

CAMBRIA FOREST COMMITTEE

TO CONSERVE AND MANAGE THE NATIVE FOREST OF CAMBRIA

Meeting Minutes

August 11, 2021, 6:30 PM
Zoom.com Video Teleconference

The meeting was called to order and a **Quorum** established by attendance of Crosby and Laura Swartz, Bob Fountain, Harry Farmer and Christine Heinrichs. Neil Havlik of the local chapter of the California native Plant Society also attended.

Public and Director Comments

Harry Farmer said that the State Water Project has cut water allocations to Central Valley farmers. Neil Havlik clarified that the order applies to those who pump directly from rivers and streams, riparian rights. The Public Trust Doctrine requires that sufficient flow be left to support fish and aquatic life.

Harry said well levels are also dropping. North County vineyards pump water from the water table for irrigation.

The **Minutes** of the July Meeting were approved as amended.

Laura Swartz gave the **Treasurer's Report**. The bank balance is \$389.60, plus \$20 petty cash.

The IRS Business Master File is not yet corrected. Laura will contact the IRS agent she worked with to get that file updated.

Director & Officer Insurance Renewal: Laura will collect information about the renewal and inform directors of the cost. The premium is due in mid-October.

Sub-Committee Reports

5.1 Education/Planting/Mitigation/Operations

Los Padres ForestWatch Analysis of Bootleg Fire: Crosby sent this document to all directors. The rapid progress of this fire raises questions as to the effectiveness of fuel reduction projects. Ember proofing and defensible space may be more effective in reducing fire spread. Christine will post to the web site.

Swanton Pacific Ranch CZU Fire Analysis: Steve Auten, who is now consulting on Cambria's Monterey pine forest for the Fire Safe Council, managed the forest at Swanton Ranch. Swanton Ranch was burned down in the CZU Lightning Complex Fire in 2020. The Forest Committee will seek independent sources that can analyze what forest management was done in that area, what effect it had on the fire, and how this might affect management of Cambria's forest. Mr. Auten has offered to attend the Forest Committee's September meeting.

Forest Management

Fern Canyon Parcels on CCSD Weed Abatement Contract List:

Crosby and Laura are in contact with Cambria Fire Department Chief William Hollingsworth regarding forested lots that are on the Weed Abatement List. He has removed the lots from the list in the past but they are on the list again. Nothing is being accomplished by having the contractor clear vegetation in the middle of the forest.

New Business

Discuss US-LT RCD Draft Public Works Plan for Covell & Other Projects:

Neil Havlik sent a comment letter on behalf of the CNPS, see attached. The letter raised questions about the proposed use of shaded fuel break treatments throughout the forest, removal of healthy trees 8" DBH or smaller and the use of mechanical masticator equipment to remove vegetation. The letter also recommended doing test plots prior to project implementation to demonstrate the effects of proposed treatment methods.

Crosby said that projects fall into two categories: Fire Prevention and Forest Health. Fire Prevention applies only to defensible space, within 100 feet of structures. Forest Health projects apply to the rest of the forest. Fire Prevention standards should not be generally applied to Forest Health projects.

Fire Safe Council representatives and Mr. Auten invited representatives of the Nature Conservancy, USLTRCD, and CNPS for a tour of the Covell Ranch and agreed to set up some test plots before doing the work. The project will go to a public hearing September 16 followed by a hearing before the Coastal Commission before work can begin.

Public money pays for these projects although the Covell Ranch is private property. Recent research questions whether these fuel reduction projects actually improve fire safety.

The Fiscalini Ranch fuel reduction project cut away more understory than was authorized in its permit. The extensive disturbance of native vegetation, after

promises of selective removal, leave forest advocates wary of Fire Safe council project management practices.

CNPS has a working group that meets weekly. They will continue to monitor individual projects.

Crosby will draft a letter for the September 16 USLTRCD hearing and circulate it to directors for approval.

Discuss Alternate Date for September Meeting:

Because of Labor Day weekend, the Forest Committee's September meeting will be on Friday, September 10 instead of Wednesday, September 8, subject to directors, Mr. Auten, and Greenspace availability. The meeting will be publicized to the general public.

Unfinished Business

Report and Discussion, CCSD Forest Management Ad Hoc Committee:

Crosby attended the meeting of Tom Gray, Harry Farmer and Devin Best, USLTRCD executive director. The CSD and the RCD might be able to share a forester, making it possible to get a grant to support the position. Cal Poly professor Chris Dicus and retired forestry professor Doug Piirto may have individuals to recommend. Harry found the meeting encouraging.

Public and Director Comments

Harry asked attendees to attend the following day's CSD meeting and offer comments on Item 7D, evaluating the way the CSD is handling Public Comments.

Future Agenda Items and Speakers

Auten Resource Consulting – Crosby will follow up
Chad Hanson webinar – Christine will follow up

The meeting was **Adjourned** at 8:03 pm.

Next Meeting 10 am September 10, 2021