



Tree Mortality Task Force Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2017

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1. Opening Comments
 - a. Chairpersons
 - i. Ken Pimlott –
 - This fire season there has been an unprecedented number of fires, but defensible space and clearance efforts along with amazing firefighting are making an impact.
 - CA legislature will reconvene on August 21. The next version of the budget bill will determine how the \$6 million allocated to CAL FIRE for tree mortality is spent. Saul has worked hard to move the Executive Order revision within the Governor's office and hopes it will be signed soon.
 - The Netflix's Original Series, Fire Chasers, will be premiering on Friday, September 8th on Netflix. The docuseries tells the story of our changing climate through the lens of wildfire and several perspectives, including CAL FIRE's. The TMTF and some of its members are included.
<https://www.netflix.com/title/80117902>
 - ii. Jon Moore – CalOES will work with counties on winter storm disaster processing.
 - b. Task Force Leader (Gabe Schultz)
 - i. Upcoming Workshops
 - August 23-24 in Sacramento, CA: Little Hoover Commission public hearing on forest management
http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/LHC_ForestHealth_8-23-17.pdf
 - August 24-25 in Anderson, CA: SAF's summer meeting, "Value Added Forestry"
<http://norcalsaf.org/2017/07/18/2017-california-saf-summer-meeting-value-added-forestry/>
 - August 24-25 in Auburn: SNC's "Introduction to Grant Writing" workshop
http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFMaterials/SNC_GrantWriting_Class_Auburn8.2017.pdf
2. Partner Updates
 - a. USFS – The agency has felled 350,000 trees on 42,000 acres. The budget year is ending, and so they are wrapping up funding of projects. In this year's budget, \$22 million was spent on specific projects and approximately \$84 million was reallocated over past two years. The USFS will be testifying at the upcoming Little Hoover Commission hearing. "Visions of the Wild," an art and film festival will focus on statewide tree mortality and fire. The event is September 6-10 in Vallejo. <https://visionsofthewild.org/>
 - b. BLM – The agency continues to ask for funding from the Washington office for tree mortality. Using project funds to initiate some projects in Calaveras, Amador, and Kern counties. Three



out of eight forestry positions are vacant. Working with CAL FIRE on a good neighbor agreement. Working with PG&E to streamline tree removal near powerlines.

- c. NRCS – This fiscal year the agency has spent \$4.9 million on tree mortality and \$11.7 million on forest health projects. They have funding \$261,000 in forestry assistance contracts covering 4,100 acres.
- d. CCC – Currently there are 45 crew members doing tree mortality in the central Sierra. SRA work will begin in the districts – their priority is tree mortality. Finalizing an interagency agreement with CAL FIRE for use of \$3 million in GGRF funds; projects will begin this spring involving two tent camps with 45-50 person each in tree mortality areas.
- e. PG&E – Met today with counties to talk about wood disposal program. There is great support and enthusiasm for the program. Will work on customer education, using different modes of communication, setting expectations, and contact management.
- f. Caltrans – Public outreach to Tahoe landowners is being initiated. A door hanger was created in coordination with the POWG to be used to notify Tahoe homeowners of upcoming tree tagging work. The agency is beta-testing e-signature software for landowner permission to enter agreements; the current mail methodology only yields a 61% response rate. Adobe Systems has offered the agency 1000 free transactions. The agency will also be use media blasts including Twitter “tweets” and a revamped website Dot.ca.gov/TreeMortality. Caltrans is seeking an area-wide permit for tree removal methodology and will present their request at TRPA’s August 23 meeting. There are an estimated 111,000 hazardous trees in Tahoe basin. The agency is continuing to work with the MDWG to towards specification changes necessary for ponderosa pines to be used as sign posts.

3. Lessons Learned from July 25th Science and Management Symposium: Extreme Drought and Tree Mortality in the Sierra Nevada: How Can Past Events Inform our Approach Forward. (Steve Ostoja, Director USDA California Climate Hub)

http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFMaterials/SOstoja_ReportOut_8_14_17.pdf

- a. The Climate Hubs were established in February of 2014 to deliver science-based knowledge, practical information and program support to farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and resource managers to support climate-informed decision-making considering the increased risks and vulnerabilities associated with a changing climate.
- b. This tree mortality event is significant. Remember that change is about the only thing we can count on. We are watching this process; need to assess it, define parameters, move forward accordingly. Global stressors including climate change will have a greater influence in shaping our ecosystems than land use practices. Science is advancing so quickly that we should convene specialists on a yearly basis.
- c. Last month the Climate Hub co-hosted a Drought & Tree Mortality Symposium in Sacramento. and partners convened a meeting of Assign specific questions. At this meeting speakers and attendees addressed the questions of: What are past events that contributed to tree mortality? What are the conditions, activities, and actions that influenced patterns of tree mortality and survival on the landscape? What are the expected conditions for the future? Expert breakout session focused on reforestation, fire and fuels management, and partnerships and opportunities. Symposium presentations can be found here:



<http://caclimatehub.ucdavis.edu/drought-and-tree-mortality-science-and-management-symposium/>

- d. Next steps: day two summary – prioritization of actions; AGU abstract submitted – Science into Action; forum paper: history of and factors associated with the SN Tree Mortality Dynamic (proposed), symposium fact sheet (in prep, proposed); workshops – climate effects on forests (recurring, reforestation/re-vegetation, fire and fuels management; climate smart reforestation guidebook; applying the Science Facts Sheets for Line Officers (proposed); adaptive silviculture treatments for climate change (suggested).

4. Working Group Updates

a. Forest Health and Resilience Working Group (Pete Cafferata & Stewart McMorro)

- i. Dr. Steve Ostoja and work group have developed a draft reforestation strategy outline following the information received at the July 25th symposium. The outline will be used by the California Climate Hub for generating a prospectus for hiring a postdoctoral researcher to lead the effort. Dr. Steve Ostoja and task force members have developed a draft reforestation strategy outline following the information received at the July 25th CA Drought and Tree Mortality workshop at McClellan. The outline will be used by the California Climate Hub for generating a prospectus for hiring a postdoctoral researcher to lead the effort. The project will cover both reforestation and vegetation management concepts for future climatic conditions, and will serve to complement and support other efforts related to reforestation already underway. Currently the vision is to include all landowners for the project's audience, including the USFS, however the specifics of how to accomplish this is part of current scoping discussion.
- ii. Drafting a Reforestation Assessment by El Dorado RCD. This effort will help to inform managers of the scope of the need, help inform speculative sowing orders, and give an update on current reforestation seedling distribution and production.
- iii. Drafting of Reforestation Manual underway with the Siskiyou RCD which will be a much-needed update to a 45-year-old reforestation manual for the State of CA. This will be made free to the public.
- iv. Reopening of L.A. Moran Reforestation Center in Davis. CAL FIRE is currently assessing and rebuilding the tree nursery closed for the last 14 years.
- v. The Seed Zone and Reforestation Story Map has been drafted. It combines maps, narrative text, images, and multimedia content, and will reside online.
- vi. A draft of the white paper synthesis on the long-term outlook for the Sierra Nevada will be completed before the September FHRWG meeting.
- vii. The Sierra Nevada Forest Science Coordination Group, a subcommittee of the FHRWG, is identifying ongoing research and monitoring projects that address science and management information related to tree mortality. The Group has identified 64 people to contact for information on ongoing research/monitoring projects. An editable ArcGIS web map was developed for capturing the data.

b. Mapping and Monitoring Working Group (Mark Rosenberg)

- i. Continues to support and update the tree removal project tracker Calmapper
- ii. Tier 2 HHZ local identification areas have been added to the map



- iii. A map of temporary wood processing and storage locations was completed and is posted:
http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/downloads/TMTFMaterials/20170602_MAP_TABLE_TempWoodProcStorLoc.pdf
 - c. Public Outreach Working Group (Daniel Berlant)
 - i. Worked with Caltrans on door-hanger.
 - d. Regulations Working Group Update (Matthew Reischman)
 - i. Wood waste tracking, Cap and Trade regulation requirement. Document will be posted
 - ii. Tree removal guidelines for high hazard zones is being finalized
 - iii. Insurance: The company Yapacopia has an existing aggregator tool and will present it to the sub-working group.
 - e. Bioenergy Working Group Update (Angie Lottes)
 - i. Attempts to reduce interconnection costs continues. Progress has made on the technical end with costs reduced for 3 projects. The CPUC will be hiring an ombudsman to work directly with the projects as go through system impact process. In last month's policy meeting, multiple ideas were proposed for lowering project costs, including reallocating costs from project owners to the public. PUC has the mechanism to make that change but wants to research tariff issues prior to proceeding.
 - ii. Investigating the issue of whether or not BioRAM facilities can meet increasing requirement for HHZ fuel (currently required to have 50% of fuel from HHZ, in 2018 requirement is 60% of fuel, and in 2019 it is 80%). Gathering data. Have heard that facilities are already having problem meeting current requirements. Hauling subsidy will not solve the problem. There is a lot of dead trees out there, but it is not being cut. Haul distances overlap in the north.
 - iii. On August 23, Little Hoover Commission is considering the viability of forest bioenergy as a forest management tool.
 - iv. Saul would like to see data from facilities on where they are getting their fuel – anecdotes are interesting but data is more impactful. Demonstrate that we are doing everything necessary to meet original goals. Use the data to move forward on policy change. Plants are reporting to CPUC the fuel they are receiving. Facilities report to utility, and utility provides to CPUC. If both sides agree to disclose, should be okay.
 - f. Market Development Working Group (Evan Johnson & Bob Kingman) –
 - i. Evan providing testimony to the Little Hoover Commission on behalf of the MDWG
 - ii. Initiating a conversation with counties on market development needs. Will gather feedback via three conference calls on August 18, 23, and September 13. Please look out for the emails and distribute to appropriate contacts.
- 5. County Updates
 - a. Amador – Initiating first three projects. Gathering right of entry forms.
 - b. Calaveras – Actively engaging on projects, trees marked, operations going in this week. PG&E has been very proactive.
 - c. El Dorado – Pilot projects going very well.
 - d. Fresno – Doing some planning with USFS. Hope to get CDAA work done before winter.



- e. Madera – Preparing a local hazard mitigation plan in preparation for CDAA funding. Moving forward with CDAA projects. Appreciate the seed zone map. A tree fell on a highway and injured a 10-year old boy who was a passenger in a moving car.
- f. Mariposa – Will approve county budget on 8/15. Some delay with CDAA funding. Detwiler fire has kept county busy; this was not a tree mortality fire.
- g. Placer – Consultant did not work out. Will find replacement.
- h. Tulare – Working on local hazard mitigation plan for CDAA funding. Focus is on evacuation routes. Phase three in removing trees from Rim fire area.
- i. Tuolumne – Second monthly report completed. We've been at this a long time and we have done good things, but how do we maintain urgency? How do we get where we need to be?

6. Closing Comments

- a. Saul Gomez – The sense of urgency felt by Task Force is now different. Before, the issues were easier to see and identify. Now, as we are in implementation mode, its harder to identify problems and how best to address. We need to be tactical and strategic. Data will be important to make the case for what we need to address. Hope to have good news about Executive Order revise within days.