



HUMBOLDT COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

Appointed by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

Supported by

Public Works, Natural Resources Planning

COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

1106 Second Street, Eureka, CA 95501



Meeting Summary (Action Minutes)

Humboldt County Fire Safe Council Meeting May 20, 2021

A [Humboldt County Fire Safe Council \(HCFSC\)](#) meeting was held on May 20, 2021 via Zoom. The HCFSC was appointed by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors (BOS) to guide maintenance and implementation of the [Humboldt County Community Wildfire Protection Plan \(CWPP\)](#).

FSC Members Attending:

- Ali Freedlund**, Supervisorial District 1 Appointee, Lower Mattole Fire Safe Council/Mattole Restoration Council
- Bill Eastwood**, Local FSC/Firewise Community, Southern Humboldt Fire Safe Council
- Chris Ramey**, CAL FIRE, Humboldt-Del Norte Unit
- Ed Laidlaw**, Supervisorial District 3 Appointee, Arcata Fire Protection District
- Greg Moon**, Tribal Representative, Hoopa Tribe/Hoopa Fire Department and Office of Emergency Services
- John Miller**, Humboldt County Planning & Building, Long Range Planning
- Justin McDonald**, Humboldt County Fire Chiefs' Association, Arcata Fire District
- Kai Ostrow**, Supervisorial District 2 Appointee, Briceland Fire Department and Southern Humboldt Technical Rescue
- Lenya Quinn-Davidson**, UC Cooperative Extension, Humboldt-Del Norte UCCE
- Lyn Javier**, Local FSC/Firewise Community, Mad River-Van Duzen Fire Safe Council
- Manny Mello**, Supervisorial District 4 Appointee, George Petersen/Northwest Insurance
- Ryan Derby**, Office of Emergency Services, Humboldt County Sheriff's OES

Fire Safe Council Alternates Attending:

- Jen Renner**, CAL FIRE, Humboldt-Del Norte Unit
- Joe O'Hara**, Local FSC/Firewise Community, Willow Creek Fire Safe Council
- Yana Valachovic**, UC Cooperative Extension, Humboldt-Del Norte UCCE

Non-Voting Agency Liaisons Attending:

- Cybelle Immitt**, Humboldt County Public Works Director Designee

Public and Agency Representatives Attending:

- Debra Harris**, North Coast Air Quality Management District
- Julia Cavalli**, Humboldt County Public Works / HCFSC Staff
- Kathy Weber**, Southern Humboldt Fire Safe Council and Crooked Prairie Fire Safe Council
- Linda Yonts**, Community Member

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AGENDA ITEM SUMMARIES

1. Call to Order – Welcome, Zoom Orientation, Roll Call/Introductions, and Agenda Review

HCFSC Chairperson, Lenya-Quinn Davidson called the meeting to order at 10:02.

Meeting attendees went through introductions and a roll call of FSC members. Participants discussed the value of having the meetings recorded via Zoom, the limitations of storing recordings on the County website, and the potential need to store recordings on YouTube. It was resolved to revisit this question at the August meeting. Some members expressed that they were looking forward to meeting in-person again, especially as restrictions loosen and summer weather allows for safer travel for those traveling farther distances. Whether or not to convene the August meeting via Zoom or in person will be informed by state and County COVID safety protocols and/or wildfire/smoke conditions. This meeting's recording is [available online](#).

Per precedent set in previous Zoom meetings, the default for action items is for the Chair to ask for any objections. Where consensus is not attainable, a roll call vote may be held.

2. Approval of the meeting Agenda and Minutes from the previous HCFSC meeting

Chris Ramey motioned to approve the February HCFSC meeting minutes. Joe O'Hara seconded the motion. None opposed.

3. Public Comments/Announcements/Correspondence

- HCFSC Photo Library
 - The [HCFSC Photo Library](#) is now posted to the Fire Safety Resources webpage (humboldt.gov/FireSafetyResources). This is where staff periodically post photos of fuels treatments and community events that can be drawn from for a variety of outreach purposes (flyers, CWPPs, etc.). Contributions from others are welcome. A companion [How-To doc](#) is posted in the same place.
- [Preparing Your Home for Wildfire Brochure](#)
 - The draft brochure presented at the last FSC meeting is being professionally printed. They should be available by the end of the month. Staff will email FSC members to coordinate pickup.
- Joe passed on a concern from a resident in Willow Creek interested in doing work on USFS land adjacent to their property. Some members advised that they should get in touch with their local USFS representative to notify them of the hazard as a first step.
- CAL FIRE Fire Season Outlook
 - Chris shared a disheartening message about wildfire-predictive indices for Humboldt County, which are record breaking for this time of year. An early green up this year means an earlier taper – fuels will dry out (and become more flammable) much earlier in the season. The Unit is working to improve staffing levels however, they are currently somewhat shorthanded. The High Rock Conservation Camp has closed, and the inmate populations at the remaining two camps are low. They have added one hand crew at High Rock and one Type II initial attack crew in Fortuna. CAL FIRE is expecting more funding and will be adding more staff positions (though mostly regional/state level); expecting to provide more grant funds and potentially direct awards to local organizations.
- Community member, Linda Yonts shared a concern regarding fire service for cannabis grows outside of fire district boundaries. *This concern was addressed during the SRA regulations discussion under Integrated Planning (see that section of the notes for the full comment and response).*

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4. HCFSC Membership

Welcome New Members

- The Fire Safe Council welcomed new members:
 - Rod Mendes (former Hoopa rep) and alternate, Blaine McKinnon for the Yurok Tribe and Justin McDonald (former alternate) and alternate Dale Unea representing the Humboldt County Chiefs' Association. The FSC is happy to continue working with Rod and Justin and looks forward to working with Blaine and Dale as well.

HCFSC Membership Housekeeping

- **Action: Support nominations to fill vacancies**
 - Willow Creek FSC member, Tom O'Gorman had to step down and the WC FSC nominated Joe O'Hara as their new representative and John Evans as his alternate.
 - **Motion:** Kai Ostrow motioned to approve the nominations of Joe and John. Lyn Javier seconded. None opposed.
- Staff will continue to seek nominations to fill vacancies as needed and work with the Clerk of the Board to appoint current nominees between now and next meeting.
- Again, reminder: HCFSC sunsets October 2021 and new [Resolution](#) to be developed prior (see the [Members, Agenda & Minutes](#) webpage for background). This will be an opportunity to revisit whether there are new affiliations that should be added or removed if not necessary, or seemingly redundant. This will be added as a primary topic of the August meeting.
- Cybelle will send out a reminder about 700 forms for anyone still outstanding.

5. Updates: Humboldt County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Implementation/Maintenance and Associated Partner Activities

[CWPP](#) Maintenance Update and Reminders

- Staff reminded members that the CWPP has a "living" component to it. Part 4: Planning Unit Action Plans and the CWPP GIS database of projects are both intended to be updated as projects and priorities evolve. A project input and update process was approved by the FSC and is posted to the [CWPP webpage](#) under the Implementation tab. In short, proposed updates are brought to the attention of staff who help prepare the proposal for presentation to the FSC as a consent agenda item for the next FSC meeting. Contact Julia with any questions or proposed updates.
- The recent CAL FIRE solicitation was a good reminder to make sure important community projects are included in the CWPP far in advance of the grant application due date so they may be referenced and the Plan's intended purpose of leveraging funding (among many other intents!) can be taken full advantage of.

Implementation Updates, Challenges and Successes

[Disaster Preparedness](#)

- Evacuation Planning
 - OES (Ryan): Red Salmon and August Complex fires spotlighted the need for countywide evacuation planning. OES worked with County GIS to develop draft evacuation zones. Reexamining and finessing now that we're heading into fire season. Have applied for mitigation funding and are looking into contracting with Zonehaven, who uses an algorithmic approach to evacuation zone development. Assuming bid for funding is successful, OES will conduct outreach to gather local knowledge to refine evacuation plans further. It is expected that initial zones will be established by July 1. This effort would be followed by a Know Your Zone campaign. Zones can be updated based on the disaster and available resources, which is beneficial for many reasons including mutual aid coordination. Zonehaven has been used by Hoopa, in Oregon, and Sierra Nevada region with impressive results. Expected cost of \$40-50k annually, which would be covered by HMGP or Homeland Security funding. Ryan expects to have more info next meeting

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and emphasized the connection of this progress to the goals of the CWPP.

- Hoopa (Greg): Hoopa has refined their plan further and will be conducting an exercise in June.
- Ryan: OES is also revisiting improvements to agricultural producer access to crops and/or livestock during an evacuation. Working with Ag Commission and Planning and Building. Considering a pre-registration process.

Restoration of Beneficial Fire

- Project Updates (current and proposed)
 - County CFSC 2018 grant update: This project was conceived of to support implementation of the Restoration of Beneficial Fire Action Plan of the CWPP, and to expand the benefits of a UCCE's CAL FIRE funded project for prescribed fire (Rx) training. It will be coming to a close at the end of June. Following is a brief roundup of accomplishments:
 - Last month, Cybelle, Lenya, and Chris [presented to the Board of Supervisors](#) about prescribed fire in an effort to educate and promote support for Rx among our political leaders. Three special presentations were also delivered to the FSC. The project will also support training of volunteer fire departments in Rx so that they can support the burn activities of the HCPBA and others.
 - One of the primary benefits of the project has been having Kai Ostrow serve as the Southern Humboldt Prescribed Fire Liaison. This role has included outreach to VFDs, Rx evaluation site visits and home risk assessments for private landowners, support of burn plan development in collaboration with UCCE, and importantly, establishment of the Southern Humboldt Chapter of the HCPBA. He will expand on his work by drafting two resource guides for those seeking to understand the benefits of and how to conduct a prescribed burn.
 - Kai reported that it has been inspiring to work directly with landowners within the community and that a lot of the preparations for Rx are the same as prepping for wildfire, resulting in multiple benefits. He is also looking forward to developing the Rx resource guide—a priority action of the CWPP—which will make it easier for people to work independently after his visit. He also gathered a great group in the So Hum Chapter of the HCPBA, who are now organizing into committees to tackle logistical issues. Get in touch with Kai if you have questions and/or are interested in joining (kaiostrow@gmail.com).
 - UCCE CAL FIRE grant project
 - Last month, Humboldt saw the first-ever state-certified burn boss course, the creation of which was mandated by legislation; Lenya served on curriculum development committee over the last few years. There was good participation from Humboldt County in the course, which is great for local capacity building for Rx.
 - The grant will also support spring fire trainings. Kai is taking a lead role with outreach and hosting several courses, including CA-219 Firing Operations and Wildland Engine Operator, which was ID'd as one of the biggest impediments to more participation of VFDs in Rx. Lenya is putting on as many trainings as possible to make up for lost time as a result of COVID—please get in touch if you are interested (lquinndavidson@ucanr.edu). Chris mentioned there was hope for an extension.
 - Lenya also reported that she was able to secure RFFC funding for Kai to continue his role as a Rx liaison for at least two years.
 - Next PBA meeting will be next Tuesday, May 25th at Rohnerville Park.
 - Prescribed Fire Activities update / TREX/Spring burns
 - Greg, who was involved in Yurok TREX reported that there was involvement of three tribes (Yurok, Hoopa, Karuk) and the Nature Conservancy; great to see the tie in of cultural benefits; many acres were burned, and it was overall very successful.
 - Chris: CAL FIRE is assessing a potential burn in Blue Lake next week. Only units available right now are grasslands; low fuel moisture is resulting in increased risk. No spring burning to date. Lenya reported that ranchers are less open to grassland burning due to

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drought, which is why the PBA hasn't burned this spring. CAL FIRE has had a similar experience; most interest is from timberlands or grasslands without grazing.

- General RFFC Update
 - The North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP) continues to work on the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity (RFFC) Program. One of the intentions is to support development of a landscape, forest health, and community protection project pipeline for implementation under a variety of existing funding sources. The NCRP RFFC team has been meeting with different groups: Tribes, RCDs, UCCE, and soon FSCs. FSC outreach effort will dovetail with what CAFSC has been doing on the state level, under its own RFFC program, but this would be North Coast region focused (likely in collaboration with CAFSC). Checking in on FSC's feelings on who should participate. Julia and Cybelle will already be participating in their capacity as NCRP staff; Lenya could also participate in role as Chair to the HCFSC. None were opposed to this proposal.
 - Next NCRP meeting: July 16th, potentially in-person in Humboldt; potential for day-long RFFC-focused pre-meeting – all are encouraged to attend. If you haven't done so already, sign up for NCRP notices and updates (<https://northcoastresourcepartnership.org/> - scroll to the bottom of page and enter your email address).
- Prescribed burning legislation
 - Lenya and others in Humboldt Rx community have continued to lead on pushing for pro-Rx legislation. Due to time constraints, Lenya was unable to provide a full update but encourage those interested to read more about SB332 and AB642.
 - [SB332](#) – “Civil liability: prescribed burning operations: gross negligence”
 - [AB642](#) – “Wildfires”; covers a wide variety of topics including Rx, focused on tribal relations and sovereignty, CAL FIRE permitting, and much more

Integrated Planning

- CAL FIRE Unit Plan
 - Submitted Unit Plan to region last week; currently under review. Will likely be posted around July 1st to website; a link will also be added to the FSC website. The Plan is used to prioritize pre- and post-fire management strategies and tactics; organized by battalion; describes projects recently treated, in progress, planned, and the different groups HUU works with; includes CWPP section with updates on County sponsored implementation projects; also includes 2020 statistics including ignitions and fires over 10 acres; list of 2020 accomplishments for fuels reduction and plans for 2021.
- General Plan Safety Element and SRA regulations update
 - The challenging and fast-paced process of updating the SRA regulations by the Board of Forestry (BOF) discussed last meeting is ongoing and continues to be tracked by the Integrated Planning Ad hoc. Draft regulations are now out for 45-day review (public comment closes June 22nd). BOF acknowledges improvements are needed and wants more feedback. Ad hoc plans to continue meeting to develop recommendations and will update the FSC as things evolve.
 - The Board of Supervisors submitted a comment letter to the BOF on the recommendation of staff: Humboldt County Board of Supervisors 4-20-2021 Meeting re [Comment Letter](#) Regarding March 15 Draft of California Board of Forestry 2021 Amendments to the State Fire Safe Regulations
- Streamside Management Area Ordinance (SMAO) update
 - County staff have been in conversation about the application of this ordinance to fuels reduction. There is potential for a Planning and Building Department Director's Policy Statement clarifying where fuel reduction would not be considered development and therefore not subject to the SMAO. A committee was formed to develop recommendations for the Director, including members of the County Forest Review Committee (including Yana), Planning and Building Staff

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(including John), and Cybelle.

- Question from Public Comment addressed as part of Integrated Planning discussion
 - Community member, Linda Yonts shared a concern regarding fire service for cannabis grows outside of fire district boundaries. She became aware of a county policy during a Planning Commission meeting where she understands that if a cannabis grow is in an SRA area, they can sign an acknowledgement that releases them from SRA requirements, stating they do not expect any fire services should fire occur on their property. She expressed concern for what seems like an unsafe and unfair loophole, given that fire services will respond regardless.
 - John Miller in response to Linda's comment (clarification added post-meeting): Per General Plan Community Infrastructure and Services Standard IS-S5, Other Development Outside of Fire District Boundaries ([pg. 5-8](#)), where a development project, including cannabis projects (but not including subdivisions which have their own specific requirements), is located outside the boundaries of a fire related district, the applicant must get a written statement from a fire company (non-district) or department (district) that fire and emergency services are available. If a written response is not provided, an acknowledgement of no available service is to be recorded as a condition of discretionary project approval (e.g., use permit) or a note placed on the approved building permit. This General Plan Standard does not relate to the applicability of State Fire Safe Regulations or whether or not the project is in SRA, only whether fire and emergency services are available outside fire district boundaries. Cannabis projects, like all projects in SRA, are subject to State Fire Safe Regulations unless otherwise exempted under state or county regulations. County cannabis regulations may include more specific road requirements, based on the project type (for instance, cannabis processing or manufacturing). State Fire Safe Regulations requirements relating to water supply and hydrants are only applicable to subdivisions. However, in almost all instances, fire department referrals, referrals from CAL FIRE, or building standards result in a requirement that water storage for fire protection be provided with an appropriate connection. As a follow up to this meeting, John Miller will prepare a description of the County process relating to county referrals and State Fire Safe Regulations requirements.
 - Chris: CAL FIRE has had to clarify with many cannabis farmers, via letter, that CAL FIRE is a wildland fire protection agency and does not provide structural protection and that most CAL FIRE stations are staffed seasonally, during which time fire districts are entirely responsible for community level fire protection. Chris will share letter with Ad hoc.
 - John: the process he described came out of discussions with a subcommittee of fire districts and the public.

Wildfire Preparedness

- Local FSC / Firewise Activity Updates
 - Mad-River Van Duzen Fire Safe Council – COVID has made meetings challenging so they are getting set up on Facebook; CERT team will meet soon for an earthquake simulation; Lyn is working on a home hardening project using hardy board and will share photos for the Photo Library. Will be reaching out to Kai to get her area more proactive with Rx. Lyn also shared that she applied for a reduced-cost biochar kiln.
 - Willow Creek FSC – community chipping efforts are doing well in Willow Creek and Trinity. Firewise Day upcoming – will be handing out [Living with Wildfire](#) magazines, and info on upcoming chipping opportunities.
 - Southern Humboldt FSC – working on a webpage, and are now on Facebook; news director at KMUD getting very involved; have helped Whale Gulch and Cathey Road FSCs get started – answering many questions about what being an FSC means; have also fielded calls from Ruth Lake area residents interested in starting an FSC. Have affiliated themselves with Trees Foundation which can serve as a fiscal sponsor and assist with mapping, graphic design, printing, and more. Consulting off and on with Redway and Garberville fuelbreaks. Garberville project moving along smoothly thanks to CAL FIRE and HCRCD. FLASH is underway in Southern Humboldt.
 - Lower Mattole FSC – held a training for first responders in the watershed that included an

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option to get S212 chainsaw training through Firestorm. Awarded an [AIM grant](#) for building capacity, hiring staff for grant development, FLASH, and landowner outreach. Project on Wilder Ridge very successful. Prepping for roadside treatment of Bull Creek. This past year was the first time Mattole Restoration Council's Fire & Fuels crew went full time.

- Shelter Cove Firewise (via Cybelle) – received funding for 8 chipper days which will support hiring a crew and taking some of the chipper program pressure off VFD members; local CERT just had a graduation; continue to engage in evacuation planning and drills, including the installation of evacuation signs.
- Project Updates (current and proposed)
 - Some activities mentioned by local FSC reps are part of County projects: The Fire-adapted Landscapes & Safe Homes (FLASH) Program is being carried out by MRC for Southern Humboldt, Mattole, and Humboldt Bay (and under other contracts for the remainder of the county). The roadside work Ali mentioned is related to the County sponsored CWPP Implementation Phase II project, which also includes defensible space assistance, and development of the brochure mentioned earlier. Focusing on maximizing work done by end of year under Phase II.
 - Successfully submitted proposal to CAL FIRE Fire Prevention grant program yesterday for CWPP Implementation Phase IV. County intends to serve as an umbrella for local groups implementing work in their areas. RCD would continue their role in supporting Southern Humboldt. The aim is to build on work we've already been funded to do and supporting implementation of the CWPP by others. The project would be focused on a handful of priority communities, modeling a phased approach wherein the focus communities would rotate. This more focused approach is intended to simplify project management and is an alternative to coordinating work countywide, simultaneously. Staff appreciate all the input from the ten collaborators!

[Fire Protection](#)

- Fire services committee update
 - The committee (Public Works, Planning & Building, and LAFCO, an ad hoc of the BOS) is assisting the Garberville Fire Protection District with annexing territory around Garberville that they currently respond to but is not included within their district boundaries (and thus no tax revenue can be collected)
 - Avenue of the Giants – there is an effort on the Avenue to explore consolidation of the many small fire departments under one administrative umbrella; may not be ready yet. Salmon Creek has expressed interest in becoming an official district if the consolidation doesn't move forward.
 - Fire Chiefs' Annual Report is in progress, with updates due June 30. Missed last year due to COVID. Working with LAFCO to develop. Needs/challenges and accomplishments sections are the richest part and is very helpful to the committee as they develop capacity-building strategies.
 - John: We are working to improve response area boundaries with LAFCO, ideally linking the boundary layer with info from annual report.

[Wildfire Ignition Prevention](#)

- 2020 Ignition Data and CAL FIRE perimeters now available
- Ignition data for 2020 is included in the Unit Plan. Battalion 4 (Freshwater north to county line) and Battalion 1 (Salmon Creek south) had the highest ignitions of the six battalions with 45 and 44, respectively with illegal debris burns then vehicle fires having the most reported instances.
- Fire service prevention program updates
 - CAL FIRE: Continuing fuels reduction, public education, and Rx; participating with grassroots groups and funneling funds to these groups to affect change.
- Defensible space inspection updates
 - Two Defensible Space Inspectors (DSIs) for HUU are doing well so far in keeping up with desired pace for 2021: 2,300 inspections completed to date. Areas that have received at least some inspections so far: Blue Lake, Fickle Hill, Maple Creek, Bridgeville, Redcrest, Stafford, Fruitland Ridge, Eel Rock, Redway, Garberville, Sproul Creek; currently working in Briceland and

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- Salmon Creek. Roughly 90% of homes have been compliant with PRC 429I.
- Ali: What do DSIs recommend re Sudden Oak Death?
 - Jen: They don't collect data on this specifically (no training), only count of dead trees near homes within defensible space zone.
 - Justin: Arcata FPD hired an inspector beyond what is mandated and are testing sprinkler systems; slowly but surely expanding their fire prevention bureau; prevention is an important part of being a fire district, not just suppression.
 - Burn permit reminders
 - Deb (via chat): If anyone has questions or needs assistance with burn permits or smoke management plans, please contact me at dharris@ncuaqmd.org.
 - CAL FIRE: biggest news in burn permitting is the state level effort to streamline the permitting process online. This hasn't been rolled out in HUU yet. Writing permits a couple weeks at a time and watching the weather to determine suspension date.

6. Confirm next meeting date and location and adjourn.

Next meeting will be August 19, 2021.

Meeting date confirmed. Meeting location (zoom or in person) TBD depending on COVID precaution guidance and other considerations. Meeting adjourned at 11:50 am.