



**Cal OES**  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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## Tree Mortality Task Force

### Tree Mortality Task Force Meeting Minutes February 8, 2016

Attendees: 72 in room (see Entities spreadsheet)  
Via phone/webinar: 21 people

#### 1. Opening Comments

- a. Chairpersons
  - i. Wade Crowfoot
  - ii. Ken Pimlott
  - iii. Charles Rabamad for Mark Ghilarducci
- b. Task Force Leader (Glenn Barley)

This is a very dynamic situation, and we need a fair amount of flexibility to address issues and find solutions. We are focusing on the counties today.

#### 2. County Updates

##### a. Tuolumne County

Traci Riggs: The County has confirmation for an approved CDAA application and tree mortality plan. Operational area helping other districts within county to help guide them through the process; also hired a contract manager (LTO & RPF); they have a biomass plant in the County, and SPI has approached them to help; currently hiring more LTO's. On February 1, the County met with CAL FIRE representatives to discuss equipment needs. The County plans to also initiate community meetings. Foresters will GPS every single tree to gather data and establish priorities. There is concern that the County may lose contractors to fall trees as early as May or June as industry needs the LTO's. Also, the 1038(k) waiver (an exemption within the forest practice rules for the removal of trees) sunsets in April of this year, and there needs to be an extension.

Randy Hanvelt: The County needs a federal Declaration, and FEMA needs to get involved. The County also needs more funding. Additional concerns about biomass limitations and USFS involvement. The County would like to see more coordination with USFS.

Ashley Conrad: CA was awarded \$70 million in grants from a Natural Disaster competition. The plan is to implement an innovative recovery program in Tuolumne County at the site of Rim Fire. The program includes recovery and resilience projects in forests, including removal



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of dead trees, and the residue will go to a biomass facility that will be built (heating & cooling included).

Tracy Riggs: The County, through its local task force, has made priorities. The biomass facility has already told the County how much material they are able to take per month.

Glenn Barley: The Tuolumne Hazard Tree Removal plan is already online, and can be a model for other counties.

### Discussion Items

- Wade Crowfoot requested Cal OES to describe the process for obtaining a federal declaration for Tuolumne. Charles Rabamad specified that to request a federal declaration, a threshold of at least \$50 million must be met. Unfortunately, FEMA currently sees tree mortality as a mitigation effort, not an immediate threat. Charles requested that counties please provide information to Cal OES to help with justification. Also, federal assistance cannot be counted when determining the \$50 million threshold. Wade requested Cal OES to work on this issue.
- Wade asked the USFS to clarify their role. Jerry Bird explained that the USFS is treating this as an emergency, and is focusing on 6 counties. The USFS is hoping for more funding, has requested additional funding, and are hoping to get budget information soon. The Good Neighbor Authority agreement is in effect to use State dollars on federal land, and the USFS is ready to sign agreements. Good Neighbor is an opportunity to work with a State forester or other entity that allows the State and contractors to work on federal land. The USFS are still responsible for the environmental analysis.
- There is concern that biomass material may have to be separated based on type. Wade recommended this issue be tasked to one of the working groups.
- CAL FIRE approved 19 SRA grants early. There is approximately \$1.75 million for the six counties that could address tree mortality. Internally CAL FIRE approved \$500,000 in the units of the six counties for projects. CAL FIRE is trying to fast-track funds for the six affected counties as well, and recommended working with Fire Safe Councils to figure out how projects can be expedited.

### **b. Madera County**

Brittany Dyer: Only one out of the five districts in Madera County has tree mortality issues, and the County has a total budget of \$200 million. Most people in the County are in disadvantaged communities, and the County has a very small OES staff. Supervisor Tom Wheeler facilitates tree task force meetings as needed. Approximately 2,000 trees along a main road have been removed with assistance from CAL FIRE and USFS. Another project started today (funded by



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an SRA grant) that will fund approximately 80 days of work crews on six different roads that need work for public safety and fuel breaks. The County received three SRA grants totaling approximately \$250,000. North Fork/CDC log deck (about \$100,000) will help take logs. A biomass facility will also be active before the end of the year. The County is looking into different markets, including the manufacture of wood bricks, which is the primary heat source in eastern Madera County. Due to the County's small budget, the CDAA 25% match is very difficult to obtain. The County is continuing to look for funding for private landowners; \$30,000 to \$50,000 estimates for tree removal around homes are becoming normal. The County is continuing to look for federal funding through FEMA. Resource needs for the County include equipment, especially traveling equipment. The County also does not have a biomass facility. The County needs access to self-loading dump trucks to move fallen trees. Briquettes that can travel would also be helpful. County personnel are going above and beyond, but the workload is not sustainable. Supervisor Wheeler would like to propose a public safety tax to fund fire departments and sheriff's office with a 1% increase. The County also needs training and certifications for tree fallers. There are also concerns about the CPUC ruling regarding how SB 1122 may impact biomass facilities coming online (paying \$500,000 up front).

### Discussion Items

- Although air curtain burners may become available in residential areas, landowners still have to pay people to bring down trees. Also, air curtain burner can't take large diameter trees. For private landowners, the only assistance currently available is PG&E if tree impacts power lines. Insurance companies are not helping – many landowners are calling their company, and 30 days later are being dropped from insurance.
- In relation to the CPUC ruling regarding how SB 1122 may impact biomass facilities coming online (relates to additional security payments through CPUC for their procurement process), there a proposed solution, but PG&E and CPUC need to have some flexibility/creativity. This will be discussed in the bioenergy meeting on Friday. Matt Plummer from PG&E stated that there is a required study, and they've been implementing that, but for several projects that is an issue because they have an older study and would like to use that older study, but when accelerating interconnection you need to be in the queue. It also creates fairness issues for other developers. Julia Levin stated that CPUC needs to be involved in the determination. Kim Carr stated that 251 megawatts (over a third operating today) will expire, and none of the contracts have been resolved. Only 6 facilities can get up and running in 60 days. They are trying to expedite the BioMat program to get new facilities built. CPUC issued memos on Friday regarding extension of contracts with existing facilities, and also issued a scoping amendment memo related to the BioMat program. Wade requested the bioenergy work group to be the entity to help everyone understand this issue and have a forum to make sure everyone is in communication with



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each other. Steve Kelly (Independent Energy Producers) stated that new facilities are having interconnection issues. Judith Ikle & Maria Sotero (CPUC) specified that the draft resolution allows both PG&E and San Diego Gas & Electric the opportunity to go into the market and purchase through bilateral mechanisms. For new and existing facilities, the 20 megawatt no longer applies. RAM program reopened for a minimum of 30 megawatts. The ruling on the broader scoping memo speaks to biomass and taking into account emergency measures and the ruling by the Administrative Law Judge and Commissioner. There is a limited comment period, please comment by Monday the 16<sup>th</sup>. It should be posted on February 25<sup>th</sup>. Julia Levin stated that conversations should also include developers.

### **c. Mariposa County**

Kevin Cann: The County has a close partnership with CAL FIRE, county RCDs, and PG&E. 4 out of 5 districts are inundated with tree mortality. 80% of the populous lives in impacted areas, 90% of ponderosa pine trees are dead. PG&E has already identified 19,000 trees to be removed. High hazard mapping has been thorough (approximately 46,000 acres, about 500,000 trees in those zones). The County has created a local tree mortality task force with over 20 entities represented, and has met six times so far. The County also has an existing senior wood program where volunteers deliver wood to seniors, and has delivered 500 cords of wood to that program. RCD/CAL FIRE/OES have held two public outreach events in the last six months, and two more are planned. There will be a Funding Fair on Feb 27<sup>th</sup>. The local Fire Safe Council has been a huge help, especially for private lands. CAL FIRE SRA grants of \$88,000 for an extremely successful chipping program, and another CAL FIRE SRA Grant of \$94,000 for dead tree removal. 139 miles have been identified just in high hazard zones. Phase I is a 30 foot right of way from center; Phase 2 will be 200 feet. County OES has put together a total mitigation plan for high hazard zones, and will be submitting a CDAA grant tomorrow. About 46,000 acres in 12 zones need work (about 9,000 trees). The project would cost about \$3 million, which is difficult to match at 25%. Private landowner assistance is a concern. Also, the County has no storage facilities, but has identified 15 potential storage facilities, mostly on private land. It would be great to partner with USFS; so much area is WUI surrounded by national forest land, and the County would like to store some material for 4 years on forest land, as it could save the County a lot of money. Another big concern is the forest service property that is next to or close by private land.

#### Discussion Items

- The Regulations workgroup is creating guidelines for storage facilities and tree removal, and hopes to submit these guidelines to the Task Force for review mid-week. Wade Crowfoot asked if BLM or USFS have some locations available; Matthew Reischman stated that there are some restrictions, but there are options.



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- Caltrans still working on mapping. They do not have a lot of information yet from counties, so they are currently focusing on their own infrastructure. Wade asked local Caltrans districts to reach out to counties instead of waiting for counties to provide that information.

#### **d. Fresno County**

David Pomaville: Only one district in the County has tree mortality issues. The Board of Supervisors has declared a State of Emergency in the County, and has developed a tree mortality core county team staffed with local representatives. The County is also planning a broader task force to deal with other issues. Through these meetings the County is able to connect overlapping projects together. The priorities of the County are public safety, ingress/egress, and infrastructure. The County is also developing a countywide response plan, and sharing GIS resources and maps. The County needs air curtain burners to help address brush, as well as masticators, dozers, transportation for moving logs, and chippers. A lot of work has been done for defensible space, but there are more projects than the County can handle. The County met with USFS on Friday, and is concerned with their ability to clear on existing fire protection roads. USFS has limited resources, and the time frame is short. The County would like to see additional grants for local agencies, and is planning to submit a CDA application, but there is concern about the local match. The County would also like a federal declaration to involve FEMA. CCC crews are being heavily utilized, but the County is expecting a lack of tree fallers once projects get going. The County is supporting Good Neighbor provisions, and hoping to conduct projects adjacent to fed lands. The County is looking for areas to store dead logs, and needs to clear brush right away. Resources for private property owners are also needed. The County has hosted many meetings for landowners, but there are issues. Local people working in the field are aware of the problems. The County has also heard about concerns from power companies getting approval to do work on USFS lands, and would also like to see Caltrans clearing beyond 60 feet in right-of-ways, as fire agencies expect 200 feet of clearance.

#### **e. Tulare County**

Steve Worthley: Almost all problem areas in the County are in national forest lands; three districts in the County are impacted. The County has a Declared State of Emergency, and the priority is dealing with USFS. The County has had difficulty getting exemptions, and would like to use State and federal funds to address the problem. Tree mortality is deeply impacting Sequoias, and there are major water/watershed issues. There is only one remaining sawmill in the County, and it can only operate on shift. The County would like to fund two shifts. There are also supply issues and market concerns. Is there a rule that prohibits log exports off of national forest, and can the County get an exemption?



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Wade Crowfoot: We will connect you to the market development group.

### **3. Working Group Highlights**

#### **a. Resource Allocation (Thom Porter/Tom Lutzenberger)**

Equipment: Self-loading log trucks are hard to find. The group is working with counties, Caltrans, and DGS to identify all equipment, and then the group will work on allocation. Next, the group will move to operators. CAL FIRE equipment will be modularized, and by the end of next week the group will know where each module is going. All CAL FIRE equipment has been ordered; delivery as early as Wednesday. Need to conduct some training and provide safety manuals, but don't anticipate much delay. All equipment needs to be manufactured, but looking for equipment to plug holes in the interim. The group is also trying to identify and locate any excess federal excess equipment, and is working through ARB on emission issues pertaining to this equipment. The funding matrix has been updated, and the group is also creating a sheet for funding fairs.

#### **b. Regulations (Matthew Reischman/Sandy Goldberg)**

The group is currently completing a regulatory guidance document for tree removal, and has published an informational bulletin with guidelines for water supply at storage sites. In addition, the group is working on contacts list for local operations (per Wade: please circulate).

Alan Abbs (CA Air Pollution Control Officer) has been working with local air districts to opt into a streamlined process for use of the air curtain burners. USEPA is fairly adamant that there are Title 5 permit requirements for these units, but the group is working on contesting that this week. Once land managers know where/when the equipment is coming, they should notify their local air districts.

#### **c. Utilization – Market Development (Evan Johnson/Kim Carr)**

The group is currently developing a 1-pager on loan options pertaining to secondary materials. The group has also made calls about other infrastructure and markets for pellets, wood logs, etc. Recommendations are welcome. The group is also compiling a 1-pager pertaining to a permit waiver for solid waste and transfer facilities to be used as potential storage of organic materials.

#### **d. Public Outreach (Janet Upton/Staci Heaton)**

Possible legislative tour dates are April 15 or April 22; the final date will be decided via a conference call tomorrow. The tour will depart from Sacramento and will focus on the Bass Lake area. The group is hoping to reach out to both State and Federal legislators.



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**e. Prescribed Fire (Craig Thomas/Nick Goulette)**

Reiterated comments made by Alan Abbs regarding permitting of air curtain burners and the need to look at streamlining permitting and regulatory concerns.

**f. Utilization Bioenergy (Kim Carr/Angie Lottes)**

Discussion regarding biomass plants during county presentations covered topics to be addressed by working group.

**4. Closing Comments**

**a. Task Force Leader (Glenn Barley)**

- Initiating regular conference call with workgroup leaders.
- Initiating regular conference call with all 6 counties.
- Will visit Fresno, Tulare, and Kern to meet directly in the coming weeks.

**b. Chairpersons (Wade Crowfoot/Ken Pimlott)**

Ken Pimlott: Please continue sending questions through working groups/chain of command.

Wade Crowfoot: Leadership in the six counties is key. Please let State and federal entities know how they can be helpful. Very pleased with the progress of the Task Force, and would like to continue to hone in on barriers and opportunities.

Adjourn