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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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## **Tree Mortality Task Force Prescribed Fire Working Group Agenda/Minutes**

February 17th, 2016

1:00 – 2:00 PM

Conf. Call – 857-232-0157, code: 367285

NOTE: agenda in black font, notes in blue font

- Introductions and roll-call:

Rich Wade, Nic Enstice, Staci Heaton, Steven Bakken, Karen Magliano, John Demassa, Ping, Dar Mims

- Review call agenda (N. Goulette)

- Review progress on immediate action items

o Update on CAL FIRE's Vegetation Treatment Program

- Board directed staff to put out VTPEIR for 45 day review and public comment. Will be out shortly.
- Steven B is glad to hear it because he believes it will make a big difference for working with CAL FIRE on Rx burning on State Park lands.
- Steve reminded us that the last go at this, in the late 90s, was hung up because of issues associated with herbicides.
- Rich said the VTPEIR does deal with allowance of herbicides.

o Continue exploring air curtain burner permitting process – roles for working group and individual members? (A. Abs)

- Will still require Title 5 permit
- Should qualify for the 8 week exemption while filing
- Develop simplified template
- Steven has been through the process in "impacted districts". They have had to go through "authority to construct" permits that can take up to 1 year to qualify and require fairly expensive engineering review. Permits are 1 year and require renewals. Takes time and problematic.
- Also has not had air districts keeping the data that State Parks has provided on prior operations.
- In subsequent call with Alan A on 2/18, Nick confirmed that EPA had agreed that the 8 week exemption and a permit filing template would be appropriate, but Alan and local districts would like to push for a little more expedited process. He and CARB staff will be continuing to work with EPA to get clear and streamlined process outlined.



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- Continue conversation regarding PFIRS use and direction –
  - Are there any state or federal resources, or direction that could help facilitate more thorough and widespread usage, including beyond the 6 counties? (N. Goulette, CARB, CAL FIRE, USFS leaders)
  - All air districts within the 6-counties are using PFIRS. SJ uses it for large landowners and large burns (USFS, NPS), but other pile burning is not. All projects that require Smoke Mgt. Plans are getting inputted. Small pile burning is not. Data is getting better as usage ramps up.
  - PFIRS is the only tool for ramping up pile burning as well. It's info reporting plan, useful even if smoke mgt plans aren't required.
  - CARB could provide training
  - Perhaps CARB could provide real human resources to the districts that needs help.
  - Maybe we could work on a memo through CAPCOA. Maybe advertise through IASC and Air and Land Managers mtg.
  - Karen and CARB agreed to scope with local air districts through IASC and Air and Land Managers mtg to learn what they need (training, staff capacity, etc.) to more fully utilize PFIRS. From there, we'll consider putting together a memo for land managers/burners with PFIRS direction.
- Maximizing capacity and resource allocation
  - Intermediate task was to inform resources WG of need for special consideration of how best to deploy human resources to meet pile burning demand (align fuel condition suitability with availability of human resources – several barriers associated with conflicting resource assignments, weekends/holidays, trainings, etc.)
  - What is the role of this working group in advancing this set of issues?
  - Difficult to say whether the WG has an ability to do much about this suite of issues. We are going to elevate this to the resources WG and TMTF leadership.
- Info on priorities – magnitude and locations
- Initiate discussion of other intermediate actions/priorities and explore roles for this working group
  - Any public meetings or notifications regarding new regulations and guidelines – Maybe outreach to counties regarding air curtain burner regs?
    - What form would that take?
    - Who would be responsible?
    - When?Direct outreach to affected parties. No public meeting recommended
  - Any public education messaging associated with the benefits of Rx fire or the specific actions/recommendations of the working group?  
No action recommended



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- Selection of other barriers we could prioritize work on
  - Public perceptions concerns
  - Liability/insurance concerns
  - Low agency or landowner priority
  - Permitting and legal concerns (state laws, burn bans, local restrictions, NEPA or CEQA process, ESA, etc.)

Group discussed and believes that these issues should be addressed by Fire MOU partnership, rather than this working group.

- Continue exploring barriers to larger-scale ecological burning (multi-day burns to reach ecologically relevant and economically efficient scales).
  - What role does this group want to take on this issue?

None. Group believes this should be tasked to FIRE MOU partnership.

- Other

- Would a national state of emergency provide any additional flexibility?
- Continue focus on immediate disposal need in the TMTF setting. Carry broader suite of issues through Fire MOU Partnership
- Nick suggested that we should talk with fire scientists about what role prescribed fire could have following tree mortality, or in getting ahead of tree mortality. Steve suggested that we will need to wait until drought lifts.
- Nick suggested that we should consider developing a white paper/simple report to the TMTF on the near-term and future role of Rx fire.
- Chris mentioned that it will take time for cost-share and funding agreements to come online before we'll know how much and where burning will be taking place.
- Wood utilization should be encouraged as first resort prior to burning.

- Outline next steps

- Revise working group's mtg/call schedule to reflect one monthly meeting.
- Continue pursuing final guidance for air curtain burners.
- Reach out to fire scientists with guidance on most appropriate role in near and long-term for Rx fire in tree mortality areas.
- Outline report for full TMTF on role of prescribed fire in near and long-term associated with tree mortality.
- Outline goals for "Fire MOU" partnership that have emerged from TMTF Rx Fire Working Group conversations.
- Provide Rx Fire Working Group with invitation to join Fire MOU partnership.

- Next meeting/call – 3/14, 10:30 – noon, (conf call only)

- Adjourn