



Tree Mortality Task Force Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2018

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1. Opening Comments

- a. Saul Gomez – The Governor’s budget will be released this week, the agencies are rolling out workshops related to Cap and Trade funds, and the Little Hoover Commission is expected to release their report on the state’s forest management in response to the tree mortality crisis at the end of January.
- b. Task Force Leader Gabe Schultz
 - i. Status: Reported number of trees removed through December 31, 2017. These numbers will be updated monthly as they are provided to TMTF Leadership.

<u>Area/Unit/County/Agency</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Trees Removed</u>
USFS	Nov-17	483,867
CAL FIRE	Dec-17	42,824
Caltrans	Oct-17	108,188
Priority Counties	Nov-17	16,121
PG&E	Nov-17	365,867
SCE	Dec-17	80,450
Total		1,097,317

- ii. Encouraged TMTF members to continue to participate in and bring issues to the Working Groups. Some groups have met most of their original objectives and are in maintenance mode. The Bioenergy Working Group needs a co-chair – will work to fill.
- iii. CAL FIRE has announced availability of 2017-2018 California Climate Investments (CCI) grant funds. Up to \$200 million is available through Forest Health grants (including conservation easements through the California Forest Legacy Program) and Fire Prevention grants. Up to \$20 million is available through CAL FIRE’s Urban and Community Forestry program. \$5 million is available to the CCC’s for Forest Health and Fire Prevention activities. The application process is two-phased with concept proposals for Forest Health grants due February 21 and Urban grants due February 26. Following review of the concept proposals, CAL FIRE will invite full proposals from qualifying projects. Full applications are expected to be due in May. CAL FIRE is working with the Air Resources Board to finalize grant administrative requirements for the Fire Prevention grants; additional information will be released later in the year. Grant workshops will be held this month in Fresno (1/19), Sacramento (1/22), Riverside (1/24) and Redding (1/26). More information can be found at: <http://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/grants>.
- iv. Upcoming Meetings: [Steep Terrain Hazardous Fuels Treatment Demonstration](#) – Week of June 4, 2018



2. Partner Updates

- a. USFS – Thank you to CAL FIRE for collaborating on the release of the ADS numbers. Current statistics are: 495,000 trees felled; 50,000 acres treated; and 37,000 acres NEPA ready.
- b. BLM – Interested in market research for the cost of tree removal work. How can we aggregate this information? Some counties provide “cost per tree” in their monthly reports.
- c. CCC – March and April will see three crews doing tree mortality work out of Groveland in the Rim Fire Area. Following that work, three crews will be working out of Shaver Lake with funding from AmeriCorps. SRA projects will begin soon as will GGRF projects specific to tree mortality.
- d. PG&E – In December, the CPUC ordered utilities via email to suspend the ReMAT program (a wind and solar version of the BioMAT) because of an order from a Federal District Court which decided in favor of a wind energy company lawsuit. The CPUC’s letter stated that they were also evaluating the implications of the ruling on BioMAT. PG&E sent letters to the BioMAT facilities with a pending Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) stating that they would not issue contracts until further guidance was provided by internal and CPUC legal staff. On December 28, Phoenix Energy filed a Motion to Compel, which asks the CPUC to force PG&E to execute a PPA with those facilities which were conditionally selected; no response to date from the CPUC. PG&E will continue to run this month’s auction.
- e. SCE – As of December 23 the utility has counted 96,696 dead trees and removed 83,805. Question: Are utilities tracking how much material is going to biomass facilities? PG&E responded: Approximately 90% going to biomass. SCE will report on that number next month.
- f. Caltrans – Completed an intensive strategic planning cycle. Allocated \$61 million to remove trees at a budgeted cost of \$1,091/tree. Completed long-range planning with El Dorado County for “Firewise 50.” Recently met with USFS to investigate an instrument of agreement to standardize operating procedures on highways within national forests. This could take the form of a letter of direction from Forester Randy Moore or a state-wide programmatic special use permit. The goal is to have an agreement with USFS in place before projects go out to bid in late March. Seeking to divert as many trees to bioenergy as possible. Current contracts have not required, but instead encouraged, contractors to take trees to biomass plants. CA Biomass Energy Alliance offered to help facilitate connecting Caltrans to biomass users.

2. Working Group Updates

- a. Mapping and Monitoring – Analyzing the ADS data to create updated HHZ tier 1 and Tier 2 HHZ, once complete will update the “Facts and Figures” document. Continued work on a local validation process for Tier 1 HHZ. Received an application from Butte County for local designation of a Tier 2 HHZ. Question: are there risk maps forecasting the number of dead trees into the future. The USFS has a [National Insect and Disease Risk Map \(NIDRM\)](#) that is updated every 5 years. Areas that are expected to experience at least 25% Basal Area of mortality in the next 15 years are considered at risk. There are other data sets that seek to map risk of future mortality. One such example was [developed by Zack Heath \(USFS\) and Nancy Grulke](#).
- b. Public Outreach –Coordinated media outreach on the ADS results to ensure a consistent message across agencies.



- c. Regulations – Currently 12 months into the 30-month exclusion for air curtain incinerators. Will work with Cal EPA to determine TMTF’s approach after the 30-month exclusion expires. The Tree Removal Guidelines have not yet been revised to address the Governor’s last Executive Order. The Insurance Sub-group reports that Senator Lara has introduced the [Wildfire Safety and Recovery Act \(SB 824\)](#) addressing insurance cancellations and non-renewals in the WUI. The Subgroup meets monthly after full Task Force at 3:15 p.m. CA Department of Insurance published a white paper on [Availability and Affordability of Coverage for Wildfire Loss in Residential Property Insurance in the WUI](#).
- d. Bioenergy – The next Working Group meeting falls on a holiday therefore, the meeting has been rescheduled for 1:00 PM on Tuesday, January 16. Fuels reduction, pest management, reforestation, biomass utilization (energy and wood products) and research are all fundable activities within CAL FIRE’s CCI-Forest Health program. CAL FIRE is encouraging projects to include a suite of those activities, and those projects including biomass utilization will be more competitive than those without. Ask project applicants to reach out to a biomass facility or wood products manufacturer to include them in the proposal. Proposals for biomass utilization only are likely to be uncompetitive. Funds will be available for spending as early as July 2018 and may be spent through June 2020. Due to the length of time for expenditure, projects may choose to include existing or new build facilities as a biomass partner.
- e. Forest Health and Resilience – The Reforestation Story Map has been approved by CAL FIRE Executive staff, with the provision that it be updated with the ADS data. FRAP staff are completing modeling work to determine areas most likely to experience type conversions and will incorporate climate stress data. The Working Group received a presentation by Dr. Kristen Shive of UC Berkeley/Yosemite National Park, titled, “The Potential for Type Conversions in Sierran Mixed Conifer.” Received a revised proposal from the potential contractor to complete the reforestation strategy and is now in the CAL FIRE “green sheet” process. Looking to develop climate-based seed transfer guidelines. Have inventoried 14 ongoing research and focused monitoring projects related to tree mortality in the Sierra Nevada. All the seedlings paid for by [OneTreePlanted.org](#) have been spoken for.
- f. Market Development – Received a presentation by the Central Valley Forestry Corps that proposes to recruit, train and deploy young adults to remove dead trees and plant new ones in cooperation with existing Local Conservation Corps and the U.S. Forest Service. They would enroll 105 unemployed young adults in an “Intro to Forestry Tech” program, followed by six weeks of specialized training in a specialized track. Finally, Local Conservation Corps would employ them for 1-2 months, after which they would be placed in post-secondary education, unsubsidized jobs, or advanced training. Seeking private, state, and federal funding. Comment: There are real opportunities to link up tech sector with long-term vision of forest industry. Since Resources Agency has produced their SB 859 recommendations report there have been internal meetings, but no public meetings.



3. County Updates

- a. Amador – Moving forward with tree removal projects in Pioneer, Volcano, and USFS and BLM lands, but weather will slow them down a bit. Sending in CDAA reimbursement requests.
- b. Calaveras – Has selected TSS Consultants as the county’s tree mortality project manager. Submitting costs to OES for CDAA reimbursement for planning activities.
- c. El Dorado – Of the 600 trees the county has removed, 75% have been in the community of Grizzly Flats. The next project will be adjacent to a high-traffic roadway; estimated that the 40 planned trees may cost up to \$400,000 due to location of trees and need for specialized equipment. RFP will be released soon.
- d. Fresno – Have made good progress on projects due to dry weather. USFS is seeking public comment on a plan to allow for felled trees to be removed from Giant Sequoia National Monument. Continue to award projects but want clarification from CalOES about the prevailing wage issue.
- e. Kern – One SRA project to complete and awaiting final approval on CDAA grant.
- f. Madera – Moving forward with CDAA projects, learning from neighboring counties, and issuing an RFP/RFQ for an operations manager. Secured 25,000 seedlings for Madera and neighboring counties. Tree mortality is real in Madera County: Supervisor Wheeler lost homeowner’s insurance due to proximity to wildlands; a tree fell on a house; and the North Fork biomass program is on halt due to BioMAT concerns.
- g. Mariposa – The county is pleased with the planning that has been done counting and marking trees and will now be able to move forward with cutting the highest priority trees.
- h. Placer – Consultant completed divisional breakouts in December and has identified 7,159 trees. The highest concentration of tree mortality trees is on USFS and BLM land adjacent to county roads.
- i. Tulare – The past month has been very productive. Met with USFS to address trees on federal land that are adjacent to county roads. Local USFS Supervisor is moving to Los Padres National Forest. Trees cannot be removed from the National Monument because it is viewed as a logging exercise. Will cut them and put on temporary log decks for now.
- j. Tuolumne – 30 projects completed with 4,277 trees felled. Working on second SRA private property project and second SRA road project. Will soon submit LATM application. Planning 25 new projects for 2018. Will implement electronic right of entry forms using Adobe software. Ryan Campbell from Tuolumne County and Lisa Worthington from Caltrans worked together on the software contract. The electronic process takes 6 minutes vs. 6 weeks for paper ROW.

4. Closing Comments

- a. Saul— Action items: Will seek co-chairs for working groups that are in need, will work with Angie Lottes on the best and timely way to talk about BioMat, and will investigate BLM’s request for market data.