

CAMBRIA FOREST COMMITTEE

TO CONSERVE AND MANAGE THE NATIVE FOREST OF CAMBRIA

Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2020, 6:30 PM

Mechanics Bank, 1070 Main Street, Cambria

The meeting was called to Order and a **Quorum** established by attendance of Crosby and Laura Swartz, Paul Nugent, Ralph Covell, Oliver Curley representing Greenspace, and Christine Heinrichs. Also attending were Harry Farmer, CSD board president, the Cambria Community Services District; Alan Peters, Cal Fire unit forester, and John Gee of Cal Fire; Dan Turner, business manager of SLO County Fire Safe Council; Carlos Mendoza, facilities and ranch manager for CCSD; and Cambrian Greg Randall also attended.

Public and Director Comments

Crosby Swartz raised the question of holding virtual meetings in the event Coronavirus cancels meetings in person. Paul will look into Skype in case we need a remote meeting.

Minutes of January and February Meetings were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Laura Swartz reported the account balance at \$983.60. She paid for the post office box.

Sub-Committee Reports

Education/Planting/Mitigation/Operations

FFRP released its new Volunteer Handbook. It will be available to FFRP volunteers.

Crosby shared a Viewpoint published in the SLO Tribune March 6, 2020, by David Brodie and Allan Cooper: What's the Easiest Way San Luis Obispo Can Save the Planet? Plant a Lot More Trees, <https://www.sanluisobispo.com/opinion/readers-opinion/article240822261.html>. The article promotes the value of trees for absorbing CO2. Harry Farmer said that trees illustrate our intimate relationship with the natural world, what they breathe in what we breathe out.

In an email response, Alan Peters said that he hopes Cambria will plant 15,000 trees a day for six consecutive days in 2023 or 2024. Rick Hawley, operations manager of Greenspace, said that organization is prepared to help.

Crosby, Laura and Alan Peters discussed management of the Monterey Pine forest. Because the species is fire-dependent, the forest usually is composed of single-age, single-canopy trees, unlike a mixed conifer forest. Commercial growers plant with the intention of thinning trees every five years. Dan Turner said that the intent is to replicate a natural forest. He said that the Fire Safe Council of San Luis Obispo is the lead agency doing the fuel reduction work, being carried out by contractors, the California Conservation Corps and Cal Fire crews under Cal Fire supervision.

Alan Peters said tree planting will be done in two or three years, after observing how much natural tree regeneration occurs. They will monitor the recent prescribed burn area on San Simeon Point for natural regeneration of Monterey Pines.

Paul Nugent asked whether tree seedlings naturally growing on Fiscalini Ranch could be transplanted, but Alan Peters said survival is poor among transplants. Dan Turner recommended using seeds from healthy trees showing no symptoms of disease.

Problem of Smoking in Forest Areas

Harry Farmer will follow up at the next FFRP Board meeting.

In his position as ranch manager, Carlos Mendoza said he has ordered more signs for the ranch trails. He feels a cigarette butt collector encourages smokers. As ranch manager, he is concerned about homeless people living in the forest using stoves and butane tanks. Call the Fire Department if you observe any burning in the forest.

Permit Referrals

Christine has permit referral packages for Settini, Bookout, Hench and Kausen permit applications. The county's website makes them difficult to locate. Contact her for packages.

Forest Management

Forest Management Task Force Conference Call 3-12-20

California Forest Management Task Force Coastal Regional Prioritization Group will hold another conference call March 12. Crosby and Laura, Dan Turner, Alan Peters, Oliver Curley and Andrea Wogsland will participate. Minutes will be available.

Laura Swartz asked whether the amount of disruption by the fuel reduction project will result in growth of more invasives. Alan Peters said he will look for studies on the subject. Broom has been reduced by 60 percent.

Dan Turner said that 700 acres have been identified for treatment between Harmony and San Simeon. The project includes Covell Ranch, Fogs End and Hearst Ranch.

Coalition letter

Dan Turner said that the letter Greenspace wrote, signed by a coalition of organizations, to the Coastal Regional Prioritization Group contained numerous factual errors and he disagreed strongly with the idea that he used poor judgment in managing the fuel reduction project. He will discuss the matter with Greenspace after the meeting.

He denied using the phrase “cutting the green tape,” which suggests evading regulations, on the previous conference call. After the meeting, Alan Peters directed attention to the website, “Cutting the Green Tape,” a state initiative to improve permitting and funding efficiencies for ecological restoration and stewardship projects, <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Cutting-the-Green-Tape>

Alan Peters said that as a Registered Professional Forester, he complies with all regulations, including Department of Transportation, the Minor Use Permit, the Mitigated Negative Declaration, California Environmental Quality Act, the Coastal Land Use Plan, and others. He said that he is guided by Cambria’s Forest Management Plan. He said the level of treatment done was less than the Forest Management Plan recommends.

Specific points Peters sent in a message after the meeting include:

Understory species composition remains the same as it was prior to the fuel reduction project, except for removal of invasive French broom.

The chain saws used for cutting and limbing trees do not require cleaning between uses as they are not vectors of pathogen spread. The heat generated by friction is considered adequate to kill fungal spores.

Tree planting is not included in the fuel reduction project, but is part of the comprehensive plan of which the fuel reduction project is part. Significant tree planting will be the last phase of the plan.

CAL FIRE is the Grantor and Lead Agency. The grant was made to the County Fire Safe Council, which is working with CCSD, private contractors, private landowners and State Parks.

The governor’s Executive Action applies only to removal of dead and dying trees. Other applicable regulations governed the fuel reduction project.

Crosby said that County Fire Safe Council and Cal Fire need to communicate with the community. He said he respects their experience and asked them to come to Forest Committee meetings to discuss the project.

They agreed to invite Keith Gilles of the Board of Forestry at UC Berkeley, who chairs the Science Advisory Panel, to visit Cambria this summer.

A Cal Poly graduate student is developing a community survey of attitudes toward the forest. The CSD has agreed to send it to all residents in water bills. How the questions will be worded can influence the responses. How results will be used in future forest management projects was discussed. While the results reflect public opinion, forest management decisions should be based on science.

Report from Fire Safe Focus Group

Dan Turner is working on Frequently Asked Questions to be posted to the Fire Safe Council's website. Submit questions to him or Jim Neumann,

They plan a Town Hall meeting for May 16 at the Vets Hall.

New Business

Forest Committee Booth at Earth Day Fair

Cambria Forest Committee will share a booth with FFRP as we have done for the last several years. Crosby and Oliver will coordinate.

Unfinished Business

Forest Impact Mitigation Measure to CCSD

Crosby will email the letter to Forest Committee directors for electronic approval. Moved by Laura Swartz, seconded by Paul Nugent, unanimous approval.

Public and Director Comments

Volunteer day Saturday March 14 at Greenspace's Native Plant Garden, organized by Amanda Gowdy. The daffodils are beautiful.

The meeting was **adjourned** 8:31 pm.

Next Meeting April 8, 2020