

Attendees

Judy Rosales, Executive Director, CRFC

Marshall Turbeville, CAL FIRE Battalion Chief

Bonnie Plakos, Chief, North Sonoma Coast Fire

Shanti Edwards, Sonoma Land Trust

Brook Edwards, Parks Supervisor, County of Sonoma Regional Parks

Damian Boune, Fire/ER Alert Guru

Rosalyn White, Odiyan/Ratna Ling

Cathy Schezer, Cazadero Community Services District

Daniel Schoenfeld, CRFC Board and Fort Ross VFD

Stephanie Endsley, Fort Ross VFD

Steve Shane, Chief, Fort Ross VFD

Craig Hayes, Muniz Ranches

Christopher Fohner, CRFC Board, Fort Ross VFD

Wanda Swenson, Coast MAC, CRFC Board

Kristina Rizga, Muniz Ranches

Kerstin Hall, PPI

Dave Picciotto, PPI

Eric Koenigshofer, 5th District LCP representative

Scott Farmer, Coast MAC Representative

Erich Lynn, Timber Cove Fire Chief

Introductions

Coast Ridge Community Forest achieved 501(c)(3) status this year and will be transitioning to the name "Coast Ridge Forest Council" moving forward.

One of the upcoming projects for the Coast Ridge Forest Council is the use of the \$423K of funds to clear 9.3 miles along Fort Ross Road. CRFC is starting a no-cost chipper program for Navarro Ranch, Gualala Ranch, and Seaview Ranch to use the chipper. The goal is to raise \$10K to allow the chipper to be used in these communities and to continue existing programs to clear roadsides for fire safety.

In July 2021, the Cazadero, Fort Ross, Timber Cove, and North Sonoma Coast fire districts came together to talk about community-wide evacuation planning and to ensure that there is consistent messaging throughout the region.

Judy Rosales's objective for today's meeting is to discuss the best path forward for the next CAL FIRE grant, because it's incredibly competitive, and last year only one project was selected in Sonoma county for funding.

Marshall Turbeville's objective is to bring together all of the individual groups in the community to create collaboration and synergy that ensures more success for everyone, and to make it very hard for the grant providers to say "no".

Bonnie Plakos' objective is to learn from other members of the community how to be successful, because North Sonoma Coast doesn't have any staff, and relies on community volunteers. The Sonoma Coast Fire district is 172 sq mi, 10 sq mi of which covers Sea Ranch and has a staff to take care of it, but the other 162 sq mi has a lot more challenges, because there are lots of roads that need treatment.

Shanti Edwards is a stewardship project manager working on coastal lands for the nonprofit Sonoma Land Trust. Our objective is to engage in a conversation about how we can improve forest health as we work on wildfire resilience and community safety projects. SLT has been the lead agency in The Sonoma Valley Wildlands Collaborative, which is a partnership between SLT, APOSD, SCRIP, CASP ACR, and the Sonoma Mountain Preservation Foundation to jointly manage 18,000 acres in Sonoma Valley for wildfire resilience and ecosystem health. We have received about \$3 million in grant funding, have treated about 500 acres through fuel reduction and prescribed fire, and have plans to treat about 1500 more through 2025.

Brook Edwards' objective is continuing the collaboration between County of Sonoma Regional Parks and local groups, in the hopes of creating alignment and improving the chances of success for future grant applications. In addition to the CAL FIRE funds coming out next year there will be another round of PG&E funds coming as soon as January 2022, and Sonoma Open Space is in charge of figuring out which projects are funded.

Damian Boune created a Facebook group a few years ago where he posts about fires and emergency events, and this fire season some individuals put together an app called "Watch Duty" that lists confirmed active vegetation fires (excluding structure fires) that are at risk to the community.

Cathy Schezer and the Cazadero Community Club recently received a grant for a chipper and are working on the Bei Road evacuation route, and are hoping to get up to the back of Navarro Ranch. They have put 400 hours into the project since March, and the neighbors on the side roads are gradually getting involved to clear the sides of their own roads, but there is still some work to be done with encouraging all members of the community to support the project.

Rosalyn White is collaborating with Save the Redwoods League, who have had success getting grants. The first step is to get the forest management plan completed and they are looking for funding organizations to get the plan done. Since Odiyan and Ratna Ling are both on the tops of ridges and there is a lot of forest, they have a high fire risk.

CAL FIRE just released a new batch of CFIP (California Forest Improvement Program) money and will continue to release more funds every couple of months. These are grants that individual community members can apply for to cover the cost of forest management plan creation. Further information is on the CAL FIRE website at <https://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/california-forest-improvement-program-cfip>.

The North Bay Forest Improvement Project also got a CAL FIRE grant and is also offering money to private landowners for forest management plans.

Dave Picciotto and Kerstin Hall from PPI were unsuccessful with getting a grant recently, and are interested in collaborating with the community on future grants, and can act as a sponsoring body, since they are a 501(c)(3).

Eric Koenigshofer and Scott Farmer are hoping to get a better understanding of what the communities are doing so that the local coastal plan, which is in the process of being updated, can better incorporate public safety, and so that the coastal zone policies can be better integrated with the inland policies.

Erich Lynn of Timber Cove VFD recently received a grant for a chipper, but they're struggling with the permit process so they'd like to hear about the experience of other groups.

Craig Hayes has been working on the Muniz Ranches fire safety program and reiterated that a healthy forest is a fire-resilient forest, and really emphasized the importance of community awareness that workers aren't clear-cutting forests.

Stephanie Endsley's advice for fostering community support is to be respectful of property on which work is being done, and to involve the local community in the work and make them part of the process.

Kristina Rizga helped create a Google group for 100 of the Muniz Ranches residents, which is being used to inform residents about controlled burns, and the group has become a great communication platform for promoting fire safety improvement initiatives and building excitement in the community.

Christopher Fohner reiterated what is possible when we come together as individuals to form a cohesive group, which has a much better chance of getting grants.

Wanda Swenson recommended getting participation agreements from landowners involved in grants, which can be done proactively, and the Coast Ridge Forest Council is currently accepting participation agreements on the website.

Daniel Schoenfeld has donated 50 cases of Wild Hog wine to Coast Ridge Forest Council, and Judy suggested a pledge drive offering a case of wine for pledges over \$200 to raise \$10K, and is looking for feedback from anyone with experience.

Meeting Minutes

Marshall has put together pre-attack maps that indicate the fire roads with red lines and proposed dozer lines with black dots Brainstorming on ideas for how to prioritize:

- Look at historical fire patterns (feedback from Marshall is that the fire history only extends back 100 years so the historical data can be incomplete or misleading)
- Use science (feedback from Marshall is that the scientific approach sometimes doesn't always show the full picture, and that there are different versions of science, but Sonoma County's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) probably has the best scientific basis)
- Focus on the footprint of local fire, then overlay the houses and roads on top of that
- Most fires occur near where people are (due to the power lines and human causes of fire) with the exception of the lightning fires, so draw maps of which areas are populated
- Look at areas of defense so that when the fire happens, we've already planned the points where the fire can be defended from
- Foresters have recommended focusing on ridge lines, and the feedback in the fire community also reinforces that ridge lines might be the best approach, and where roads are also ridge lines, it's even better
- The fire service's priorities (in order) are life, property, then the environment
- Do the private roads on the ranches with the smaller grants like those from the PG&E settlement fund, and use the CAL FIRE funding for the ridge lines (feedback from Marshall is that this might be a good approach because the ridge lines can be more costly to clear because they're not as accessible). The ridge lines are where the fire retardant can be more successfully applied because the fire has come down out of the canopy to the ground, but it relies on the ridge lines being cleared. It's possible that ridge top fuel breaks could evolve into burning canyons in a prescribed manner to emulate the natural wildfire process
- Locations with easier environmental reviews could be more achievable
- When writing grants, a recommendation is to cover what is being done to protect life, property, and the environment.

- In the grant wording Marshall is seeing "shovel ready" on more PG&E grants, and to make a project shovel ready, you need to:
 - Define the specific geographic area and the distance on the sides of the roads that will be cleared
 - Define what you're specifically going to do (e.g., clear cut, trees that fall on the road, trees 6" above, etc)
 - Complete the environmental review
 - Get landowner participation agreements in place

There is a grant available at the moment (up to \$385K) through the California Fire Safe Council for counties to apply for grants, and it could be used to write a CalVTP for the area, which could make us shovel ready for the projects that are upcoming, but the county would have to submit the application on our behalf.

If the work is being done by volunteers on private land, an environmental review isn't required because government funds aren't being used.

Release of liability forms are recommended for anyone involved with doing the work on roadside clearing projects.

The grant ranking system isn't publicized, but it considers factors such as fire history, how many people and homes will be saved, and low-income communities.

With the CAL FIRE grants, it's worth looking at the unit plan, which explains what CAL FIRE is looking for and what their objectives are.

The UC Cooperative Extension has a new Vegetation Management Fire Mitigation Specialist, and they are interested in doing a case study on what is being done along the coast, and identifying the barriers to getting the work done.

Marshall suspects that more money is going to go into grants in the future, and since the majority of the land is owned by private individuals, being able to receive those grants will rely on grassroots efforts in order to be more competitive.

For ongoing communication, one option would be for this working group to set up an email group or a web portal for collaboration, and the Coast Ridge Forest Council website can also serve as a portal for reference material.

Marshall recommends that a good homework exercise would be for everyone to create a roadside treatment project that could have strategic value, and to start seeking landowner participation agreements.

Post-Meeting Notes

Bonnie Plakos wants to organize a community meeting in Annapolis with the Coast Ridge Forest Council and The Local Crew to talk to residents about organizing community workdays and getting involved in our large-scale planning efforts.

Erich Lynn thought it was a great meeting but is frustrated with the coastal permitting process. How can they build on the coastal zone permit issues through the county's (Caerleon's) federal grant to expedite work on Seaview Rd? Getting landowner approvals is overwhelming. Who would write the grant? Do we include Seaview with the community forest grant? He is relieved that he is not alone and we are all working on this together.

Rosalyn White said that Ratna Ling offered to organize community workdays in the area and will provide lunch. Judy suggested that Rosalyn organizes with Erich Lynn and that CRFC would help as needed. Rosalyn and Erich will reach out to Kashia and bring in Save the Redwood League who they've been working with on their forest management planning and grant writing.

Cathy Schezer discussed putting in a grant to the county to complete Bei Rd, building off the Fort Ross Rd project.

The BOS announced \$300,000 and not \$3 million as Judy accidentally said at the meeting.

Kristina Rizda on Muniz Ranches offered to help with communications as needed.

Brook Edwards will liaise with State Parks and Luke Farmer, his replacement at the Jenner Headlands.

All are enthusiastic about reconvening in January, and it was discussed that we form sub-committees concentrating on certain issues (break up by community, create landscape level planning map, coastal permits, CEQA, outreach).

Shanti Edwards wanted to clarify that the Sonoma Land Trust is a 501(c)(3), and she suggested that Rosalyn White from Odiyan connects with Save the Redwoods League and the Kashia to determine micro-region priorities and funding needs, and that they could also connect with the Conservation Fund and Ag+Open Space District as they have been heavily involved with the Buckeye Forest conservation project.