

## **Cambria Forest Committee November 10th, 2023 Meeting summary**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Crosby Swartz at 10:03 AM. A quorum was established. In attendance were Secretary Christine Heinrichs, Treasurer Laura Swartz, Board member Julie Jorgensen, Greenspace Executive Director Karin Argano, FFRP Executive Director Kitty Connolly, CCSD Facilities and Resources Supervisor David Aguirre, PROS Committee member Jeff Wilson, Rancho Marino Reserve Director Keith Seydel, local CA Native Plant Society representative Neil Havlik, and CCSD Board Director and CFC liaison Harry Farmer.

Karin Argano began the meeting by announcing that Greenspace the Cambria Land Trust would again be doing their Annual Tree Planting on Saturday, November 18th starting at 9AM. One thousand Monterey Pine seedlings will be planted by numerous volunteers in the San Simeon State Park area across from the Water Reclamation Facility on San Simeon Creek Road. Everyone is welcome to join in and participate, individuals as well as families. Bring gloves, a shovel, hat and water. But please, no dogs.

A brief comment was made regarding the kiosk on the grounds of the Historical Society Museum at the corner of Burton Dr and Center St, especially that much information was available, including from Greenspace and the Cambria Forest Committee.

In the Treasurer's Report, Laura stated the CFC had \$992.15 in the checking account, but that there will be \$557 due in the near future for Directors and Officers insurance. She added that the focus of the Forest Committee is not to be flush with cash, but mostly to allow for a variety of voices to express themselves without any time constraints or limitations regarding the needs and concerns of the forests here in Cambria, including projects taking place that affect the local environment.

The next topic of discussion was aerial mapping of Cambria forest projects. The need for doing so is that both Cal Fire and the Resource Conservation District are reluctant to reveal how many trees are being cut down, as well as the need for pretreatment and post treatment analysis. Shannon Sutherland, who was not available to attend today's meeting, is a licensed drone operator who may be able to provide this service in the future. Kitty Connolly then pointed out that permission was needed from the land owners to pursue any effort of this type. For example, drones are not permitted to fly over the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve.

At this point Jeff Wilson spoke to the possibility of establishing a standard CFC subcommittee to address projects such as aerial mapping and fire mitigation. He noted that Forest Management is an important concern of the CFC, and he'd be more than happy to be a part of the subcommittee involved in this area. Neil Havlik then expressed his surprise that neither CDF (California Department of Forestry) or the RCD would be required to specify how many trees had been removed at various projects. He said the term "stems per acre" is at times used to address an issue such as this, though the size of a tree removed would not necessarily be noted. nor would tree density be described. Crosby then said that in the work done on the Covell Ranch, the project stated that tree count per acre would be reduced from 500 to 200 trees. The Forest Committee submitted written comments to the Resource Conservation District and the Coastal commission about the lack of pre-treatment and post—treatment tree count reporting, but was told that such reporting would slow the pace and scale of their forest management projects.

Karin then addressed this issue from the perspective of Greenspace, and that work being done in Strawberry Canyon in conjunction with the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD would be very specific, taking a scientific approach regarding a Forest Management plan and a Fuel Reduction program. In fact, a survey had already been done, initially creating seven sectors, then doing an extensive inventory regarding the size of each tree, sapling count, and understory, with the intention of ultimately having a thorough before and after study of the work done. Keith Seydel then informed us the upcoming work to be done on Rancho Marino would have a pre

and post treatment approach as well. Crosby then expressed his appreciation that more concern as to forest health and detailed work taking place was being addressed.

A short discussion about the date of the December Forest Committee took place, with the date chosen being Friday the 15th, which would occur after the PROS Committee, the Resources and Infrastructure Committee, the Fire Safe Focus Group and the CCSD Board meetings had taken place.

Crosby brought up the Vegetative Management work being done in Fern Canyon. So far the CCSD has some mowing and string trimming along the trail in the Canyon, plus a tree was taken down where the trail crosses Fern Drive. Some string trimming was also done on Burton Dr up close to the Preserve. Crosby then asked David Aguirre to provide more detail. David added some overhanging brush was removed on Burton Dr at the CCSD easement, plus weed abatement had taken place that was approved by the Cambria Fire Department. Laura then expressed her concern that the weeding in the steeper areas of the Canyon poison hemlock had been stirred up, which will cause the hemlock to spread in the coming years. David said he was unfamiliar with this issue but would be cautious in the future. There was also a lengthy discussion on the Fern Canyon trail connecting with Cambourne Dr heading north, including the need to put down dirt, rock or railroad ties to slow down erosion, maybe doing so with a small tractor, perhaps even using fallen trees to prevent erosion. At one point Crosby stated that no vehicles had been in the area for years, and this should not be done.

Crosby then turned to the newly restructured PROS (Parks, Recreation and Open Space) Committee, and how it would be expanding its scope of interest to include forest management as well as recreational activities on the East Ranch. At the last PROS meeting, Chair Michael Thomas said he'd be requesting various groups such as Greenspace, the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo, the Cambria Forest Committee, and others, to present a brief monthly report on their issues of concern, therefore providing greater information and attention to PROS, the CCSD Board of Directors, and the public in general. Laura suggested that when the Forest Committee meets, attendees would be welcome to bring up issues they feel are important, the item then discussed, a consensus arrived at, and taken to the PROS Committee for consideration. Crosby observed this is a new opportunity that needs to be taken advantage of, especially when it comes to informing new employees at the CCSD, including General Manager McElhenie.

Crosby asked David about lots owned by the District. Mr Aguirre stated he'd been diligently working on this issue for about three weeks, had determined the District owns 194 lots, 141 that are covered by the conservation easement. He's obtained APN #'s regarding weeding, and is getting as much information as possible, to which Crosby expressed his appreciation. David also said he's considering consulting with a local arborist, but that most of all he desires to pursue this subject on his own, then informing his employees as to the importance of the work they're doing, and to be as knowledgeable as possible in addressing the health of trees and the natural environment. Ways of dealing with the disease known as dwarf mistletoe was briefly discussed.

Laura then informed David of our local arborist Blair McCormick who has lived in Cambria for over 40 years who is extremely knowledgeable and reasonable to work with. Laura also pointed out there is a specific way to do weed abatement that lessens the possibility of weeds becoming more problematic in the future. Julie then brought up the problem with cape ivy in Fern Canyon, and the need to be extra careful in removing it so that more of it isn't propagated throughout the canyon. She noted her very skilled landscaper and his crew have been addressing this problem on her property for years, that removing it is incredibly time consuming, and requires diligence and patience for years for it to be done right and ultimately removed.

Laura then pointed out that, due to very poor weed removal practices in years past, every weed imaginable now exists along Santa Rosa Creek, and that she has made every effort possible on their own property to slowly remove weeds and invasive grasses to where they have mainly ceased to be an ongoing problem.

Crosby asked Keith Seydel if he had anything to report regarding action being taken on Rancho Marino. Keith said US-LT RCD was still getting quotes from various contractors, and once one was chosen the fuel reduction project would begin. However, with the rainy season around the corner, work would likely not be initiated until warmer, drier weather prevailed.

FFRP Executive Director Kitty Connolly announced there would be no Thanksgiving tree planting this year because there were no trees available. And while she didn't state the following, this is due to the destruction of the FFRP nursery resulting from the storms earlier in the year.

Crosby wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, and that we'd connect again at the December meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

The next Forest Committee meeting will be Friday, December 15th at 10AM via Zoom.

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