



Cal OES
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Tree Mortality Task Force Meeting Minutes March 13, 2017

1. Opening Comments

- a. Chairpersons (Ken Pimlott/Jon Moore) – No comments
- b. Task Force Leader (Gabe Schultz) – Kristen Merrill has joined the Task Force leadership team handling logistics.

2. **Joint Legislative Update** (Ken Pimlott) – Joint Informational Hearing of the Congressional Natural Resources Committees was held Feb. 27, 2017 on the topic of "Tree Mortality, Forest Health and Prescribed Fire." While prescribed fire constituted a good part of their conversation, tree mortality is on the radar of the Committee Members, even those outside of the affected counties. Chief Pimlott encouraged TMTF members to keep tree mortality top of mind with their legislators, especially those in the budget committees. Address questions to Gabrielle Meindl, Deputy Director, Legislation or Monika Giebitz, Chief of Legislation.

3. USFS Update (Chris Fischer)

The USFS reports 284,000 trees have been felled over 30,000 acres. An additional 66,000 acres are in progress, and 90,000 acres are NEPA ready.

4. Utility Company Update

- a. PG&E – 230,000 trees are forecasted. Crews are currently out marking.
- b. SCE – 60 circuits transect HHZs. 28,000 felled trees have been removed with 17,000 still pending. The utility is concerned about fire season and concerned about moisture from winter rains rotting root systems of otherwise healthy trees. Has investigated different strategies to expedite tree cutting, including "rotor-blade," and felling and leaving. Investigating biomass companies. USFS special use permits set to expire this June and want to extend if possible. (USFS responded that the agency is working on extending permits.) Continuing to prepare their workers for safe operations in HHZ. Willing to partner up with other utilities on public outreach information, etc.

5. Caltrans Update (Darold Heikens)

Most projects are in winter suspension. 57,000 trees have been removed. Added \$3 million to Madera-Mariposa project because the number of trees expanded significantly-- 75,000 trees needed to be removed. Highway 89 emergency project working in snow to complete. Caltrans' publication *Mile Marker* has tree mortality on cover and 4-page article:

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/milemarker/docs/2017/MM-2017-Q1.pdf>

\$78 million in new projects this upcoming season (Sept-October). Don't see any federal funding coming available.



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Comment: CSAC met with Feinstein's staff. Her staff might have interest in making FEMA disaster assistance available, but her budget people thought it was uphill battle and it will become a disaster if fire happens.

6. Working Group Updates

a. **Mapping and Monitoring** (Mark Rosenberg/Chris Fischer): Absent.

b. **Public Outreach** (Daniel Berlant/Staci Heaton):

Getting ready to go live with landowner assistance portion of website. Gleaned information from working groups that will go up on webpage. The site is currently under review and will be ready in about a month. Agencies met to coordinate outreach campaigns for summer release.

c. **Regulations** (Matthew Reischman/Sandy Goldberg):

In the data-sharing phase of the FIREWISE validation pilot project program to include on the ground data into the model.

CalRecycle requires the operator of the incinerator complete an enforcement agency notification form on CalRecycle website which allows use of incinerator for 120 days. The form is required if incinerator will be in a landfill, but not required if located in a forest. Contact LEA to determine if form is needed.

A sub-group focused on insurance was established with Rosemarie Smallcombe and John McEldowney as co-leaders, topics include:

- United Policy Holders have a survey www.UPHelp.org/survey to get an understanding of the scope of the problem
- Nevada County is operating a Defensible Space Verification program in which an inspector charges \$100 and provides a report to the insurance company. WildfirePartners.org is a company in Colorado that is doing something similar.
- SB1595 – Under consideration by the Legislature. Would require insurance be offered to people in compliance with defensible space standards.
- Wildfire Pool concept – Similar to the existing earthquake pool. The problem is that earthquake pool only has 12% uptake
- LANDSAT data does not necessarily show defensible space work that has been done (because of low 30 sq. meter resolution and update schedule). On-the-ground efforts are not reflected in the data that informs the models.
- There should be some way to marry defensible space and insurance rates to incentivize homeowners to share the risk with insurers. We need data that shows defensible space influences survivability. Chief Pimlott responded: historically no hard data on this. CAL FIRE has a more formalized inspection program under which 250,000 inspections are targeted by July 1, however, with 750,000 habitable structures in the SRA, there is a work-load problem. Will work to coordinate CAL FIRE efforts with other inspection programs in future.



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Comment: Chinese Camp lesson learned. CA ISO needs to help get these units on line expeditiously. All meters had been updated, but CA ISO's approval was slow in coming.

- d. **Bioenergy** (Angie Lottes): In process of putting together an Interconnection Meeting with stakeholders of BioMAT projects. Invitation will be sent soon. The meeting is growing in scope, but will include system impact studies of seven different projects.

CA Energy Commission's EPIC grants, funding the construction of biomass facilities, are expected to be awarded this month.

- e. **Resource Allocation** (Thom Porter/Tom Lutzenbeger): Approvals have been completed for \$800,000 in additional tree mortality equipment. Four additional pieces of equipment have been added, including chippers and masticator heads, and trailers are coming. There will now be up to 51 pieces of equipment. Two air current burners are not yet in service due to soil moisture.
- f. **Forest Health and Resilience** (Pete Cafferata/Stewart McMorrow): The WG has submitted for review the publications: "Recommendations for Comprehensive Sierra Nevada Ecological Restoration" and "Tree Mortality Impacts on California Seed Zones." Next, the group will revisit their objectives and progress made.

Two reforestation workshops have been held: Feb11 (50 attended) and Feb 25 (30 attended). Upcoming workshops are March 22 in Mariposa County, April 7 in Tuolumne, and April 27 in Madera.

Sherry Hazlehurst from USFS has drafted a briefing paper describing need for coordinating science and management efforts focused on tree mortality. The paper will identify needs, upcoming projects, and gaps. TMTF co-leads have asked the WG to synthesize information on the long-term effects of tree mortality.

Forestland Steward publication of CAL FIRE – Upcoming edition is focused on landowners and titled, "Don't give up now." The current edition was titled, "Unprecedented" and focused on tree mortality: <http://calfire.ca.gov/foreststeward/pdf/news-summer2016.pdf>

- g. **Market Development** (Evan Johnson): WG members continue to work with local businesses, Caltrans is reviewing viability of using pine for guardrail posts, and a wood product business report by Beck Group has been completed and will be distributed to TMTF.

Q: Is blue-stained wood load-capable, can it be used as framing material for houses? A: There is only short window, but when chipped, particle board can be made with it.



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Q: Can wood be shipped overseas? A: Yes, export markets are growing every day and there are no unnecessary barriers to do so.

Comment: GO-Biz has been working to improve markets for blue-stained wood. Currently helping to expand a medium density fiber board facility. A new business environment ranking has CA as #1 in nation.

7. County Updates

- a. Amador – Two pilot projects will soon be underway. The county could use help getting a biomass plant going as one is fully renovated, but sitting idle. A log yard remaining from a closed lumber mill is being used by PG&E for storage and processing.
- b. Calaveras – County is scheduled to begin dead tree removal. SPI says they are out of logs and are looking for material, even if blue stained. LTO issue. Interested in defensible space inspection program.
- c. El Dorado -- Absent
- d. Fresno – Nathan Magsig is a new supervisor from Fresno's 5th district. He aims to help open and operate more lumber mills. Fresno provides significant amount of hydropower to SCE. Saul has agreed to come and tour Sierra. Fresno has 75,000 trees dropped and is starting to spend \$1.5 M in CEA money.
- e. Madera – Building public awareness is very important as the majority does not recognize the extent of tree mortality issues.
- f. Mariposa – This morning's County Coordination Meeting recorded the largest attendance; these meetings are very valuable. County has hired a tree removal contractor. Having problems with required matching funds.
- g. Placer – Cal OES is hosting an April 14 Workshop on best management practices for tree removal and is seeking presenters and participants. The workshop will be held in the Cal OES Multi-purpose room in Mather. Chief Pimlott requested all workshops be coordinated with the Public Outreach WG.
- h. Tuolumne – The County is challenged by the D-49/LTO issue. There is a need to elevate tree mortality as an issue in urban counties. Reduction in CVA match is still an issue. The county recently held a workshop to engage private landowners in dealing with own trees; there is a huge amount of interest out there and the TMTF is making a difference in the lives of these people.