

## **Contra Costa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update Summary Working Session #1 – May 21, 2019**

### **I. Introduction.** Cheryl Miller welcomed the group and attendees introduced themselves.

- Steve Aubert, Fire Prevention Captain, Contra Costa County Fire District
- Chris Bachman, Fire Marshal Contra Costa County Fire District
- Judi Clark, Martinez Cert
- Dave Gibson, Fire Marshal El Cerrito Kensington Fire
- Jennifer deGraaf, Landscape Architect
- Deputy Chief Frank Drayton, San Ramon Valley Fire Prevention District
- John Earthy, Red Cross + The Crossings HOA, Concord
- Renee Fernandez Lipp, Contra Costa County Resource Conservation District
- Barbara Goldenberg, Director, Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Eric Govan, Fire Marshal Richmond Fire Department
- Meridith Hendricks, Save Mt Diablo
- John Howard, Los Vaqueros Watershed, Contra Costa Water District
- Greg Jones, National Park Service, GGNRA Wildland Fire Management
- Norman LA Force, Sierra Club
- Mathew McLane, PG&E Vegetation Management
- Deputy Chief Mike Marcucci, CAL FIRE Santa Clara Unit
- Cheryl Miller, Executive Coordinator Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Larry Nagel, Director Kensington Fire Protection District
- Larry Nunes, Advisor, Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Ralph Osterling, Registered Professional Forester, Moraga
- Rebecca Pollon, Rossmoor
- Jill Ray, Office of Supervisor Candace Andersen (Board of Supervisors District 2)
- Dennis Rein, Moraga Orinda Fire Protection District
- Cary Richardson, Contra Costa Water District
- Jim Selover, Deputy Chief San Ramon Fire District
- Susanna Thompson, Office of Supervisor Diane Burgis
- Ben Weise, Contra Costa County Resource Conservation District
- Hedwig Van Dem Brock, Master Gardeners of Contra Costa County
- Ismael Vega, CAL TRANS
- Kathy Woofter, Contra Costa Fire Protection District
- Connie Yip, Cal Trans

### **2. What is a CWPP & Why Should Contra Costa County's be updated**

Cheryl Miller, Executive Coordinator, DFSC provided an overview of the 2014 Contra Costa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The document is available for download at <http://www.diablofiresafe.org/publications.html> - CWPP. The document has been critical for grant funding. Since 2009 DFSC and partners in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties has been awarded over \$2.5 million of grant funds and \$2.5 million of community match for activities in the CWPPs. For PowerPoint presentation see [http://www.diablofiresafe.org/cococo\\_CWPP\\_planning\\_process\\_0219.html](http://www.diablofiresafe.org/cococo_CWPP_planning_process_0219.html).

### **What is a Community Wildfire Protection Plan?**

A CWPP is a written document, mutually agreed upon by local, state and federal representatives and stakeholders that identifies how a community will reduce its risks from wildland fire. Community Wildfire Protection Plans are authorized and defined in Title I of the Healthy Forest Restoration

Act (HFRA), passed by Congress November 21, 2003 and signed into law December 3, 2003. The HFRA established unprecedented incentives for communities to take lead roles in community wildfire protection. Eleven years after the legislation CWPPs continue to shape prevention and fuel reduction.

Ms. Miller provided an overview of the contents of the CWPP:

1. County Information – overview and identification of stakeholder
2. Fire hazard and risk in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).
3. Prioritized fuel reduction treatments
4. Treatment of structural ignitability
5. Signature page
6. Appendix

In order to be federally recognized the CWPP must be signed by three entities:

1. The applicable local government (i.e., counties or cities)
2. The local fire department(s)
3. The state entity responsible for forest management – CAL FIRE.

There are three minimum requirements that also must be met:

1. Collaboration: A CWPP must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties.
2. Prioritized Fuel Reduction: A CWPP must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure.
3. Treatment of Structural Ignitability: A CWPP must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area.

### **Planning Process and Time Frame**

An “Overview” was provided to the group that identified the 4 step update process, timeframe, key outcomes, results and deliverables:

- Step 1: Kickoff, Convene Decision-makers, Involve Federal Agencies, And Engage Interested Parties
- Step 2: Review Existing CWPP and Projects and Priorities Update
- Step 3: Action Plan Update and Assessment Strategy
- Step 4: Plan Update

Download the Overview at [http://www.diablofiresafe.org/pdf/Contra\\_Costa\\_CWPP\\_Update\\_overview\\_0219.pdf](http://www.diablofiresafe.org/pdf/Contra_Costa_CWPP_Update_overview_0219.pdf)

### **Review of Existing CWPP**

Ms. Miller provided a review of the Plan and mentioned additional information sources that were not included or not available when the 2014 Plan was prepared, including:

- 25 cities in Contra Costa County are listed in the Federal Register as “[Communities at Risk](#).” But there are areas we might want to add such as Briones, Marsh Creek and Morgan Territory.
- Local high fire hazard severity zone designations may expand beyond the areas designated by the 2008 CAL FIRE Assessment (examples include locations within the communities of Pinole, San Pablo, Danville and Richmond)
- Additional values at risk (things we want to protect) beyond homes, businesses, and infrastructure (man made elements) to include: natural resources (e.g. critical wildlife habitat such as identified in the East Contra Costa Conservation Plan), significant recreation values, scenic areas, and areas of historical, cultural or economic value.
- Information on local preparedness and firefighting capability including: community preparedness, evacuation planning, safety zones, fire assistance agreements and response capability.
- Strategies to reduce the risk of wildfire. The existing CWPP identified 10 strategies that can be refined during the update.

- The CWPP documents practices and actions as well as funding priorities, with six recommended actions. It also sets forth eight criteria to be used to select recommended priorities.

### **Roundtable Discussion**

Participants discussed updates on projects/ programs, current issues, and offered comments on additional items to be considered for the update. Comments can be grouped around several themes:

#### Overall Planning and Funding Outlook

- Bay Area Prescribed Fire Council (BARxF) CAL FIRE Deputy Chief Marcucci mentioned that there is now a prescribed fire council in the Bay Area working to expand the use of prescribed fire. <http://www.cafiresci.org/events-webinars-source/category/spring-meeting-and-field-tour-bay-area-prescribed-fire-council> for their Spring meeting materials.
- Cal Fire Santa Clara Unit: Deputy Chief Marcucci reported the Unit covers over 1.3 million acres with 300,000 in Contra Costa County. The new Governor, new Secretary of Natural Resource Agency and new Santa Clara Unit Chief are all supportive of fire prevention with over \$500 million in funding. The 45-day report from CAL FIRE Director to the Governor resulted in funding of 2 projects in the Unit (Moraga Orinda and along Highway 17 Los Gatos to Santa Cruz County line). The State is also funding new fuels crews and fire fighting hand crews. Forestry aide crews (nearest out of Davis) also are coming on board, as well as support from the National Guard. The unit will be adding a 16<sup>th</sup> engine.
- Contra Costa County. Susanna Thompson reported Contra Costa County is currently updating their 2040 General Plan which includes the urban limit line, zoning code and general plan designations. They coordinate with local agencies on land use and habitats of concern. They are also coordinating with PG&E.
- National Park Service – John Muir NHS: Engine Captain Greg Jones shared that the John Muir National Historic Site manages approximately 300 acres on the north side of Highway 4 and south side of Mount Wanda. The Park staff has a declining capacity for planning and implementation; however, a five-year General Management Plan Update is in development. NPS partners with neighbors on their boundaries. Fire hazard reduction includes mowing and road clearance.
- Richmond Fire Department: Fire Marshal Eric Mendoza Govan reported that Richmond is developing a CWPP as an annex to the countywide plan. They are updating their defensible space program with inspections starting July 1.

#### Agencies/ Fire Districts/ Departments Fuel Reduction Projects and Wildfire Prevention Programs

- Cal Trans: Connie Yip, Ismael Vega and Jeremy Reis shared that Cal Trans District Four covers seven counties. They partner regularly with CAL FIRE and PG&E. Vegetation management includes mowing, spraying fire strips and animal grazing (goats). They utilize contractors to manage large 20' wide firebreaks, as well as tree trimming, brush abatements. They often have to deal with homeless encampments and related ignition concerns. Staffing has been critical.
- Contra Costa County Fire Prevention District. Fire Marshal Chris Bachman, Fire Prevention Captain Steve Aubert and Fire Technician Kathy Woofter highlighted some of their prevention program elements that include hazard abatement. They recently held an educational program in Marsh Creek. Future enhancements will include bringing back their public education coordinator position. They are also collaborating on the community alerting system to make sure information gets passed on in timely manner. This will include training in the county ordering system, emergency operations center training and incident communications. Kathy Woofter reported that due to the late rains they would be pushing compliance requirements for their eight high priority hazard zones out until June 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Contra Costa County Water District: Cary Richardson and John Howard provided an overview of their fuel management program that includes livestock grazing of over 5,000 acres watershed,

special prescriptions using sheep to reduce grassland thatch, mowing along roadside (e.g. Vasco Road), 80 miles of fuel breaks, maintaining fire trails and five miles of coyote brush line, work along suburban boundaries and roadsides. They coordinate with CAL FIRE, EBRPD and other agencies. There are ongoing internal training, tours, maintenance needs etc. to ensure ingress and egress. They also have water projects to identify hydrant locations in Morgan Territory and adjacent Alameda County and will be installing 13 additional 500,000 gallon water tanks.

- El Cerrito - Kensington: Fire Marshal Dave Gibson shared that El Cerrito – Kensington adopted their annex to the countywide CWPP in 2017. It prioritizes projects and additional educational efforts, especially around ember awareness. Since 1992, they have had an aggressive abatement program. They continue hazardous fuel reduction in their Hillside Natural Area, a 102-acre open space. Projects have included controlled burns, work with the Delta Conservation Crew, maintenance 100' from structures and 200' from structures for a flame length less than 8'. They have recently written a grant for additional funding for hazardous fuel reduction work.
- Moraga Orinda Fire Protection District (MOFD) – Dennis Rein provided a brief overview of the North Orinda Shaded Fuel Break. A current cooperative project covering approximately 14 miles and 1550 acres from San Pablo Ridge west to Inspiration Point and east to Happy Valley road and along Briones Ridge to Acalanes High School in Lafayette (see [www.MOFD.org](http://www.MOFD.org) for details). MOFD also inspects the privately owned properties in the very high fire hazard areas of Moraga and Orinda for defensible space clearance. MOFD has been developing evacuation plans and holding drills with local law enforcement partners for their communities with limited access (including the community of Canyon). They also offer Firewise assessments on how homeowners can reduce their potential structure ignitability and have a chipper program for residents throughout their district.
- PG&Es Community Wildfire Safety Program. Mathew McLane spoke about PG&Es Community Wildfire Safety Program for accelerated tree clearance from overhead electric lines in Tier 2 and 3 areas. They have been working in Orinda, Morgan Territory and Marsh Creek, Canyon and other areas and are approximately 30% complete for this year. The program is 3 pronged: 1) Wildfire safety inspections and enhanced vegetation management with 15' minimum clearance from conductors and all overhead tree limbs. 2) Hardening the system with equipment for improved reliability and 3) Public power safety shutoffs when critical fire weather conditions occur. PG&E will have an open house in Walnut Creek on July 11<sup>th</sup> 6-8 PM for further community information.
- Rossmoor: Rebecca Pollan shared that Rossmoor includes over 10,000 people on approximately 1,800 acres located adjacent to Las Trampas Regional Park. Their residents are particularly nervous since there is only one main road in and out. They do have large green spaces within the community. In most past years, animals have started fires by coming in contact with the PG&E transmission lines and then falling to start grass fires that threaten the community. They are interested in more information on flammable plants, sprinklers and firewise.
- San Ramon Valley Fire District (SRVFD): Deputy Chief Jim Selover and Division Chief Frank Drayton shared that SRVFD has an abatement program, fire trail maintenance and emergency operations plan. An evacuation plan is in progress working with local law enforcement. CAL FIRE recently funded a camera program located where there is a good vantage point of the District for early detection of wildfires. They will be hiring additional staff as of June 1<sup>st</sup>: weed abatement & education, social media and web master. They are also recruiting an emergency preparedness manager. They utilize both the county alerting system and reverse 911 and are developing a new emergency operation command center in San Ramon.

#### Evacuation and Community Preparedness

- Briones Hills Area: Larry Nunes, a DFSC Advisor and Briones resident is interested in evolution of the community capabilities and expansion of DFSC programs. He is particularly interested in firewise communities and access issues.
- Kensington: Larry Nagel, a Director with the Kensington Fire District Board is interested in warning system, both CCWarn and community alerting sirens, as well as Firewise and expanding CERT programs.
- Red Cross: John Earthy reported that last year Red Cross revamped their preparedness programs for deep dives in disaster specific information. They are training for more engagement and working with FEMA and a scientific advisory council to transform the lack of citizen's attention to preparedness. They are looking at messaging and practices to reach individuals and groups for more resilient communities.
- The Crossings HOA, Concord: John Earthy is also involved in his community HOA "Walnut Country" (a part of The Crossings HOA). He will be working with Kathy Woofter, Contra Costa Fire to gain support of the NFPA Firewise program. The HOA Board, attorneys and insurance broker are concerned about the liability exposure from adopting such a program. Community members are also concerned about privacy and private property rights.
- Martinez CERT: Judi Clark shared that the Martinez Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) covers Briones and Martinez, including the Concord airport and mobile homes. They recently had large oak limbs bring down live power lines and block and intersection. They are working with two family and one senior (over 55) mobile home parks, where a common attitude is that "wildfire won't happen to me." They also coordinate with the HAM radio on hands on exercises and community efforts to address simple messaging when power is not available. CERT volunteers work with Contra Costa County Fire District also assist with initial weed abatement inspections for follow-up by District staff.
- Supervisor Candace Anderson's Office: Jill Ray reported that the Supervisor would continue to help push information out to the community through their channels.
- Supervisor Diane Burgis's Office: Susanna Thompson reported that the Supervisor is very interested in the Morgan Territory area after the fire last year. They may be able to establish Firewise or community chipping. There is support from the public for Mount Diablo State Park and other agencies to re-establish fuel breaks.

#### Other Areas of Interest:

- Contra Costa County Resource Conservation District (RCD) Ben Weise reported that CCRCDD works with private landowners, especially in East county. They also have a watershed program with on the upper reaches of Walnut Creek for arundo removal. They recently met with the State Coastal Conservancy regarding the new forest health program and expansion of the RCD into wildfire prevention and mitigation.
- Fire Resistant Plans: Hedgwig Van Der Broeck shared her interest in expanding available information focusing on the characteristics of native and non native plants that make them more or less flammable. She requested the group share any information on available research.
- Landscape Architects: Jennifer deGraaf, Registered Landscape Architect, shared her focus on education of both professionals and homeowners.
- Professional Registered Foresters (RPF): Ralph Osterling, RPF, shared a recent experience regarding community support: a client on the peninsula that had funding for community hazardous fuel abatement projects but residents were not interested in receiving funds. He also is working with Stanford on fuel management plan with special emphasis on ember range with spread of new ignitions and canopy coverage over roads related to potential blocking of egress-access routes when trees fall.
- Sierra Club: Norm LaForce expressed concern for long-term maintenance of fuel reduction, especially for exotic invasive species. The funding for maintenance in perpetuity is critical.

Sierra Club is also concerned about habitat and wildlife protection and was active in development of the EBRPD vegetation program and CEQA. The EBRPD program has learned a lot about vegetation and how to protect habitats. Sierra Club promotes 3 Rs for eucalyptus, remove and restore for biodiversity as well as support of Rx (prescribed) fire as the best approach where it can be used. Wildfires will happen, we can reduce risk but not prevent.

### **Expanding Participation in the Planning Process**

Anticipated outreach methods for the project will include:

- Email “Updates”
- Information on web-sites
- Presentations
- Media releases
- Community Surveys

Ms. Miler requested stakeholders spread the word to others in their agency or groups. Also distributed stakeholder list and requested contact information for ones that should be added.

### **Next Meeting**

Tuesday July 16<sup>th</sup> 1:00 - 300 PM. El Cerrito.

Topic: *Draft Action Plan and Assessment Strategy. Review Draft On-line Survey.*

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