

Meeting Summary (Action Minutes)
Humboldt County Fire Safe Council
October 6, 2008

A Humboldt County Fire Safe Council (HCFSC) meeting was held on October 6, 2008 from 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M., at the Bureau of Land Management Arcata Field Office, 1695 Heindon Road Arcata, CA. The FSC was appointed by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors to guide preparation and implementation of the County Master Fire Protection Plan (Fire Plan).

Fire Safe Council Members Attending:

Dan Larkin, Humboldt County Office of Emergency Services, Emergency Services Coordinator

Debra Lake, Fruitland Volunteer Fire Department, Board Chair

Joe O'Hara, Willow Creek Fire Safe Council, President

Lucy Salazar, USFS, Six Rivers National Forest, Fuels Management Specialist & Air Coordinator

Hugh Scanlon, CAL FIRE –HUU, Battalion Chief

Tim Jones, Bureau of Land Management, Fire Management Officer

Will Harling, Orleans/Somes Bar Fire Safe Council, Director

Fire Safe Council Members Absent:

Bob Harris, Miranda Fire Protection District, Fire Chief,

Ian Sigman, Honeydew Volunteer Fire Company, Chief and Lower Mattole Fire Safe Council

Manny Mello, Northwest Insurance, CIC

Johan McFarland, Arcata Fire Protection District, Chief

Dave White, Humboldt County Fire Chiefs Association, Treasurer

Public and Agency Representatives Attending:

Andrew Nash, Mattole Restoration Council, Lower Mattole Fire Safe Council

Cybelle Immitt, Humboldt County Planning

Jared Hammatt, Bureau of Land Management

Pat O'Hara, Willow Creek Fire Safe Council

Paul Abbott, Willow Creek Fire Safe Council

Susan Abbott, Willow Creek Fire Safe Council

AGENDA ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 P.M. by the Fire Safe Council Chair, Will Harling, and introductions were made around the room.

AGENDA ITEM 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 7, 2008 FSC MEETING

Discussion – Chair Harling asked if anyone had any corrections or additions in regards to the action minutes. A spelling correction was made to an attendee's name.

A few follow up items were discussed:

Clearing fuels on FS land adjacent to your property – need to get archeological and ecological study and try to get as many homes along that property line as possible.

Joe talked to PG&E and is waiting to hear back from them.

Action –

On a motion from Joe O’Hera and seconded by Will Harling the Council unanimously approved the minutes.

CI – Post the approved minutes to the website.

AGENDA ITEM 3 - PUBLIC COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE

Recommendation

Receive comments, announcements and/or correspondence. (FSC extension and more lessons learned from fire season).

Discussion

- FSC Extension and appointment of FSC members – BOS took action on September 23, 2008. They extended the term of the FSC until September 28, 2010 and appointed the members. We need to now recruit for a State Parks and Hoopa member for a January 2009 Board appointment. State Parks is working internally to nominate someone. Cybelle Immitt (**CI**) with the assistance of Paul Abbott will contact the tribal government about who they would like to nominate.
- The FSC contact list was sent around for an accuracy check. (**CI**) – will update the list and send out to FSC members via email.
- Lessons Learned from Fire Season - Presentation by Will Harling– (See PowerPoint):

Sample of what was covered in the PowerPoint:

What Worked:

- Frequent Community meetings during critical fire periods – There was good communication with incident commanders and the community. Mutual respect.
- Structure Protection Planning - Used red-zone to digitally collect on-the-ground information about properties.

What didn’t Work:

- Burnout Operations - Some miscommunication and misconceptions about why and where these happen – need to track what works and what doesn’t

work in a scientific way to learn for the future. Need to educate our communities about these types of methods. Big and important role for FSCs - Liaison between community members and professionals.

- Team Transitions – There was not a lot of overlap between teams and a lot of info was lost. It is important for the local liaisons to help make sure that information is retained.
- Public relations on a regional scale - Not a lot of public information about the benefits of the fire in the media coverage.

Need to get community on board with the reasoning behind firefighting strategies before the fires come.

Expand Incident Management Team commands to longer periods – this may not always be possible (safety, coordination with state and local resources,...). Something to propose for consideration.

- **Orleans/Somes Bar Fire Plan** – received public and agency comment, revised and are having public meetings on it now. Revisions will be made and then they will send out for review again.
- **Fire Safe Check List – CI** - Send Orleans and Mottle examples to Willow Creek FSC folks. Consider putting examples on the web with a link to their sources. – Look to what Orleans/Somes Bar FSC has done as a model. Tie in with the WUI grant. Need to use a digital database (redzone). Use Big Red Truck form as an example.
- **Big Red Truck Program** – 2006 grant – Fire departments get reimbursed \$25/ home visit – Out of the \$40,000 grant, they have \$3,000 spent. Have 6 months left. Need more participation.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – SUBJECT: CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION FOR GLENN ZIEMER AND DUANE SHERMAN

Recommendation

Review and authorize the Chair to sign certificates of appreciation for Glenn Ziemer and Duane Sherman recognizing them for their years of service on the FSC.

Discussion

Debra Lake made the certificates and CI will send out for approval via email and then send to Will for his signature. Then the certificates will be presented to Duane and Glenn. Thanks Debra!!!

ACTION

Certificates will be approved via email.

AGENDA ITEM 5 - FSC MEMBER FORM 700S

Recommendation

Receive Form 700s (Statements of Economic Interest), discuss how to fill them out, fill them out and send them back to **CI**.

Discussion

There is some confusion about which form to use. FSC members will hold off on filling these out until **CI** gets back to them once she gets clarity from her department's administrative staff.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - APPROVE 2009 QUARTERLY FSC BUSINESS MEETING SCHEDULE

Recommendation

Receive draft business meeting schedule, revise if necessary and approve for posting to website.

Discussion

The FSC members reviewed the business schedule and no comments were made. Will Harling announced that he is starting to plan a meeting in early December 4, 2008 about this last fire season. This could be one of the Council's "satellite meetings" and may end up being held in Willow Creek. Will Harling will keep everyone posted on plans for this meeting.

FSC members will consider planning another type of meeting to support the growth of the Willow Creek FSC.

ACTION

On a motion from Tim Jones and seconded by Joe O'Hara the Council unanimously approved the 2009 business meeting schedule. **CI** will send the schedule out to Council members and post it to the website.

AGENDA ITEM 7 - FSC COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORTS

Recommendation

Receive Committee progress reports, discuss next steps for these groups & take action where requested:

Discussion

Humboldt County Fire Safe Council Committee Projects Update (running tally of activities and needed action)

1. FUEL MODIFICATION/BIOMASS UTILIZATION

(Lucy Salazar, Tim Jones, Will Harling and Joe O'Hara. Coordinator - Lucy Salazar)

Excerpt from Associated Master Fire Protection Plan Implementation Measure:

FSC Goal: Encourage countywide efforts to reduce or modify fuel loads for community protection and fire prevention.

Recommendations: Emphasize increased countywide coordination of fuel modification projects by all involved agencies and organizations. Develop a biomass utilization program to develop commercially viable markets for fuel reduction project wood byproducts and residue such as slash, small diameter logs, foliage, wood chips, etc.

Progress:

Biomass

- Ultra Power is submitting a grant to have a poll and dowel plant at that site.
- Southern Trinity is putting in a grant for a whole tree chipper.
- Seeing more interest in mechanized equipment and seeing more mastication as part of the firefighting strategy.
- **Lucy S.** has kept an eye out for biomass utilization opportunities and shared information about many studies and papers on the subject.
- Pertinent articles related to biomass utilization opportunities are continuously shared both with the Humboldt County FSC members and with the Humboldt Biomass listserv.
- Interaction continues with HSU professors connected with biomass utilization and the HSU Schatz Energy Center, to stay abreast of technology developments and opportunities and pass those on to county and local FSC members.
- Progress is being made in the technology for utilizing biomass and we have to plan appropriately so we can be ready to take advantage of funding and technological opportunities that will soon be presented.
- Communication continues with existing cogeneration facilities: DG Fairhaven, Scotia, and Blue Lake Power (formerly Ultra power, soon to be starting up again).

Fuel Modification

- The Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved adding a State Parks position to the FSC and now someone needs to be identified and appointed by the Board.
- A State Clearinghouse grant funded by the US forest Service was secured to update and refine the fuels portion of the Master Fire Protection Plan and the program will begin this fall. A Subcommittee for guidance with the clearinghouse grant was formed and includes the following: **Tim J., Will H., Joe O'Hara and Cybelle I.**
- A WUI grant application has been prepared to fund a fuels reduction cost-share program called "Fire Safe Homes and Forests". We asked for \$45,000 match from T3 for the WUI grant and the Board approved the request and the grant application was submitted. The grant was highly ranked by the local CAL FIRE Unit and forwarded on to the State.
- Work has begun to generate a countywide fuel treatment database, starting with the projects listed in the MFPP.

Action Items:

- Send a copy of the Clearinghouse grant proposal with the work program to the subcommittee. Start planning to get the committee together to start the detailed planning for implementing this program. **(Cybelle I.)**
- Recruit a State Parks representative on the FSC. **(Cybelle I.)**
- Discuss what PG&E's interest is on the countywide level with being involved with biomass utilization efforts and report back to the group. Also, look into the possibility of including their vegetation maintenance maps in the countywide system. **(Will H Maybe with help from Joe O'Hara)**
- Prepare a staff report and submit a funding request for T3 funding to support fuels reduction efforts in some way to the BOS through the Community Development Services Department. Fuels reduction will be considered when a program level request goes to the Board in coordination with the County Administrative Office. **(Will Harling, Cybelle I.)**
- Keep tabs on progress with biomass utilization and report back at next meeting. Need to focus on goals for Humboldt County. **(Ongoing Lucy S, Cybelle I)**
- Use information Jared from BLM collected as a starting point for generating a countywide fuels reduction plan as part of State Clearinghouse grant program. **(Cybelle I, Lucy S, Joe O, Will H, and Tim J)**

2. DEVELOP A RELIABLE REVENUE SOURCE FOR FIRE PROTECTION

(Dave White, John McFarland, Will Harling and Cybelle Immitt. Coordinator – Dave White)

Excerpt from Associated Master Fire Protection Plan Implementation Measure:

Implementation of this measure would result in the identification and institution of reliable revenue generating structures, such as an appropriate assessment and funding implementation strategy to fund fire protection and emergency services, fire prevention, and training.

Progress:

The Revenue Issues Subcommittee has developed a reference guide for the various funding mechanisms available to local government fire protection entities. This guide is intended to provide initial descriptions, process explanations, government code citations, practical tips and other information related to funding mechanisms and their implementation. The guide addresses benefit assessments, special taxes, and Mello Roos funding. Information is also included in the guide on formation, expansion or annexation of fire districts. This document is an informational guide for districts or potential districts, designed to give them an idea of the different types of funding measures available to districts and the requirements of each of the different types of measures. The guide will be updated as new information is available. District or potential district representatives are also encouraged to contact local fire officials who are able to supply information and resources related to funding mechanisms.

This committee has also been involved in exploring opportunities for generating sustainable revenue to support fire protection through fire district reorganization and

formation. County staff and Council members have attended Fire Chiefs' Association meetings as well as community meetings to discuss the concept of fire district reorganization and formation as a way to generate sustainable revenue. There has been general interest in the possible options and the idea will be explored further.

Fire protection benefit assessment guide

- Have final draft document. Dave updated it to include the Court ruling and some text about not having the assessment as your sole source of funding.
- This is a document that one could take to a governing board and bring them up to speed enough for them to agree to move forward on the idea. Dave and Glenn are willing to take it out into the community to present it and see if it is a useful tool.
- Is biased to the benefit assessment (for special tax and another mechanisms would probably need a consultant). The assessment method is the most likely way a local fire department would be able to do this on their own.

Sustainable revenue to support fire protection through fire district reorganization and formation

- County staff and Council members attended Humboldt County Fire Chiefs' Association and Southern Humboldt Fire Chiefs' Association meetings as well as a meeting in the Mattole to fly the concept of fire district reorganization and formation as a way to generate sustainable revenue. There was general interest in the possible options and the idea will be explored further. Fire departments interested in moving forward are: Westhaven, Scotia, Palo Verde, Phillipsville, Briceland (Possible involvement from Whitethorn and Telegraph Ridge), Garberville, Honeydew (Possible involvement from Petrolia), Prosper Ridge (Possible involvement from Petrolia) and Whale Gulch.
- Have many fire departments of all types in Humboldt so will not have a one size fits all.

Action Items:

- By next FSC meeting have finished product (how-to-guide) will also take to the Chiefs. **Done – the CD was handed out.**
- When the how-to-guide is done it will be showcased to local departments on an as needed basis. **(Ongoing)**
- Meet with the small oversight committee for the fire district formation reorganization and get support and direction for next steps. **(Cybelle I., Dave W., John McFarland, John Miller)**
- Fine tune the fire service reorganization proposal and meet with the interested fire departments which were identified earlier in the process. Begin the LAFCo application process and associated public outreach program. Seek additional Title III funding to support these efforts. **(Cybelle I., Dave W., John McFarland, John Miller)**
- Prepare a staff report and submit a funding request for T3 funding to support MFPP Implementation. This will be done in coordination with the County Administrative Office. **(Cybelle I.)**

- Research possible impacts of the State Supreme Court ruling on special benefit. Get a County Counsel opinion on the recent ruling on Benefit Assessments. **(Cybelle I., Dave W., John Miller)**

3. LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARD

*(Dave White, John McFarland, Bob Harris, Hugh Scanlon & Cybelle Immitt.
Coordinator – Cybelle Immitt)*

Excerpt from Associated Master Fire Protection Plan Implementation Measure:

Develop level-of-service standards for the provision of all fire protection services (fire, EMS, HazMat, rescue) in the County, and make such standards public so that landowners and residents understand what is and is not available to them.

Progress:

Progress has been made on creating a web-based GIS tool that can be used to show the current level of fire service throughout the County. The criteria by which current levels of service can be measured have been put together and run by the Humboldt County Fire Chief's Association. Hugh is working with County GIS in refining the tool. Hugh believes we could make this work without a whole bunch of effort. A report button will need to be added later. It has not yet been demonstrated to the Humboldt County Fire Chiefs' Association (HCFCA).

We are in the process of gathering all of the necessary data which will then be linked to a web-based GIS system that can be used to determine what the level of service is in any given area (by parcel number). When the tool is done it will be updated annually but changes will be made as needed (such as the possible So-hum changes that are in the works).

Provided a presentation about this project to the Board of supervisors and received positive feedback. (See PowerPoint Presentation)

Action Items:

- Meet with the committee to populate the data tables with the information we have **(Hugh S and Cybelle I)**. Then meet with the whole subcommittee to go over the data and decide if they are comfortable with sharing what we have with the Fire Chiefs' Association. **Cybelle I** – set up meeting.
- Present sample and underlying list of criteria to the chiefs. Will be looking for help from the chiefs to self classify LOS. Each fire department will have to approve base information with some quality control oversight. Each fire department will do a self analysis that is then cleared by the chiefs. **(Hugh S and Cybelle I)**
- Get information to the other committee members and start thinking about what “adequate level of service” might mean (via email). Ask the Fire Department folks about this – this group needs to put that together. We need a description of this so it is not too technical for the fire service to rate themselves using a matrix. **(Hugh S)**

- Could add this as an item to the Realtor's disclosure document. Wait on this task until we have a more complete draft product to share.
- Refine and standardize the report function of the GIS tool. **(Hugh S)**
- Look into getting Title III funding to support a GIS person to help get this off the ground on the website. **(Cybelle I)**
- **Long-term Plan** - Complete sample area demonstrating how the tool can be used to illustrate the current level of service, present to HCFCA and proceed according to feedback received.
- **Longer-term Plan** – Work with the HCFCA to Identify and agree on a level of service standard that can be used as a goal by fire departments.

4. IMPROVE EMERGENCY DISPATCH SERVICES

(Dan Larkin, Hugh Scanlon and Dave White. Coordinator – Dave White)

Excerpt from Associated Master Fire Protection Plan Implementation Measure:

Improve communication and coordination between local fire departments, state agencies, federal agencies, and other allied agencies during fires and other emergencies.

Progress:

This committee has focused its efforts on monitoring and contributing to activities countywide that are related to improving emergency services communications. There has been some consolidation of some dispatch with Arcata going to the dispatch Co-Op. The County is working to build a relationship with other agencies in the area and is talking to other places that have similar issues. The County has formed the Humboldt Operational Area Communications Committee (HOACC) composed of representatives of area local, state, and federal agencies and other area organizations operating radio communications systems in the County.

Areas of known need are being addressed through partnering actions and continued expenditures (using both grant funding and local appropriations). HOACC partners are sharing information on their radio communications infrastructure, looking for common pathways of immediate development and cost savings, and paying particular attention to future system coordination/compatibility issues. Humboldt County Communications is nearing completion of a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) and is working with other Northern California counties through the California Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (CalSIEC) and the grant process to fund an area-wide TICP, communications equipment, and training/planning support.

Reverse 911 – is operational but not fully operational – could launch the system right now but it would be imperfect. There are plans to eventually upgrade to cell phones – will have to register on line. There will be a public information effort soon.

The County received a grant through the state - for repeaters in southwestern and northeastern Humboldt County. The following is from notes sent by **Dave White** who was not able to attend the meeting:

County Fire Net System:

The Orleans Mtn. site would provide little or no benefit to any county fire department. Orleans has a translator system that works well off of Horse Mtn. Other than that, there are no local fire protected areas within range of Orleans Mtn. so putting a fire net repeater there would not be a good use of available funding.

The Shelter Cove location would provide an improvement in fire communications in the south eastern part of the county and is worth pursuing. This location would require some sort of a link to the Command Center in Fortuna.

Priorities for the County Fire Net (CFN):

New Repeater locations:

1. The central area (Kneeland) that would improve problematic communications for Kneeland, Big Lagoon, Blue Lake, Fieldbrook, and Ferndale as well as in the Eureka/Arcata area.
2. Red Mtn for Orick and Yurok Fire.
3. Shelter Cove area.

Funding Issues:

Need Funding (grants?) to start replacement of wide band only radios and pagers for the smaller departments. Cal Fire's command center will be switching to narrow band in 2010. The current CFN repeaters are narrow band capable, but many of the departments have equipment that can not be converted to narrow band, particularly pagers. Along this line, Chiefs needs to conduct a survey to see who has non convertible equipment.

Need Reliable funding for upgrades and replacements of CFN equipment. Currently some departments and the dispatch Co-op are paying into a radio maintenance fund. This fund has covered repairs so far, but does not have enough money to cover any serious replacements. The amount that all departments are paying could be significantly increased. Since the County is helping with paying the dispatch fees, another option would be to sit down with the CAO and Board of Supervisors to discuss the possibility of funding for the CFN system. Perhaps this could be something that Prop 172 funds could be used for.

Action Items:

- Keep the FSC abreast of goings on in the effort to coordinate with other agencies.
(**Dan L and Dave White**)
- **Dan L** will send updates to **CI** to be forwarded to the FSC.

5. MFPP POLICY RECOMMENDATION INTEGRATION INTO THE GPU (*John McFarland, Tim Jones and Cybelle Immitt. Coordinator – Cybelle Immitt*)

Cybelle facilitated the process of integrating HCFSC policy recommendations related to fire into the applicable sections of the GPU with specific guidance from Kevin and Glenn. Tom Hofweber was the primary author of the chapter.

Progress:

This chapter has been posted to the web for several months and a revised version has not yet been drafted for the next draft of the General Plan Update. Any feedback from the FSC is still welcome. <http://county-internet/planning/gp/gpdemo/GPU-TOC-Demo3.htm#ch21>

Another chapter of possible FSC interest is the Infrastructure and Community Services Element and Technical Study–use web link to review the report and Element <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/planning/gp/gpdemo/GPU-TOC-Demo3.htm#ch7>

Updated versions of these chapters will be completed and posted in November.

Action Items:

Cybelle will print off copies of the Safety Element and the Infrastructure and Community Services Element for FSC member review at the January FSC meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - CONFIRM NEXT MEETING DATE AND ADJOURN

The next meeting date will be **January 12, 2009 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at the Six Rivers National Forest Headquarters in Eureka.**

The meeting was adjourned at **4:03 PM**