinks release is good. Be careful not to paint too rosy of a picture – the issue is not over even though the work is good.
 - 5. Ken: likes the fact sheet. He uses that to talk to legislators. Revisit the fact sheet and make public?
 - 6. Keep message: resources have been used well, but work is not done. Daniel Berlant.
 - 7. Ken says: jobs? Trees cleared?
 - 8. Counties respond- this is timely because of 1 year anniversary as a media opportunity.
- b. Saul – Don't overcommit. Wants to meet task force members personally.
- c. What can be used for the monthly report? Getting this out to media and general public.
- d. Daniel- How can we outreach to urban areas about this issue. Out of sight/out of mind.

VII. Adjournment