



Tree Mortality Task Force

Meeting Minutes

July 10, 2017

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1. Opening Comments

- a. Chairperson Saul Gomez: \$6 million was appropriated in 2017/18 budget for grants to local agencies in the 10 HHZ counties consistent with the requirements for eligible tree mortality projects through the California Disaster Assistance Act and consistent with CAL FIRE's unit fire plans. We understand that the LTO/tree contractor issue has been pending for several months, an amendment of the Executive Order is under consideration.
- b. Chairperson Ken Pimlott: Amazing support for TMTF efforts was shown by legislators in recent budget hearings. As we are now in fire season our goal is to keep fires out of tree mortality areas. In the last week, there were 488 fires in the SRA alone, 600 fires statewide. The Governor signed a budget appropriation of \$10 million for the SRA grant program. The grant process will be similar to 2016/17, and while the budget doesn't call out tree mortality, there will be some emphasis on mortality in HHZs. CAL FIRE wants to help grant projects be successful and still has several SRA workshops planned throughout the state:
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFMaterials/2017%20SRA%20Workshop.pdf>
CAL FIRE will establish a process for distributing the local assistance grants in coordination with Cal OES and the CDAA program. Regarding the LTO/tree contractor issue and the revised Executive Order, this has been a complicated process because while we aim to absolve some licensing/certification requirements, we wanted to ensure we were not absolving either group of the associated responsibilities.
- c. Chairperson Jon Moore: We will work closely with CAL FIRE as the local assistance grant program is being developed and the monies dispersed to eligible projects.
- d. Task Force Leader (Gabe Schultz)
 - i. TMTF Pulse Check Responses – Over the past month, TMTF Leadership submitted questions to the Working Group leaders and County representatives to take a “pulse check” on the TMTF's current structure and process.
 1. County responses – County representatives express continuous support for the current structure and have found useful both the communication that the TMTF encourages and the products that have been produced. Counties have appreciated the loans of equipment and desire to have more. They expressed concerns over homeowner's insurance, tree removal and the fiscal issues of lack of funding for landowners and the CDAA match requirement. A newer issue of concern is the roadside hazards that log decks and slash piles are creating.
 2. Working group responses – Most of the working groups noted the general decline in active participation in the groups; the “official” members identified in the Incident Action Plan are often participating less than the “unofficial” members not identified in the IAP. Pressing concerns include: reforestation, urban outreach, insurance, outreach to new businesses and connecting to existing



businesses, bioenergy funding and related transportation, and data collection. Some working group objectives have been met, some have been determined to be less relevant, and others have been added. There is the potential to combine some working groups. Over the next month TMTF Leadership, with the help of the working group leaders, will assess the current working group objectives to determine if/how they have been met and how they might need to be updated.

ii. Upcoming Workshops

- Through July 19, various locations in California: SRA Fire Prevention Fee Grant Workshops:
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFMaterials/2017%20SRA%20Workshop.pdf>
- July 19-20, Tuolumne: 2017 Weed Committee Annual Tour:
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFMaterials/Weed%20Tour%20Registration%20Flyer%202017.pdf>
- July 25, Sacramento: Science and Management Symposium – “Lessons learned from extreme drought and tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada”:
http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFMaterials/Save-the-Date_Drought%20Workshop_FINAL_20170606_v2.pdf

2. USFS Update

- a. There are approximately 10 slots left for the July 25 Science and Management Symposium.
- b. USFS has felled 341,000 trees, treated 36,000 acres, and re-entered 8,000 acres.
- c. Federal budget discussions are underway, but the President’s proposed budget recommends a decreased appropriation for the agency. “Fire borrowing” legislation is still being discussed; should it be implemented it does not mean there is going to be an increase in funding, just that the agency won’t have to borrow from other programs.
- d. Five and a half million acres along the west slope of the Sierra Nevada from Yuba to Kern counties were mapped in the initial aerial detection monitoring flight in June. It is more difficult to tell mortality at lower elevations because the trees have grayed out. Mortality in the higher elevations was not visible as snow still covered the trees. For these reasons this initial flight may not be an accurate description of what is happening on the ground. Evaluation of the data is ongoing. Coordinating communications across agencies will be an important component of releasing updated mortality numbers. The planned late season (Aug/Sept) flight will be helpful to improve accuracy.
- e. Concern was expressed that public land permittees are not able to get on their grazing allotments due to tree mortality and road damage. A lesson learned from Rim Fire was that roads had to be cleared in order to complete initial attack. Because of limited resources and capacity, the USFS is prioritizing storm damaged roads that also have tree mortality. The agency has created maps for firefighters to see cleared and blocked roads, and staff continue to input data real-time as on-the-ground conditions change.



3. BLM update
 - a. Currently performing a long-term programmatic environmental assessment for utilities and roads.
 - b. Hopeful that funds will be available to use good neighbor agreements with CAL FIRE to treat BLM lands bordering state lands.
4. NRCS update – the EQIP program has funded \$5 million in applications this year with strong focus on HHZ counties.
5. CCC update
 - a. The first year of AmeriCorps funding is coming to an end with Corps workers addressing tree mortality around Shaver Lake.
 - b. The agency is currently developing a process for awarding out \$2 million in tree mortality grants.
6. PG&E Update
 - a. As of June, 73,000 trees have been marked for removal, 35,000 completed.
 - b. 7,700 properties signed up under the debris management program, of these 40% have been completed, 43% have agreements in hand, and 19% need to be followed up. Changed the Debris Management Program from 100 feet to 50 feet radius around infrastructure. There are currently 74 crews working in the Debris Management Program working diligently to eliminate the backlog of participating customers.
7. Caltrans Update
 - a. A total of 107,608 trees have been removed. \$115.8 million expended in 2016/17 and \$60 million programmed for upcoming fiscal year
 - b. Hearing with TRPA board is scheduled for August 23.
 - c. Ongoing conversation for special use permit for 18 USFS forests.
 - d. Agency has spent \$1.4 billion on major damage response, 10% of this was spent on tree mortality.
8. Working Group Updates
 - a. Mapping and Monitoring Working Group – Kevin Conway on behalf of leaders
 - i. Waiting for ADS data to potentially revise HHZ
 - ii. Process for local designation of Tier 2 HHZ is complete and posted on the TMTF website. <http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/workinggroups#MM>. The first two Tuolumne sites have been added to map layers.
 - iii. Log storage sites have been mapped and a supporting contact spreadsheet created. Both will soon be posted to TMTF website.
 - b. Public Outreach Working Group – Daniel Berlant
 - i. Working with insurance sub-working group
 - ii. Continuing messaging for urban audiences
 - c. Regulations Working Group Update – Matthew Reischman
 - i. Insurance sub-working group update – Meeting today with insurance trade representatives to present a list of risk mitigation factors that might reduce the risk for



- both the insurance industry and private property owners. The group will also hear a presentation by Fair Plan president Anneliese Jivan.
- ii. Bioenergy facilities are regulated by ARB and Cap and Trade, but there is an exemption for fuel reduction and forest improvement projects. The Working Group is investigating the type of documentation that is appropriate for projects in HHZ for which there is no forest practice documentation. CalEPA and ARB are working to help resolve.
- d. Bioenergy Working Group Update (Evan Johnson on behalf of Angie Lottes)
- i. Continue to make progress on technical and policy issues related to interconnection
 - ii. Have currently negotiated a \$6.6 million reduction in costs across projects
 - iii. An interconnection policy meeting will be held Friday, July 14 to review ways to adapt the BioMAT program to enable forest biomass projects to be responsible for lower interconnection upgrade costs.
- e. Resource Allocation Working Group (Kevin Conway on behalf of leaders)
- i. The Landowner Assistance sub-working group is being subsumed under this working group and John Melvin, who previous led the sub-group, will now be leading the larger working group.
 - ii. A draft “database” of grants has been posted to the TMTF website. The list is quite extensive and will be edited to ensure relevancy and ease-of-use. Feedback and additions to the list are welcomed.
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFResources/AvailableGrants6.28.2017.xlsb.pdf>
- f. Forest Health and Resilience Working Group (Kevin Conway on behalf of leaders)
- i. The seed zone map was finalized and will be part of a larger story board on reforestation
http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFResources/20170626_SeedZones_letter_port.pdf
 - ii. Preliminary work on long-term outlook for Sierra Nevada white paper continues. CAL FIRE FRAP staff have been assigned to the project.
 - iii. Work continues on the reforestation effort for non-federal forestlands. The California Climate Hub is hiring a post doc researcher to lead the effort, funding is expected to come from funds in the LA Moran Reforestation Center BCP budget.
- g. Market Development Working Group (Evan Johnson)
- i. Presentation by Lisa Worthington and Larry Swan – Potential uses of ponderosa pine on the State highway system.
 1. One objective of working group, “Work with affected counties and existing wood project markets to determine the feasibility of expanded wood project markets in California.”
 2. Caltrans currently uses Douglas fir treated with copper and zinc, approximately 7,000 signs are targeted for replacement.
 3. Question: Could the excess unwanted resource of blue-stained wood be used on public roads, sign posts, guardrail posts and blocks? The coordination of Caltrans and USFS through the working group allowed for an expedited investigation.



4. Forest products lab provided specs comparing ponderosa pine with other wood species. USFS met with traffic operations engineers within Caltrans. Using ponderosa signposts may be able to be expedited as they don't require crash-testing, while roadblocks and guard rails require crash-testing.
5. Next steps: A virtual meeting between METS & National Forest Products Testing Lab, industry outreach peer review with other DOT, revise Caltrans highway design standards, revise purchase agreements, distribute "Notice to Bidders."
6. Long-term goal: Establish a new market for ponderosa pine that will extend beyond tree mortality emergency

9. County Updates

- a. Amador – Finished second TM project, and prepping invitation to bid on the third. A consultant has begun work with BLM on hazard tree removal. CalAm group is working with county fire safe council to apply for grants.
- b. Calaveras – Just received notification that a Toyon Park parcel near Valley Springs is coming available as a possible storage and processing site.
- c. El Dorado – 8 operational areas identified, 2 areas in process.
- d. Fresno – Concerned that County road crews are overextended between tree removal and winter road damage repairs. Success: the county's first CDAA claim has moved through the process and reimbursement is eminent.
- e. Kern – Currently has one LTO working on a tree mortality SRA grant project.
- f. Madera – Finances and winter storms have delayed the county's progress. The prospect of addition CDAA and SRA funding is encouraging.
- g. Mariposa – Signed agreement with Blue Ridge Services as the county's TM operations manager. The consultant is very process oriented, uses decision making and management tools, including a tree mortality cost model to track reimbursable expenses. Recently conducted an assessment of dead trees around county infrastructure and roads to establish priority projects. The local fire safe Council and RCD are working under SRA agreements to remove dead trees on private parcels. NRCS funds are helping.
- h. Placer – Recently hired TSS Consultants to manage their tree mortality projects. Currently completing a mortality assessment.
- i. Tulare – Thank you to Governor's office for additional CDAA funding. County is currently preparing SRA grant applications, and recently submitted CDAA bills for reimbursement.
- j. Tuolumne – The county appreciates the additional \$6 million in CDAA funds. Insurance and funding for private landowners are still issues. Looking forward to solutions on the issues of LTO/tree contractors and CDAA match. Distributed a copy of the county's tree mortality status report. Right of entry forms are now online will be a great tool to share with other counties

10. Closing Comments

- a. Director Pimlott – The current budget also provides funding to reestablish the seedling production facilities at the LA Moran Reforestation Center. The seedlings grown will help support non-industrial landowners.