

Cambria Forest Committee August 15th, 2025 monthly meeting summary

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM by Chair Crosby Swartz. Also in attendance were Treasurer Laura Swartz, Board member Julie Jorgensen, Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Executive Director Kitty Connolly, Rancho Marino Reserve Director Keith Seydel, California Native Plant Society local representative Neil Havlik, and Cambria Community Services District Board Director and CFC liaison Harry Farmer.

There were no Public or Director Comments. In place of the minutes Chair Swartz recommended reading Director Farmer's July 11th CFC meeting summary in the CCSD 8/14/25 Agenda Packet. Thoughtful comments of appreciation regarding Mr Farmer's reports were expressed by some attendees.

Treasurer Swartz provided a very quick financial update, stating CFC has \$1635.31 in the bank account, and \$20 in petty cash, no change from the previous month.

Organization Reports;

Neil Havlik began his report by saying he had, "nothing in Cambria", but then said he'd received a notice in the mail from the County stating that the Planning Commission will be reviewing the Settlement Arrangement for the Dana Reserve Project in Nipomo sometime in mid September. He remarked that both the Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors could exercise their veto power over the Settlement, though it's likely this item will not come before the Board of Supervisors until November. This issue is occupying a bit of the Native Plant Society's time, as is concern over Fire Prevention, and the current fire of over 100,000 acres mostly still out of control in the Los Padres National Forest. He alluded to the severity of the flammable nature of the chaparral burning in the wilderness, as there is no history of fire in this area for over 100 years. He added it would be interesting as to the amount of restoration work and reseedling that will be taking place in the future.

While there was no report from the Fire Safe Focus Group, Crosby commented that another chipping event is potentially on the horizon. Folks interested can contact either the Cambria Fire Department or the FSFG.

FFRP Executive Director Kitty Connolly began her report with, "not much going on, same old same old...". which was essentially tongue in cheek, as this was followed by an expression of serious concern regarding, "the quality and maintenance of the Ranch under CCSD's management which has changed in the last two years" as other projects have taken priority. She expressed the hope that the relationship between CCSD and FFRP would become, "less adversarial". She also related that at yesterday's (Thursday August 14th) Board meeting roughly two dozen community members attended expressing support for FFRP and opposing the lessening of monies allocated for Ranch maintenance in the CCSD budget. And though the budget wasn't changed, an Ad Hoc Committee to address the topic was assigned by CCSD Board President Debra Scott which will hopefully result in improving the relationship between the two organizations.

On more uplifting topics, Kitty reminded us of the upcoming regularly scheduled ice plant removal party, docent walks, FFRP's involvement in the Pinedorado Parade "as an array of animals and a few plants"(in which FFRP won the top award in 2024), and the PopUp on the Ranch the following weekend. As the conversation returned to the Ad Hoc Committee, Kitty stated it was likely the topic of Ranch maintenance and funding would possibly also be discussed at one or two Town Hall meetings. Kitty then perked up everyone's spirits by requesting another ten "Invasive Weed Guide" books, a top notch very eye opening publication organized and written by local talent Christine Heinrichs and the Swartz's.

A brief but meaningful discussion then took place initiated by Laura Swartz as to both FFRP and the District reconnecting with the California Coastal Conservancy as a potential funding source. Laura and Crosby spoke to how in years past the CCSD caused the relationship with the Conservancy to decline to such a degree there was

no longer communication between the two agencies. As Kitty described an opportunity for improving the Ranch through funding from the CCC a few years ago that was not pursued by the CCSD, a feeling of frustration and disappointment was felt from those attending the CFC meeting.

There was no report from Greenspace, and the progress being made in the transformative fuel reduction/forest restoration project in Strawberry Canyon. However, Keith Seydel, who assisted in training the crew involved with the Strawberry Canyon weeks long process, informed us the project was probably about a week away from being finished. Keith then provided an update on the burn piles at Rancho Marino, and that burning would take place once the first good rain occurs. He also spoke to the measuring of the piles that have already been burned, the scars that have taken place, and so forth. He added that about 200 piles were burned last year, and there are about 150 remaining that could be burned in about three days.

Crosby provided information on recent involvement with the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo, as one of their representatives recently came out to Fern Canyon to examine damage done by the irresponsible downing of a tree in the Canyon by the contractor recommended by the CCSD.

Under New Business:

Crosby informed us that, at the recent meeting of the California Coastal Commission, staff placed nine special conditions on the forest health/fire prevention Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District SLO-RESIL project, which he believes will help close certain loopholes and demand more specific and detailed information on the various Vegetative Treatment Programs being considered.

Also, Crosby stated that the two Forest Committee interpretive signs, “Pines Make Cambria Special”, located by the footbridge on Main Street next to the Black Cat Restaurant where the path leads to the East Ranch, and on Camp Ocean Pines near their office, are “showing signs of age and need to be replaced”. He estimates the cost would be about \$300 for the two signs, and he and Laura would put them up themselves. Once an cost estimate is obtained Crosby will bring the item back for discussion.

As the meeting was winding down, Neil provided a bit more detail on the Dana Reserve Housing Project in Nipomo. He concluded that hopefully the Settlement defining the project as presently stated will be seen as too large, and perhaps be denied and returned to the developer to be downsized.

At this point Chair Swartz adjourned the meeting at 10:55 AM

Th next meeting of the Cambria Forest Committee will be on Friday, September 12th at 10AM via Zoom.

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