

# CAMBRIA FOREST COMMITTEE

TO CONSERVE AND MANAGE THE NATIVE FOREST OF CAMBRIA

## Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2023, 10:00 AM

Zoom.com Video Teleconference

1.0 Chair Crosby Swartz called the meeting to Order at 10 am. A Quorum was established by attendance of Crosby and Laura Swartz, Cambria CSD liaison Harry Farmer, and CFC Secretary Christine Heinrichs. FFRP executive director Kitty Connolly, Rancho Marino director Keith Seydel, California Native Plant Society representative Neil Havlik, Greenspace board member Jeff Wilson and Greenspace executive director Karin Argano, and USLTRCD project manager Spencer Gordon also attended.

### 2.0 Public and Director Comments and Reports

Cambria was experiencing a severe storm on this date. The fire chief had requested all shelter in place for the duration, to avoid further problems and allow emergency workers to work.

Keith reported that while the creek hadn't closed the road, it was running over. He showed the group water running through his classroom. He stayed for part of the meeting but had to leave to manage flooding before the meeting ended.

Karin said that about 70 trees had come down in Strawberry Canyon. Trails will need a lot of maintenance after the storm is over. She may have to postpone a class field trip to the Canyon scheduled for March 29. Kitty offered Fiscalini Ranch for the students in the event Strawberry Canyon is not safe.

Kitty reported that the screenhouse, not fully a greenhouse, has water running through it. She is working on a Letter of Interest, in collaboration with Greenspace, for a \$50,000 grant, due this day, to plant pollinator plants.

3.0 Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting was deferred. Harry's liaison reports to the CCSD are helpful, see attached.

### 4.0 Treasurer's Report

Laura reported the bank balance is \$297.15 "We are living within our means," she said.

### 5.0 Sub-Committee Reports

The rest of the meeting was devoted to discussion of the CalVTP Project-Specific Analysis and PWP Coastal Vegetation Treatment Standards for the Cambria Reserves Restoration and Vegetation Treatment Project, CalVTP Project ID: 2022-36, and the Hearst Ranch Forest Health Fuels Reduction Project, Project Specific Analysis, posted to the Cambria

Forest Committee website under Forest-Related Documents, CalVTP, <http://cambriaforestcommittee.org/documents-2/cambria-reserves-restoration-and-vegetation-treatment-project/> and <http://cambriaforestcommittee.org/documents-2/calvtp-hearst-ranch-forest-health-fuels-reduction-project/>

Points of concern:

Viewing the forests as fuel and fuel reduction as key to forest management sidesteps important management issues. Young trees are the big trees of the future.

The PSAs extend the 100-foot Defensive Space area applicable to residential structures to the entire Cambria forest. This is inappropriate for forested areas and other standards should apply.

Community organizations should have an opportunity to review ongoing work and comment. Covell Ranch is under a Conservation Easement and the public should have access to it.

Standards requiring reduction in number of trees should be revised to allow for variety of tree sizes and ages rather than removing all trees below a certain DBH, in this case 8". Removal of all young and small trees reduces the forest's ability to evolve and respond to changing climate conditions.

Removal of understory allows open space to be hotter and drier. Non-native grasses and invasives such as French broom replace native shrubs.

Piled vegetation should be burned with caution to protect nearby trees and avoid fire escape. Non-natives such as French broom should be cut before going to seed. Cutting after allows seed to be scattered for future regrowth.

Consider the value of the forest for sequestering CO<sub>2</sub> and retain trees appropriately.

Test plots should be created to compare treatments: number and size of trees removed, mechanical and mastication compared to hand cutting and spreading branches. Test plots were established for the Covell Ranch project at the urging of CNPS, but CNPS representatives were not invited to review the results.

James Allen's 2019 update on Fiscalini Ranch was criticized by the County Fire Safe Council business manager Dan Turner. Crosby will provide that report to Spencer Gordon.

Keith will work with Spencer on how the PSA will apply to Rancho Marino. It should be maintained as a reference area reserve, with the exception of the Randall Road fuel break.

The CalVTP process allows for public comment at several points, such as the RCD hearing and directly to the Coastal Commission. The public, as individuals and through organizations such as the Cambria Forest Committee, Greenspace the Cambria Land Trust, Friends of Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, and California Native Plant Society, can participate by submitting comments at every opportunity.

## 6.0 Report from Fire Safe Focus Group

Rancho Marino, San Simeon Point and Pico Creek Project Analyses

## 7.0 New Business

### 7.1 Comment Letter on Cambria Reserves and Hearst Ranch Project Descriptions

Crosby will write a comment letter ([usltrcd.pwp@gmail.com](mailto:usltrcd.pwp@gmail.com)) and distribute it for approval to directors and signing by Greenspace. He will include citations of research papers that support changing attitudes in the Fire Science community toward forest maintenance.

**Next Meeting April 14, 2023**