



Tree Mortality Task Force

Tree Mortality Task Force Meeting Minutes June 1, 2016

1. Opening Comments

- a. Chairpersons
 - i. Supervisor Worthley was absent.
- b. Tulare County Task Force Project Manager Eric Coyne - Kyria Martinez
New attendees: Dinuba Energy, Todd Bates from Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park, Fire Management Specialist, and Bob Brewster.

2. Agenda Overview (Eric Coyne)

- a. Tulare County Board Approval
Tulare County's Tree Mortality Plan was presented to the Board of Supervisors at last month's meeting to ask for guidance and for authority to submit the plan to CAL Fire for State approval. Permission to file for CDAA Grant, California Disaster Assistant Act, was also requested. Tulare County's Tree Mortality Plan was unanimously adopted. Resource Management has been working with CAL Fire to ensure that the Tree Mortality Plan would be acceptable at the State level. A formal submission and approval of the plan is required.

The majority of the discussion at the Board of Supervisors was about financial coverage of the Tree Mortality Plan. The various funding sources have changed in the past two weeks. The Governor has given \$5 million to CAL Fire to buy the equipment that is allocated to the original six disaster counties. The Governor has allocated \$30 million for CDAA funding so that when counties file a disaster claim, there is money to pay the claim on the 75% reimbursement basis. The Governor also allocated \$6 million for grant funding for tree removal activities. Only the 10 disaster counties are eligible to apply.

Resource Management Staff spoke with the Board of Supervisors and it was decided the County will not apply for FEMA funding at this time. The FEMA plan could take up to two years for approval and is also on the 75% reimbursement scale. Staff recommended and the Board approved not seeking FEMA Funding at this time. The CDAA application was drafted stating our local need.

The County calculated that 36,000 trees need to be removed immediately. Using the Tuolumne cost methodology at \$1,000 per tree, the cost for cutting and dropping the trees is a \$36 million need, not including the disposal cost. The Board was charged with looking for any available Grants to subsidize these costs. If the State is successful in accepting our damage estimates and getting a Federal Disaster Declaration, our cost share would be reduced to 6.5% NET County cost versus 25%.

The Board further agreed to allow Resource Management Agency to designate \$250,000 of the Road Funding to put toward the budget for tree removal activities. Further funding sources are being investigated.

(Kyria Martinez)

The Tree Removal Plan was submitted to the Board of Supervisors, which has been adopted. The CDAA application has been completed and will be submitted to the State. Tulare County will meet with the State in two weeks and will have further updates. The Tree Mortality Task Force has a new website and E-mail address. All further correspondence will come from the Tree Mortality E-mail address and the link for the website will be sent out.

After speaking to the State Tree Mortality Task Force, only County or State personnel were approved to be added to the Task Force Sub Groups.

3. Local Sub Group Updates

a. Rules and Regulations (Nancy Woods)

At the May 20, 2016 State Meeting: \$6 million of equipment was purchased to be utilized in impacted areas; SRA Fire Prevention Grants for communities most heavily impacted by tree mortality was awarded \$1.77 million; TMTF developed a statewide High Hazard Zone Map and web-based viewer showing where Tree Mortality intersects with critical infrastructure; issued emergency guidelines for removal of dead and dying trees and protecting cultural and environmental resources; Cal OES allocated \$81 million for California Disaster Assistance Act funding to Counties for removing dead trees threatening critical infrastructure; Caltrans expects to encumber over \$50 million this fiscal year for hazard free tree removal workout throughout the state.

An \$11 million one-time increase to the General Fund has been requested for CAL Fire to assist in removal and disposal of trees. A Homeowner flyer has been discussed and state funding has been requested to assist homeowners who need to remove trees next to or threatening their homes. A flyer is being finalized to provide FAQs on requirements for hiring proper entities to remove the trees.

There is a Fair Plan that is required for homeowners to purchase when their homeowners insurance is cancelled with no reason stated. A Fresno Insurance Agent was contacted and provided additional options for homeowners before being forced to purchase the Fair Plan coverage.

An Aerial Survey was conducted in the southern sierra priority areas. The results should be available in the next 1-3 weeks. The results will indicate the increase or expansion of tree mortality and what other areas will be surveyed in the future.

Tree Mortality is getting more recognition at the federal level. A Tree Mortality update was given at the Governor's Drought Task Force. The Board of Equalization-Timber Tax has a FAQs document on their website, which will be scaled back to focus on tree removal issues.

Madera County reported on their success at their storage site in North Fork. Storage sites are expected to fill up quickly. There is a preference on length of logs and accepting logs from areas that pose a health and safety risk. Logs can be exported through the Port of Stockton.

Air Quality and EPA was discussed with regard to Title V permitting Air Curtin Burners. US EPA Region 9 representatives garnered a recommendation that CARB develop a statewide general permit for Air Curtin Burners, which could pose a problem with some local air districts with prohibitions on use of those permits.

There was a discussion on the necessity of bringing in out-of-state trucks to haul logs out of the forest areas. There are concerns that out-of-state contractors can undercut California companies because their trucks aren't required to be compliant with California laws. To ensure California companies are used first ahead of those out-of-state contractors, a list will be prepared.

b. Mapping and Monitoring (Pedro Ornales)

The State is asking for all agencies to submit their assets so it can be uploaded to the website. Those assets include roads, communications, utilities, public places, pools, any recreational facilities, and any populated areas. Tulare County needs to figure out which assets are missing from the map and report those to the State level Mapping and Monitoring Group. The Surveyors are working on Balch Park, a right of way, assessing the trees that are dead. The Surveyors request being advised how comfortable Tulare County is in releasing that information to the public.

A High Hazard Zone will be created, which will be split into Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 will consist of any area with public or private structures and Tier 2 will consist

of Utilities. The Tule River Tribe will share the information on their Tree Mortality removal program currently being utilized on the reservation on the State Level website.

- c. Public Outreach (Carrie Crane, absent, relayed by Julieta Martinez)
Carrie has been unable to attend a meeting thus far due to State approval, but will be able to attend the meeting next week via teleconference.
- d. Resource Allocation (Charlie Norman)
Charlie Norman and Chief McLaughlin met with Chief Shy and Chief Brewshado. They reviewed the priorities of Tier 1 and Tier 2. Balch Park Road, Bear Creek Road, any right of ways were also discussed. Once the group gets together with Pedro to overlay the maps and find where the priorities are, the group will be able to get started.

(Chief Shy)

Marking timber along Balch Park Road has begun. The progress is about 15 feet off the edge of the pavement. CAL Fire is hoping to have Balch Park and Bear Creek completed soon.

(Chief McLaughlin)

Communication with TCSO, CAL Fire, and Tulare County OES has begun on the evacuation plan of the surrounding communities. In the next month, it will be insured that all plans and areas of refuge are in place.

- e. Prescribed Fire (Neil Pilegard)
Neil was recently approved to lead the sub group and will be attending the next teleconference meeting. Neil is awaiting an update from the National Parks, who mentioned about a project in Redwood Canyon before June.

(New Guy)

Redwood Canyon is tentatively scheduled for June 10-18, 2016.

(Neil Pilegard)

Neil spoke with a trucking company, who is a GSA and DoD government contractor. The company needs more information with regard to where the logs will be coming from, where they will be transported to, how to load and unload the logs, and that they are interested in participating in the tree removal plan.

- f. Bioenergy (Skip Barswick)
PG&E is leading the way on the RAM Program and are in discussion with their suppliers. They are not going to be issuing bilateral contracts. The utility companies are going to go with the cheapest bids, unless there are incentives to deal with the bioenergy plants. There are many questions that need to be

answered before any bids can be submitted, such as: What is the cost; is there a tipping fee; who is hauling; who is paying for hauling?

Skip has contact with an armorer in Kern County who has purchased several thousand acres of fallow ground and is willing to chip logs and apply that to the fallow ground. He is available to start immediately. There is also talk about utilizing storage sites, which would drive costs up.

Eric Coyne raised the question on the process of the trees currently being removed by the various utility companies. CAL Fire responded that it depends on the individual company; PG&E is just dropping trees and Edison is treating the trees and chipping and removing their trees. Eric further mentioned that there have been inquiries within the County on wood chipping. Hector Lara informed Eric Coyne that the contact is based out of Shafter and is currently in the wood chipping business.

Eric inquired about what is being done with the chipped wood; is it being burned, transported to a Bio plant, or is there a market for it? The companies plan to sell the woods shavings. Tuolumne utilizes storage lots to continue in the tree removal process. The trees are hauled off the area and transported to the storage lot, which is located next to the bio plant where the trees are being ground up and then burned. The U.S. Forest Service is dropping trees and currently does not have a plan to move them off the area. They will instead close roads rather than treat the area.

Comments (Skip Barswick)

One alternative to getting rid of the chipped and shaved wood would be to allow the public to utilize it for composting and other uses. There is a concern on the trees being stored at the storage lots and them not being used or destroyed and the lots then abandoned, increasing our costs by moving the trees multiple times.

Comments (Eric Coyne)

The County needs to develop a disposal plan for the trees so that we don't end up with a problem similar to the tire problem seen previously. Skip brought up the issue of logging trucks not having enough room to be used to haul trees, which brings back the use of chipping and shaving the trees.

Comments (CAL Fire)

Homeowners are dropping trees and leaving them onsite due to having no way of utilizing them. It was suggested that as a County, we issue permits to utilize the downed trees.

Comments (Eric Coyne)

The County has adopted the Right to Entry Permit. Eric will be meeting with CAL Fire at the conclusion of this meeting to discuss removal plans to be ready when applying for various grants to aid in removal efforts.

4. Roundtable (Additional Updates or Comments)

a. Caltrans

There is a contract in process for 245. We have already started on 180 this week. The contract was sent up for approval today. The only issues we will have on 245 is with the property owners. We will need to contact all property owners. We will start with the first 3 miles. There are 2,200 trees to be removed off 245 private property locations. We will be contacting the property owners for permission to enter onto their property to remove the trees. If the trees are in the National Forest, they must stay in the area. We will either fall the trees, chip them, or store them in the area. We plan to chip as many as we can. Any trees that are not within the National Forest can be removed. On 190, we need to get clearance and then move forward.

We plan to close the road down to one direction for 10-15 minutes, depending on the amount of trees to be fallen. Once we get to a property, it will get a little more difficult. We will put signs out informing of the plan to close the roads to take trees down. We will probably start at 180 and move downhill.

5. Next Meeting date (Kyria Martinez)

- a. The next meeting is scheduled for July 6, 2016 at 2:00 pm at the Board of Supervisor's Office in Conference Rooms A & B.
- b. We will send out the Minutes and Agenda by the end of the week prior to our meeting, and the additional material from Pedro and myself will be sent out to the group.

6. Adjournment