

Placer County Fire Safe Alliance
October 22, 2007

1. **Call to Order:** George Alves called the meeting of the Placer County Fire Safe Alliance (Alliance) to order at 10:12 a.m. at the CA Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) Bowman Station located at 13760 Bowman Road, Auburn, CA.
 - A) *Introduction of New Members:* No new members were present.
 - B) *Self-Introductions:* George Alves, Placer County Fire Mitigation Coordinator - Office of Emergency Services (OES); Rich Gresham, Katie Maloney and Jane Keillor, Placer County Resource Conservation District (Placer County RCD); Bill McKenzie, CalFire; Marc Walburn, US Forest Service (USFS); Joanne Drummond, Fire Safe Council of Nevada County; Gary Hall, Foresthill Fire Safe Council; Robin Yonash, Placer Sierra Fire Safe Council; David Jaramillo, Sierra Forest Legacy; Rui Cunha, Placer County OES; Brett Storey, Placer County Executive Office; Edward Crans and Bill Mendonca, CalFire; Paula Celick, Greater Auburn Area Fire Safe Council; Steve Holl, Holl Consulting.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** The September 24th meeting minutes were approved with a minor correction.
3. **Approval of Agenda:** The Agenda was approved. George Alves noted he will be reviewing the current Alliance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Alliance structure, and objectives for possible refinement.
4. **Public Comment:** none
5. **Information/Non-Action Items**
 - A) *Biomass Projects and Bin Update:*

Brett Storey reported \$50K has been spent on county's bio-mass collection effort thus far. He noted the County will be now be monitoring for changes in residential burning activities that might be attributed to the biomass collection effort. Tahoe area homeowners have been more focused on fuel reduction efforts and utilizing the collection bins in greater numbers since the Angora Fire. There are about 100 bins currently in use in that area.

The County will be shifting its focus in terms of biomass collection to meet the needs of orchard owners in the western portion of the county now beginning their annual process of orchard maintenance. Additional collection efforts will be launched in both the Foresthill and Meadow Vista areas.

The County, in collaboration with the High Sierra Resource Conservation and Development Council, is launching the development of a technical study to identify the best location for a bio-mass co-generation facility in the Tahoe Basin.

The County is hoping to acquire \$3M in state funding to add to the \$4M County effort. It is hoped a facility can be operational by the end of 2008. It was noted a co-generation facility would be subject to Federal EPA monitoring. The County's intent is to get the Tahoe facility up and running with hopes of demonstrating any pollution issues can be sufficiently handled, facilitating the placement of additional utilization plants.

B) Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Update:

Steve Holl reported the CWPP is in the process of being printed, after County review; the CWPP will be distributed to the Alliance, individual Fire Safe Councils, and Municipal Advisory Councils (MACs) for their review with feedback to be collected by George Alves. Review of the CWPP will be the focus of November Fire Safe Council meetings and it is hoped all council comments will be in by the next Alliance meeting.

Alliance discussion revolved around the CWPP projects list including the need to address public education and community outreach, the maintenance of existing fuel load reduction and shaded fuel break projects, and the need to be sure the CWPP list of projects is incorporated into both the DMA 2000 Update and the Cosumnes-American-Bear-Yuba (CABY) and Regional Water Authority Integrated Regional Water Management Planning efforts in order to be eligible to apply for both federal and state funding opportunities.

C) Grants Status:

1. Status of Open Grants:

Rich Gresham submitted the Central Sierra Crest to the San Francisco Bay Watershed Initiative grant for \$500K and is awaiting word on the status of the submission. If approved, \$75K will go to Nevada County for fire safe activities. \$100 K will go to the County biomass utilization effort, with additional funding to facilitate an expanded El Dorado, Nevada, and Placer GIS data collection and mapping effort.

Rich reported another grant will be developed by year end related to continuing the Watershed Coordination for the North Fork American River watershed. The new funding cycle will provide another three years of funding for selected watershed coordination efforts. The American River Watershed Group (ARWG) Core team will be meeting to identify workplan components of the new funding proposal.

Brett Storey and George Alves shared information on the project proposal being submitted to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for Strategic Opportunity Grant funding consideration:

- Hidden Falls Park Trail: \$100K project to facilitate connectivity to adjacent open space
- National Forests Work Assistance: \$49K to assist with the implementation of \$1M worth of forest management work on forested public lands.

- Placer County Elder and Special Needs Assistance Program: \$49K to purchase equipment needed to begin a pilot assistance program for those unable to comply with defensible space requirements without help.

- Placer Legacy Website: \$30K to update the County website

- Creek Signage: \$15K for additional creek crossing signage

Brett noted SNC competitive grant proposals are also being developed.

6. Action Items:

A) *Hazardous Vegetation Abatement Ordinance Review:* The Placer County Board of Supervisors (BOS) reading of the Ordinance for the Abatement of Hazardous Vegetation on Unimproved Parcels will be conducted tomorrow, at the meeting in Tahoe. The second reading is expected to consist of placing the Ordinance on the following BOS Agenda as a Consent Item.

Rui Cunha reported collecting comments on the Ordinance from many fire agencies.

George Alves reviewed how the Ordinance would be delivered to the public through local fire departments including the inspection, notification of non-compliance, and appeals processes. After completing those processes for those in non-compliance, a contractor will conduct abatement activities on behalf of the landowner and the County will add the costs incurred to the landowners' property tax bill.

Rui fielded Alliance questions and noted the insurance industry will also have an opportunity to review the Ordinance. If Ordinance language holds up to scrutiny, it could potentially be expanded to apply to improved parcels. The County has funded \$250K for the first year as a pilot project, \$200K for abatement and \$50K for defensible space inspections. The first year program will focus on the North Tahoe, Squaw Valley, Alpine and North Star areas.

Brett added the County will be sending notices to various government entities requesting hazardous vegetation abatement on public lands under their jurisdiction.

B) *Alliance Meeting Schedule for November and December:* After a brief discussion, it was decided not to have a meeting in November but to hold a meeting on December 10, 2007.

7. Project Updates:

A) *I-80 Fire safe Freeway Project:* Ongoing

B) *Placer County Community Wildfire Protection Plan:* See Agenda item 5.B).

C) *Pending/Developing Grant Proposals:* See Agenda item 5.C).

D) *Biomass Projects Update:* See Agenda item 5.A).

E) *Other:* None

8. Fire Safe Council Reports:

- *CA Fire Safe Council:* The Alliance received an update on the Fire Safe Council trademark issue and the Alliance requested George Alves conduct follow up to obtain clarification in light of contradictory information presented on the issue.

Joanne Drummond reported attending the CA Fire Safe Council meeting in So Cal, representing the Fire Safe Council (FSC) of Nevada County as they are still seeking a response to their letter sent to the CA FSC months ago. Joanne noted in speaking with various board members, she learned the CA FSC is working on establishing their procedures and guidelines, indicated staff is not performing up to standards, and are currently not in compliance with their by-laws in terms of financial and annual reporting.

Joanne indicated she came away from the meeting with the impression there is a lack of active participation in the organization by its board members. The next meeting date for the CA FSC, slated for the 3rd week in January, is dependent upon the availability of updated financial statements for Board review.

It was reported SB838 is presently held up at the State Fire Marshall's office where a lack of community participation is being cited as a problem.

Joanne noted it is her understanding projects not requiring environmental compliance have the best chance of being selected for funding and reviewed the history of CAFSC and past Alliance discussions about SB838 for the benefit of those not present at previous discussions. .

George Alves noted the CAFSA had historically acted as a grant clearinghouse and that SB838; a 2 year bill would give \$26M to the now non-profit CAFSC to run the grant clearinghouse.

Rui Cunha noted the BOS needs to review SB838, be aware of what is pending, and monitor the progress of the proposed legislation.

- *Foresthill/Iowa Hill Fire Safe Council:* Gary Hall noted Fire Inspectors in Foresthill are extremely busy.

Gary asked for clarification on extending the Abatement Ordinance to private improved parcels as these properties are as much a nuisance as unimproved properties.

He reported a couple of projects are in the works at Michigan Bluff including a 200 acre prescribed burn.

Rui Cunha noted while Abatement Program funding is currently grant dependent and will need to transition from being grant driven to being budget driven in order to address on-going funding needs. Brett commented the county will be going to the insurance industry for their input on abatement issues.

- *Placer Sierra Fire Safe Council:* George Alves reported the FSC is up and running, had a booth at the Meadow Vista Oktoberfest, and consists of a dedicated and motivated group in the process of developing and adopting their bylaws.

Robin Yonash said: "I am extremely impressed with the energy and commitment of the Placer Sierra Fire Safe Council. Residents of the PSFSC are in good hands."

- *Greater Auburn Area Fire Safe Council:* Paul Celick reported Auburn's Fire Chief continues to support abatement projects in the face of complaints that too much abatement has been done, negatively impacting privacy screening from neighbors.

The Fire Safe brochure has been sent out to over 4,000 Auburn residents with Penryn and Newcastle residents targeted to receive them next. Community groups will also receive them for distribution.

Robin Yonash suggested conducting outreach workshops to distribute the brochure.

Paula noted the mayor of Auburn is very concerned about the city's fire safety.

Fire Safe Council of Nevada County: Joanne Drummond reported fire wise community efforts underway include Lake Wildwood. Lake Wildwood includes abatement requirements in to their CC&Rs.

Joanne reviewed the FSC's efforts in terms of projects progress, CWPP development, and project proposal development efforts. She noted Chipping has tripled over last year.

9. Agency and Stakeholder Reports:

- *Placer County OES:* Rui Cunha indicated there is nothing else to report.
- *CDF/CalFire:* Bill Mendonca reported the State Responsibility Area (SRA) Severity Zone Map will be released shortly with the public review process to follow. New standards for building materials will be predicated on the Severity Zone designations and are due to go into effect January '08. The new standards relate to new construction only and not to remodels. Roofing materials are included. It was noted the building industry may not be ready to deal with the new standards in terms of materials availability.

Rui noted the County will be endorsing the new building materials standards.

Bill reported work continues on shaded fuel breaks, while more Scotch Broom abatement is being considered. Spraying was identified as the most effective way to deal with the problem. Fire roads are also being repaired and improved.

- *USFS:* No report

- *BLM*: No report
- *Placer County FMC*: Nothing more to report
- *ARWG*: No report
- *RCD*: Katie Maloney reported the Prop 40 funded CA Forest Improvement Program has allocated close to \$1.5M in projects and is looking to receive the last \$500K allocation of the current Agreement with the expectation another Agreement for \$2M will follow as soon as the last \$500K is allocated.

Rich reviewed the Nevada-Placer Weed Management Area funding proposal that if awarded funding will provide for invasive species workshops and include Scotch broom eradication efforts.

- *NRCS*: No report
- *Sierra Nevada Conservancy*: Brett Storey reported the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is holding a symposium at the Miners Foundry on December 5th on Climate Change the day before their next Board Meeting on December 6th when the first round of SNC grants will be awarded. Over 150 Strategic Opportunity Grant proposals have been submitted for funding consideration thus far.

10. Adjournment and Next Meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m. and the next meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2007 at 10 a.m. at the same location.