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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 8th, 2016

10:30 – Noon

Meeting location - EPA building - Conference room 710

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

- Introductions
 - o Attendees: Dar Mims, Craig Thomas, John Demassa, Jim Suerro, Steve Bakken, Rob Griffith, Karen Magliano, Rich Wade, 2 others from CARB in-room (see sign-in sheet), Stacey Heaton, Chris Zimny, Nic Enstice, Jeff Armstrong, Bill Condon
- Review call agenda
- Provide update on “Fire MOU” meeting and discuss relationship with TMTF Rx Fire Working Group - (C. Thomas)

Craig provided a history on the “Fire MOU”. Settlement agreement was impetus. Worked with signatories to refine language. Initial meeting was Feb. 2-3. Started with a small group committed to seeing increased use of fire as a tool for ecological and other benefits. An invitation package is in the works and will be distributed broadly through an initial response. Currently considering a June meeting to continue rolling with the process.

Rob added – Purpose of MOU is to increase use of fire for ecological and other benefits. See air quality and public health as essential part of the group’s charge. ARB and air districts could also be signatories, or advisors? They are welcome to consider how they would like to participate in the collaborative efforts.

State parks questioned how/whether this is different than previous agmts. Rob elaborated on additional goals that make this different than other existing inter-governmental MOUs and agreements. It is not binding, like an agreement, but rather an MOU. Craig elaborated that it is a vehicle for collaboration to overcome the broad set of challenges that increasing fire poses.

State Parks very committed to Rx Fire and would likely be signatory

Karen asked what the June meeting would bring together. Craig and Rob intend to open the door and invite partners in at the June meeting. Goal is to broaden the partnership at that point.

Alan offered that CAPCOA would like to be engaged and would appreciate a presentation to better understand the MOU

Bill notified that CA DFW would likely want to be involved and be a signatory.



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Rob clarified that the MOU predates the TMTF work, will be related and interact with the TMTF, but the scope is more broad.

- Review progress on immediate action items
 - o (K. Magliano, J. DeMassa, D. Mims) - Complete analysis of current air quality and burn day trends for San Joaquin and Mountain Counties Air Districts.

Dar Mims from meteorology section at CARB provided an overview of the air quality stats that CARB team pulled together and John sent this morning (2/8). Burn days clustered to spring and fall, less in winter and summer. Incomplete datasets based upon the reality that the mandatory monthly data varies based upon mixed reporting. Data still provide good foundation. Most accurate data comes from PFIRS. Jason Brands (PFIRS administrator) explained PFIRS. PFIRS burn requests entered, considered, approved, and then burners report.

Alan asked about which districts actually use PFIRS. Jason will report back. Mountain Counties (northern Counties) and Great Basin use the data. San Joaquin does not use PFIRS. The TMTF priority counties largely do not use the program. Usage is incomplete. Notable increase in usage is occurring year-to-year. Karen notes that the value of PFIRS allows for interactions among counties and airsheds. Helps forecasters balance across basins.

SJ reports aggregated data.

Dar continues with reporting allowable burn days and usage. Lots of burn days ($\approx 71\%$), relatively few used ($\approx 29\%$).

Nic asked about when authorizations are provided. Day of? Dar described that they project as far out as they can. 96 hours at-best. 1300 call is when coordination happens and most accurate projections are provided. This allows land managers to flex their time.

Craig, can we tease out pile burning from broadcast. Aggregate sum reporting does not help for understanding. CARB staff and ARB are working with Lee Tarnay to begin to refine data analysis and know more.

Dar provided some context for when and what kind of burning is happening, but also spoke to limitations in the data. Craig pushed on the matter again.

Dar reinforced that we need more positive public comms around successful burning.

CAL FIRE data for all units. Clustered in winter/spring. 50 percent accomplishment burns compared with requested. Rob reinforced that this is typical for USFS as well. Very little CAL FIRE burning within the target counties.



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State Parks may also be clustered with the CAL FIRE data. Rob thought the reporting likely referred to all SRA. Not land managed by USFS or local districts.

Data is all non-ag.

Every district provides annual data, but not necessary granular data.

Nick asked whether SJ needed to use PFIRS. Karen and others described that SJ already has robust coordination and reporting, so probably don't need to add additional direction. There are other districts who could use assistance.

Rob reported that the USFS is also looking across the state, anticipating future potential expansion of drought emergency areas.

Rob also wants to investigate how allowable days align with fuel conditions and prescribed fire weather. This may show that the allowable days don't align with the fire prescriptions. Also a misalignment of resources. What about workforce availability. USFS are working on that analysis.

Karen would also like to know the breakdown b/w pile and broadcast, to better understand windows of opportunity.

- (R. Griffith, H. Enge, others?) - Direct land managers and relevant landowners in 6-county area to report their anticipated burning (6 month and 12 month timeframe?) into PFIRS to facilitate more effective planning and burn permitting in coordination with other land managers and air regulators.

Steve B. - Difficulty with making PFIRS mandatory is that many air districts are still not using it. Another unfunded mandate. Steve asked about whether curtain burners would also fit under smoke management. Dar explained that no, it is a stationary source, and thus is regulated under a different program.

Regarding PFIRS, Dar stated that air districts in the proclamation are not fully utilizing the tool. Continuing incomplete dataset.

- (unassigned) - Develop uniform guidance and leader's intent.

We will hold on this item until we are able to discuss a little more. Broad agreement that more usage will make a difference.

Rob noted that 5 years ago the USFS did provide direction that all units must use PFIRS, when local air district does in-fact have the capacity. USFS still has in-house impetus to use it, so they have a two-tiered process to meet both using and non-using districts.



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Believes that if all land managers were using it, that would take risk aversion out and increase latitude.

- (C. Thomas and N. Goulette) - Use air quality/burn day data and PFIRS data to inform whether and how to provide additional flexibility, streamlined permitting, and/or guidance for smoke permitting
 - (K. Magliano and CARB smoke mgt team) – advise on what measures could even be available if need is determined – **did not have this conversation.**
- (N. Goulette) - Inform Resources WG of additional curtain burners – status update

Limited and incomplete update. Check in with Resources WG for more complete update.

- (A. Abs) - CAPCOA investigating air curtain burner permitting process to streamline and facilitate efficient deployment

Not looking as streamlined as he was hoping. US EPA is insisting that they are Title 5 sources, and they will need some analysis, but more extensive public scoping (45 day min.), etc. EPA Region 9 said they might consider helping with a uniform application process, but may not be willing to offer more regulatory relief.

Alan asked Rob to scope with other USFS regions to see how they have worked through this associated with other beetle outbreaks. We may need to collectively approach EPA on this matter.

We still need to know from CAL FIRE where they are looking to place these units fairly specifically and be informing the air districts ASAP.

EPA is looking into the emergency exemption under Title 5. Apparently there is an 8-week exemption. They are looking into which level this needs to be approved at.

Stacy will be having their bi-annual meeting tomorrow, so she will also daylight the permitting issue.

Can approve for movement within a district.

- (C. Thomas and N. Goulette) - Inquire with Resources WG and other relevant WG about treatment priorities and human resources. Is there another group who is aggregating this information?



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We still don't have this information and it would be critical to inform air managers about balancing demands and to inform any further recommendations or actions from the Rx fire working group.

- Identify intermediate actions/priorities that group needs to be considering or taking initial steps on – (Group discussion)

We did not get to this item

- Outline next steps
 - o Continue conversation regarding PFIRS use and direction
 - o Continue exploring curtain burner permitting process
 - o 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.)
 - o Continual exploring barriers to the multi-day burning challenges (to reach ecologically relevant and economically efficient ways).
 - o Initiate discussion of intermediate actions/priorities and explore roles for this working group
- Next meeting/call -
 - o 2/17 – 1:00 – 2:00 PM
- Adjourn