

Alameda County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Summary Working Session #2 – March 22, 2011

1. **Introduction.** Attendees introduced themselves, where they live or work and their perspective, interest or experience with wildfire

- Yeda Altes, Oakland Wildfire Prevention Advisory Commission
- James Art, Fire Protection Engineer
- Gil Bendix, Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Dinah Benson, Oakland Wildfire Prevention Advisory Commission
- Fire Chief Kenneth Blonski, East Bay Regional Park District
- Fred Booker, Alameda Master Gardeners
- Marcia Grefsrud, California Department of Fish and Game, Habitat Conservation Unit
- Assistant Fire Marshal Leroy Griffin, Oakland Fire Department
- Danielle Hutchings, Association of Bay Area Government
- Richard Kauffman, Friends of Sausal Creek
- Jerry Kent, Claremont Canyon Conservancy
- Dee McDonough, Diablo Fire Safe Council, Oakland Wildfire Prevention Advisory Commission
- Tamia Marg, Claremont Canyon Conservancy
- Battalion Chief Mike Martin, CALFIRE
- Cheryl Miller, Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Jeanne Perkins, Natural Hazard Mitigation and Recovery Consultant
- Camille Rogers, Oakland Fire Department
- Jean Robertson, California Native Plant Society
- Penny Spear, East Bay Municipal Utility District Ranger Supervisor
- Assistant Fire Chief John Swanson, East Bay Regional Park District
- Jay Swardenski, Fremont Fire
- Assistant Fire Marshal Bonnie Terra, Alameda County Fire District
- Fire Chief Edward Tubbs, Piedmont Fire
- Roger Wong, Oakland Resident, National Park Service
- Ciara Wood, Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Jay Swardenski, Fremont Fire

2. **What is a CWPP & Why Should Alameda County Have One**

Cheryl Miller, Executive Coordinator, Diablo Fire Safe Council provided an overview of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The PowerPoint will be made available on the web site http://www.diablofiresafe.org/ala_co_CWPP.html

Alameda County has a history of fire; the Tunnel Fire in 1991 being the most damaging. A fire history map shows many fires throughout the county over the past century. The CAL FIRE mapping shows many “*very high fire hazard severity zones*” adjacent to Alameda County communities (in both Local Responsibility Areas [SRA] and State Responsibility Areas [SRA]). Alameda County also has multiple fire protection jurisdictions with nine different entities that have direct protection responsibility: Alameda County Fire Protection Agency, Albany Fire Department, Berkeley Fire Department, CAL FIRE, Fremont Fire Department, Hayward Fire Department, Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department, Oakland Fire Department and Piedmont Fire Department.

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). It was passed by Congress on November 21, 2003 and signed into law on December 3,

2003. The HFRA established unprecedented incentives for communities to take the lead role in community wildfire protection planning.

As an example, the group reviewed the contents of the Contra Costa Community Wildfire Plan, approved in 2009. (The document is available for download at <http://www.diablofiresafe.org/publications.html> - CWPP). Additional CWPPs were available at the meeting for review. Plans typically have the following information

1. County Information – overview and identification of stakeholder
2. Fire hazard and risk assessment – including fire history, assets at risk and dealing with risk.
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 addressed by the plan.

Why have a CWPP?

A CWPP determines strategies for reducing the risk wildfires pose to communities, critical watersheds, and natural resources. Three reasons are typically provided to answer the question “Why have a CWPP?”

1. The HFRA indicates that 50% of federal funds for fuels reduction must be spent in Urban Wildland Interface boundaries. A CWPP gives communities an opportunity to define their respective community boundaries and influence the treatments used to reduce wildland fuels and restore ecosystem health.
2. Communities that develop a CWPP are given priority when funding opportunities for fuels reduction on private and public lands are available.
3. Federal agencies must consider community recommendations for funding priorities.

Since Alameda County has little Federal lands the group brainstormed what the Alameda County CWPP should include and why the plan is of value to us. The ideas can be grouped around several themes:

Fire in Alameda County

- Impact of climate change and global warming on frequency of fires
- Caveat that current modeling and maps may under predict due to fuel build-up since the mapping was done

Fire Suppression

- Availability of adequate water for fire suppression
- Dual issue of fires following major earthquakes
- County wide coordination – radio frequencies, hydrants, other equipment

Access and Traffic management:

- How fire department gets in to an area to fight a fire
- No parking restriction on narrow roads to allow for fire engine access
- Dead end streets
- Access and response times
- Evacuation – turnarounds to be able to change direction

Socio-Political/ Neighborhood Issues

- Organizing neighborhoods –preparedness, prevention activities and evacuation drills
- Local nurseries not to sell pyrophytes (highly flammable plants)
- State legislation to outlaw pyrophytes
- Personal relationships – who will work with who to get things done

Awareness, Outreach and Education

- Public information stuff needed – to raise awareness and teach “how to”
- Community implementation – teach citizens how to do on own
- School programs – environmental clubs, PTAs, private schools may be easier to access than public schools, community service requirements for graduation from high school
- General awareness for those who live in wildland urban interface (WUI) – what “WUI” means, those who did not experience fire do not realize they live in WUI; entering area signs, law of recency (no recent fire = no memory of exposure)

Fuel Reduction

- Fire safe landscape plans suitable for urban lots
- Confusing to understand what standards should be implemented. What is fire safe? What does it look like? Best Management Practices and technical support.
- Get people out on trails or into landscape to help them see what fire safe landscape looks like – help them imagine.
- Role of invasive plants
- Role of homeowners maintaining private property

Structure ignitability

- Role of structural flaws that can capture embers
- New and reconstruction of structures
- Retro-activity of Chapter 7A building codes

Planning Process and Time Frame

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

- Step 1. Convene Decision-makers
- Step 2. Involve Federal Agencies
- Step 3. Engage Interested Parties
- Step 4. Establish Map
- Step 5. Community Risk Assessment
- Step 6. Priorities
- Step 7. Action Plan
- Step 8. Finalize

Download a copy of the Overview at http://www.diablofiresafe.org/pdf/Planning_Overview.pdf

3. Available Base Information, Expertise, Resources

The group also discussed existing technical information, plans, GIS and infrastructure information. It was noted that there are 17 water purveyors in County – some draw water from the State aqueduct; other manage watershed lands such as EBMUD and SF Water)

4. Expanding Participation in the Planning Process

The group also recognized that there are many community experts and special interest groups. It is important for the planning process to capture local knowledge and engage interested parties.

Participants were asked to assist in the outreach and contact those groups that might be interested.

Some of the additional groups that participants felt should be contacted include:

- Public Utilities Commission
- San Francisco Water (Sunol watershed)
- California Landscape Contractors Association
- Association of Professional Landscape Designers
- American Society of Landscape Architects
- Building trades
- Garden clubs
- Piedmont Pines neighborhood association (PPNA.org)
- ABAG has information on land use, infrastructure in the WUI on GIS (facilities layer)
- Zone 7
- Invasive Pest Plants Council
- Rockridge News
- Montclairion
- Council newsletters
- Alameda Watershed Council (Forum)
- Bay Friendly Landscaping (Stop waste.org)

Anticipated outreach methods for the project will include:

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

A few potential presentations were identified including:

- Piedmont Disaster Fair Sept 25th
- District 5 Oakland residents

Next Meeting

Tuesday May 26th 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Trudeau Training Center

11500 Skyline Boulevard Oakland

Topic: *Preliminary Community Risk Assessment and Prepare for Community Workshops*

For More Information Contact

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