

Alameda County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Summary Working Session #6 – Administrative Draft Plan

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

- Yeda Altes, Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District
- A. Gilda Barbosa, FEMA Region IX
- Gil Bendix, Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Shelagh Brodersen, Friends of Garber Park
- Barbara Goldenberg, Shepherd Canyon, Friends of Sausal Creek
- 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
- Jerry Kent, Claremont Canyon Conservancy
- Dee McDonough, Diablo Fire Safe Council, Oakland Wildfire Prevention Advisory Commission
- Cheryl Miller, Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Elizabeth Prussia, East Bay Municipal Utilities District
- Jean Robertson, California Native Plant Society
- Robert Sieben, North Oakland Hills Association Fire Prevention Committee
- Assistant Fire Chief John Swanson, East Bay Regional Park District
- Jay Swardenski, Fremont Fire Department
- Jim Thompson, Berkeley Fire Department
- Brian Wines, Regional Water Quality Control Boards
- Ciara Wood, Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Roger Wong, National Park Service
- Doug Wong, Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District Advisory Committee

2. Planning Process Recap - 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 www.diablofiresafe.org/ala_co_CWPP.html

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. CWPPs are authorized and defined in Title I of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA). This Act was passed by Congress on November 21, 2003 and signed into law on December 3, 2003. The HFRA established unprecedented financial incentives for communities to take the lead role in community wildfire protection planning. In order to be federally recognized the CWPP must be signed by three entities: applicable local government (i.e., counties or cities); local fire department(s) and the state entity responsible for forest management – CAL FIRE. Three minimum requirements that also must be met: collaboration; prioritized fuel reduction and treatment of structural ignitability.

As an example, the group reviewed the contents of the Contra Costa CWPP, approved in 2009. They also looked at how the CWPP has been used: to identify and prioritize areas, develop recommendations, find funding and this past year begin to implement education and community projects. (The Contra Costa County plan is at www.diablofiresafe.org/publications.html - CWPP).

The eight step planning process, anticipated timeframe, key outcomes, results and deliverables were also reviewed (see www.diablofiresafe.org/pdf/Planning_Overview.pdf for the Overview).

3. Follow up from Prioritization Exercise and Preliminary Draft Action Plan

At the March meeting the group reviewed and made additions to recommendations from their February work session. They also participated in a prioritization exercise where each participant was provided with 12 red dots to place next to their preferred items. Following the prioritization exercise the stakeholders divided into groups to develop preliminary action plans around four recommendations. These action plans appear in the Administrative Draft Plan as “grey boxes.”

4. Administrative Draft Plan

The group reviewed the Administrative Draft Plan. Additional issues and recommendations were made and will be added to the draft report including:

Recommendation: Access/ Egress and red flag days. The idea that both emergency responders’ access and evacuees’ egress is inadequate in hillside areas is an area where improvement should be investigated. While the Draft Plan identifies the problem, it makes no recommendation or provision for action items.

During the roundtable discussion, it was noted this is not a new issue. Historically, these homes were built in an era where each home had a single vehicle. Now, there are typically multiple vehicles per household, and therefore on-street parking is a “must.” In the event of an emergency, a multitude of evacuees who are trying to exit and narrow roads, made narrower by parked cars, can come to a standstill. When apparatus is also trying to enter the site against this flow, traffic comes to a stop, vehicles are abandoned and nobody moves anywhere. This was clearly evidenced by television news footage from the Tunnel Fire in 1991.

A few cities have attempted to restrict parking in these hill areas. This resulted in a significant reaction from homeowners. Additionally, it was noted that roadside vegetation has also been allowed to encroach into the public right-of-way in some of these areas. While no clear-cut resolution was identified some concepts were discussed, such as: property inspections, public education, homeowners’ association education and teamwork in managing the vegetation, and even utilizing hand crews. There was no solution identified in the brief time allowed, but the participants in the discussion were urged to provide additional input. The Draft Plan is to be made public in April, and further input shall be gathered at that time.

Recommendation: Regionally specific educational materials for homeowner. Simple homeowner education materials are needed that are specific to the development patterns and conditions in Alameda County. These should identify inexpensive things a homeowner can do. They should focus on existing structures and how a homeowner can improve their home’s ignition resistance. Information should include the concept of non-ignition zone and how simple actions of cleaning leaves and not storing flammable materials below decks can reduce the potential of ignition from embers. Perhaps Sunset Magazine could develop guidelines on “bad plants” and how they should not be planted near windows. Other subjects could include how to prepare your home for an evacuation. North Hills Community Association is an prototype for an effective channel for distributing this information.

Recommendation: Balance fuel load management with biological resources. The Admin Draft of the CWPP pervasively presents vegetation as fuel. Additional language is needed to break out the kinds of vegetation present in the County; what resources should be protected. There should be more information regarding environmental sensitivities. This should include botanical expertise, recruitment studies of native plants following fuel reduction treatments; habitat preservation, invasive species, managing, permitting and replanting. It should include the need to apply for permits from California Department of Fish and Game and possibly Regional Water Quality Control Board for any removal of riparian vegetation, including along seasonal or ephemeral creeks. It was recognized that the level of detail needs to be appropriate to the level of the CWPP as a county-wide coordinating plan.

The CWPP can be used to raise consciousness. The first link of reference is often the only source reviewed so the source needs to be relevant. There was a request from California Native Plant Society to be able to prepare a section for inclusion in the Appendix similar to the Contra Costa County CWPP Appendix on Cultural Resources and Fuel Load Management. The Beaconsfield Canyon model (Oakland open space project with Friends of Beaconsfield Canyon) was offered as a prototype to look at.

5. Section 6 – How you can help sustain the plan. The final section of the plan addresses Sustaining the Plan. A list of ways that partners can help sustain the plan included:

- Monitoring (being on a mailing list for updates, providing input on annual plan updates or providing information about activities)
- Sharing (sharing information from the CWPP to group or neighborhood), incorporating information into training programs or classes, serving as a liaison, serving as an expert resource, serving as a logistics resource
- Leading (leading a project, participating in a program, planning or project effort, sponsoring or funding a collaborative education program, preparedness exercise, fuel reduction or structure retrofit project).

Stakeholders were encouraged to provide ideas for other roles or ways they could contribute to the implementation of the plan.

6. Strategy for Final Presentations

The final steps in the planning process include:

- Circulate Draft Plan for comment – April 2 – May 5
- Provide redline of Final plan and copy of comments to Stakeholders for final review 5/11
- Final Stakeholder meeting as requested. Target date May 25
- Signatures of support – May 5 – 31.

Stakeholders were asked to assist the process by:

- Submit additional projects (actions, lead/partners, timeframe, funding needs)
- Submit corrections or additions to text
- Submit commitments to Sustaining the Plan
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7. Next Meeting

Target Meeting Date 5/25 information to be sent with final review copy. Save the Date.

For More Information Contact

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