

Cambria Forest Committee June 2nd, 2023 Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Crosby Swartz at 10:05 AM. Just prior to the start of the meeting Crosby mentioned that Greenspace and the Cambria Forest Committee had sent a joint letter to the California Coastal Commission addressing the Fuel Reduction Projects in the Cambria area to be discussed and ruled on by the CCC at their June 7th meeting. A copy of this letter is enclosed at the end of this summary. Crosby also explained how to attend the meeting and present one's concerns, and that this month's CFC meeting is earlier than usual, on the first Friday of the month instead of the second Friday, so folks could be more prepared regarding any comments they'd wish to make to the Coastal Commission.

In attendance at today's meeting were CFC Chair Crosby Swartz, Treasurer Laura Swartz, Greenspace Executive Director Karin Argano, Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Executive Director Kitty Connolly, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District Assistant Project Manager Eli Ginsberg, Rancho Marino Preserve Director Keith Seydel, California Native Plant Society representative Neil Havlik, and Harry Farmer, CCSD Board Director and CFC liaison.

CNPS local representative Neil Havlik began the discussion by again expressing his concerns regarding the shrub component and the potential excessive removal of the shrub layer on the planned projects, especially Rancho Marino. He said it would be unrealistic to expect workers with chain saws to be reasonably attentive to the details of the work being done, and hoped that someone would be on site such as a "biological monitor" to oversee what's taking place and marking the areas to be saved.

At this point Karin Argano spoke to Neil's concerns by describing her reaction on the recent Covell Ranch tour, stating she was "pleasantly surprised" with the work done by the crews, including being sensitive to the wildlife such as deer and frogs. She added that the presentation by the supervisor gave her, "a boost of confidence, a glimmer of hope." Eli Ginsberg added that monitors would be supervising the crews on the Rancho Marino project, including US-LTRCD Project Manager Spencer Gordon and Rancho Marino PD Keith Seydel, and that the group doing the work on the Covell Ranch are known as, "the Great Tree Tenders". Neil then stated that while he was "glad to hear" the good news of what had been done and what was planned, he again expressed concern that the deer could possibly retard the reestablishment of shrubs, their own nesting habitat and food source.

Laura then gave her observations of the work done on the Covell Ranch, including many trees removed, much chipping having been done, and that poison oak as well as invasives such as orchard grass had come back, and there was a need to be proactive in this area to prevent invasives returning.

Treasurer Swartz then provided a brief update on finances, and continuing involvement with the Committee's accountant.

Continuing along the same topic, Crosby then offered his assessment of the work done on the Covell Ranch as a result of the recent tour, saying that the area had, "a nice look to it" as a result of the abundance of rain in recent months, also that it was obvious much work had been done such as tree thinning and chipping, and it would be helpful to tour the area again in the dry season to witness the results of what had been done. Laura remarked there needs to be "a happy medium, a middle ground", not either too much removal or none at all.

The upcoming CA Coastal Commission meeting was again brought up, observing that on June 7th about one hour would be devoted to Public Comment to the various Cambria projects on Agenda Item 17 that would likely be occurring later in the day. Karin stated that Greenspace would probably not be commenting, as they were happy with the letter written by Crosby and cosigned by Crosby and Greenspace President John Seed. She added that, observing past history with other agencies, Letters are more influential to Commissioners and Staff than verbal public comment. The comment letter to the Coastal Commission and the Coastal Staff response are posted on the Coastal Commission website www.coastal.ca.gov/meetings/agenda/#/2023/6. Look for June 7th Agenda Item 17, Correspondence, and Addendum.

No new Future Agenda Items were brought up, and a presentation by Steve Auten of the Auten Consulting Group and US-LTRCD PM Spencer Gordon is still being considered.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 AM.

The next CFC meeting will be on Friday, July 14th, at 10 AM via Zoom.

This summary written and submitted by CCSD Director and CFC liaison Harry Farmer.