

CAMBRIA FOREST COMMITTEE

TO CONSERVE AND MANAGE THE NATIVE FOREST OF CAMBRIA

Meeting Minutes

September 10, 2021, 10:00 AM

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 and David Krause of California Native Plant Society, John Seed, president of the board of Greenspace – The Cambria Land Trust, Mary Webb, former Greenspace board president, Richard Hawley, founder of Greenspace, Kitty Connolly, executive director of Friends of Fiscalini Ranch Preserve and Thomas Loganbill, board president of FFRP, Dan Turner, business manager of the SLO County Fire Safe Council, Hayley Barnes, USLT RCD, Andrew Johnson, USLT RCD, Riley McFarland, assistant forester at Auten Resource consulting, Brandon Sanderson of Cal Fire, Steve Auten, of Auten Resource Consulting, contractor for the Covell Ranch Plan, and Cambrian Elizabeth Bettenhausen.

Presentation on Covell Ranch Project by Steve Auten. He provided an overview of the project. Assistant forester Riley McFarland was the main author, working with Dan Turner of SLO County Fire Safe Council, which hired his firm as the consultant. View video of the meeting here, https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ImxXBLUXKD593mhR4qN8QuUgDue9kXbghUx4HwkyOk0KYeQrbtI8ChSG0oJxVCfP.Y3Bsf_tzEQr_wgST

His slide presentation is posted on the Home page of the CFC website. The plan will cover the next ten years of management.

He reviewed the history of Cambria's forest, from 1937, via aerial photos. The forest has been changed by development and affected by the climate crisis. He said the plan seeks to find a balance point for biological resources, treating for a level of heterogeneity. The project develops a set of bounds, with regard to pathogens such as dwarf mistletoe, and available water, archaeological, and biological resources.

Mr. Auten engaged in discussion of various aspects of the plan with Crosby Swartz, Dr. Bettenhausen, Mr. Hawley, Mr. Havlik

Points raised included the plan's standard of removing Monterey Pine 8 inches in diameter, criteria for removing trees, maintaining forest and understory diversity, and follow-up to monitor regeneration. What criteria will be used to select healthy trees for removal to achieve the Monterey Pine to Coastal Live Oaks ratio, how much understory will be removed, and whether the machinery used will set up the area for mud and debris flow during winter rains were discussed.

Mr. Auten said he was writing down questions to be answered in the future. No meeting date was discussed.

CNPS representatives will be invited to view the work as it proceeds. Mr. Turner said that the Nature Conservancy, which holds the Agricultural Conservation Easement on the Covell Ranch property, which is privately owned and not open to the public, has been actively involved in the development of the PSA. He said that a Licensed Professional Forester will be on site during all operations.

Mr. Turner said that test plots of at least one acre will be treated, although that condition was not stated in the PSA.

The presentation part of the meeting was **concluded** at 11 am. After a break, a short business meeting resumed.

The **Minutes of the August Meeting** were approved with Crosby's changes.

Treasurer's Report: Laura Swartz reported that the balance remains at \$389.20, with \$20 in petty cash.

She submitted information for the Director & Officer Insurance policy renewal but hasn't had a response. She anticipates that costs will be about the same as 2020. The policy expires October 17.

Laura and Crosby are still trying to clear up the information in the IRS master file. While the incorrect entry is not currently an issue, it could affect grant applications.

Sub-Committee Reports:

Tree planting at Camp Ocean Pines. This project could be eligible for Cambria Community Council grant funding. Laura is working with CCOP executive director Andrew Boyd Goodrich to proceed. Seedlings would come from Greenspace. CNPS is invited to participate.

Forest Management

CCSD contractors have not entered Fern Canyon to cut vegetation on the parcels that were included on the district's list. Since the deadline for weed abatement has passed, no further action is expected.

Report from Fire Safe Focus Group:

Crosby and Laura attended. CCSD has included updating the Forest management Plan in its Strategic Plan. Discussion continues as to how Cambria Fire Department could be compensated for taking on Cal Fire's responsibility for inspecting developed properties. Currently, Cal Fire is charged with inspecting developed properties and CFD undeveloped lots. Cal Fire lacks personnel to do these inspections.

The group will hold a Wildfire Preparedness Day in October.

Video of all fire safe meetings is posted at <https://www.247ncep.com/>

Unfinished Business

Discuss US-LT RCD Hearing for Public Works Plan & Covell PSA

Forest Committee, Greenspace and CNPS representatives discussed the presentation and the opportunity to comment at the hearing. The Coastal Zone should have an RCD that considers the special interests of the area, especially with regard to development.

This is one of the first projects authorized under the Cal VTP program. Chad Hanson was quoted in a recent LA Times article questioning these premises of forest management, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-08-21/california-burning-is-it-time-to-rethink-forest-management> This project could be used as a precedent for future projects, so it should be based on sound science.

The Fire Safe Council and Auten Resource Consulting invited CNPS to meet at the site to discuss concerns, but did not invite Greenspace or the Forest Committee.

Oral agreement to conduct test plots lacking written confirmation in the PSA is a concern. Who will comprise the working crews and who will supervise them have not been announced, but could make a difference in how the work is carried out.

Future Agenda Items and Speakers

Los Padres Forest Watch – Executive Director Bryant Baker and scientist Chad Hanson have accepted the Forest Committee’s invitation to speak at a future meeting, but the date has not been set.

The meeting was **Adjourned** at 11:55.

Next Meeting October 13, 2021 (Check for Update)