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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

January 20, 2016

1:00 – 2:30 PM

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

- Introductions
 - o Attendees: Rob Griffith, Steven Bakken, Whitney Bray, Chris Zimny, Liz Forsburg, Bob Kingman, CARB (John DeMassa, Karen Magliano, Dar Mims), Brian Nowicki, Darla Guenzler, Alan Abbs, Craig Thomas
- Review call agenda
- Review “Group Objectives” (page 8 in attached IAP)
 - o Discuss role of prescribed fire in near and longer-term tree mortality mitigation
 - Chris Zimny notes that prescribed burning/broadcast burning is critical for longer term forest resilience, but pile burning is immediate need.
 - Alan Abs suggested that ARB help explain how burn day determinations are established.
 - Dar Mims from ARB began to explain the geographic determination factors. San Joaquin and Mountain Counties Air Basins are the primary ones we’re dealing with.
 - Alan- need to balance with Ag burners as well
 - Nick questions which laws are governing air regulation. Dar offered that EPA Clean Air Act, Title 17 smoke management guidelines and Health and Safety Code are the relevant sections
 - Alan- land mgr turns in smoke mgt plan, air district looks over and considers, that then enters the burn into the queue for burning. Then contact air district ahead of anticipated burning (1-2 weeks) and they balance needs and allocate burn days and allowable burn quantities, acres, durations.
 - ARB makes burn day determinations. Marginal days are at district staff and APCO discretion. No burn day, means no burn day, unless it is an emergency (rare circumstances)
 - Nick – embedded assumption is objectives 1 and 2 that additional burn days and regulatory relief will be needed.
 - Craig asked if there are any exemptions and flexibilities associated with immediate disaster declaration and threats to public health and safety. Is there any? Do we need to ask at a higher level – US EPA?
 - Karen – we need to first establish what windows already exist, whether and by whom they are being used, and consider additional flexibility from there.
 - Alan – are agencies using the Prescribed Fire Information Reporting System (PFIRS) – the online database for prescribed fire requests? It could really add a lot of efficiency to the scheduling and permitting.
 - Rob states that there is Regional Office direction that all National Forests use PFIRS. Some air districts aren’t using PFIRS yet though, so that limits the utility.



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- John confirmed that not everyone is using the tools available, which could make a real difference that would help aggregate data and make better decisions
- Stephen Bakken raised the curtain burner issue that curtains are treated as a “stationary source” or pollution with permitting requirements, rather than equivalent to piles. CAL FIRE treats them as incinerators. Stephen suggests that they should be treated more like piles, given their portability
- Alan agreed with some of the limiting factors regarding permitting, but also spoke to the benefits. CAL FIRE and other operators should talk with Alan about streamlining permitting – Action item.
- Group also identified other existing curtain burners available including several owned by USFS and several owned by State Parks. Report to Resources WG.
- Brian Nowicki – appreciates the immediate need is associated with pile burning, but would also like to also explore the role of broadcast burning and exploring limiting factors associated with broadcast burning. Would want to make sure we focus on getting out of the “clean-up” cycle. Group agreed that there is interest in exploring more systemic challenges to broadcast burning to enhance ecological resilience. Get ahead of the curve. Longer-term activity for the group.
- Review and discuss preliminary work plan (attached) in light of IAP objectives
 - o ARB is collecting data on existing burn days. Check in w/ Lee Tarnay (USFS and NPS smoke management) as to whether he already has this data. Rob has asked his team to collect this data across the state.
 - o Craig reminded us of tradeoffs. It isn't burn or don't burn. It's a matter of when we burn and whether we have some measure of control, or not.
 - o Group discussion - Regarding total burning demand, can we get land managers and owners to enter their information into PFIRS within the 6-county area. Can we make a focused request to ask major land managers and land owners to use PFIRS? Also ask counties? – group agreed that this is an action item.
 - o Craig brought up the capacity needs (workforce) issue and the prioritization of projects over space and time. Rx Fire Working group may not need to do this. We will coordinate with resources and forest health WB to see who/if anyone is already collecting this info. It would inform both what additional resources would be needed for pile burning, and help inform what additional air quality regulatory relief could be needed.
 - o Review pile burning backlog and anticipated increase associated with tree mortality. USFS acknowledges a substantial backlog in pile burning already within the 6-county area.
- Discuss additional limiting factors relevant to near and longer-term progress
 - o Beyond air regulation, human resources was identified, along with qualifications, and liability insurance.
- Identify next steps in support of immediate needs and longer-term progress
 - o Complete analysis of current air quality and burn day trends for San Joaquin and Mountain Counties Air Districts.



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- Direct land managers and relevant landowners in 6-county area to report their anticipated burning (6 month and 12 month) into PFIRS to facilitate more effective planning and burn permitting in coordination with other land managers and air regulators. Develop uniform guidance and leader's intent.
 - 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
 - Inform Resources WG of additional curtain burners
 - Initiate dialogue between CAL FIRE and CAPCOA regarding air curtain burner permitting to streamline process and facilitate efficient deployment
 - Inquire with Resources WG and other relevant WG about treatment priorities and human resources. Is there another group who is aggregating this information?
- Set standing mtgs.
- 2nd Monday of each month – 10:30 – Noon, In-person with conf call option
 - 3rd Weds of each month – 1:00 – 2:30, conf call
- Adjourned at 2:32 PM