
WILDFIRE MITIGATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, November 15, 2022

Posted: 1/6/2023



Committee Members Present

Curtis Brown, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Mike Richwine, Office of the State Fire Marshal
Caroline Thomas Jacobs, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety
J. Lopez, State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Robert Troy, California Office of Emergency Services
Deborah Halberstadt, California Department of Insurance
Michael Maguire, Office of Planning and Research (Virtual)
Becca Joyner, California Fire Safe Council (Virtual)
Roy Wright, Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety
Dave Winnacker, California Fire Chiefs Association (Virtual)
Christopher Ochoa, Representative from the Building Industry
Yana Valachovic, California Fire Science Consortium
Maziar Movassaghi, Department of Housing and Community Development (Virtual)
Sophia Lemmo, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (Virtual)
Sean McGlynn, League of California Cities
Catherine Freeman, California State Association of Counties
Don Hankins, Professor, CSU Chico (Virtual)

Members Absent

Keali'i Bright, Department of Conservation
Lenya N. Quinn-Davidson, University of California Cooperative Extension
Staci Heaton, Rural County Representatives of California

CAL FIRE Staff in Attendance

Daniel Berlant, Deputy Director
Wendy Collins, Assistant State Fire Marshal
Steve Hawks, Assistant Deputy Director
Andrew Henning, Assistant Deputy Director
Frank Bigelow, Staff Chief
Jim McDougald, Staff Chief
John Morgan, Deputy Chief
Dennis O'Neil, Assistant Chief
Mark Rosenberg, Research Data Manager
Chris Keithley, Assistant Deputy Director - Fire & Resource Assessment
Jeff Fuentes, Division Chief (Virtual)
Jamie Sammut, Staff Counsel (Virtual)
Kara Garrett, Associate Governmental Program Analyst

1. CALL TO ORDER 1:00 PM

A. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Mike Richwine.

Mike Richwine

B. Roll Call – Kara Garrett

Quorum Established with seventeen committee members present, six of which attending virtually.

C. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes (**Motion Required**) – Mike Richwine

Motion:	Chris Ochoa moved to accept the meeting minutes; J Lopez seconded the motion with the amendment of the minutes.
Action:	All members voted unanimously to approve the motion.

D. Agenda Review (**Motion Required**) – Mike Richwine

Motion:	J Lopez moved to accept the meeting agenda; Don Hankins seconded the motion.
Action:	All members voted unanimously to approve the motion.

2. OLD BUSINESS

Daniel Berlant / Steve Hawks

A. Risk Modeling –

1. Work Group Update – Meeting will be on November 21, 2022.

B. SB 190 – Model Defensible Space Ordinance –

1. Program continues to look for feedback on the draft. Use track changes in the Word document file sent with meeting minutes, also located online at osfm.fire.ca.gov/boards-committees/wildfire-mitigation-advisory-committee/ under the August Meeting Documentation tab and send back to Chief John Morgan at John.Morgan@fire.ca.gov.
 - Final feedback due at the end of November.
 - We were initially going to review the final document at the December meeting, we will now be reviewing at the January meeting for final comments and suggested changes.
 - Final Draft Presentation on February 21st.

C. Division Report –

1. Burn Permits:

- Doing some upgrades to the new automated system to include attaching burn plan and any other paperwork the reviewer will need to review the application.
- Planned roll out on January 1.
- Adding a map layer to flag a property in the “buffer” area of another jurisdiction.
- Beginning to create the training videos for units.
 - Burn Permit Policy and Procedures are currently being reviewed.

2. Defensible Space:

- We will be holding two presentations next week for Land Use Planning Workshops.

- We will be recording a video to showcase the first home to receive a Wildfire Prepared Home designation. The home was rebuilt from the ground up following the devastating Camp Fire in 2018 using specific choices in building materials and overall design that can help raise a home's wildfire rating.
 - Defensible Space and Home Hardening programs are working on revising the self-assessment survey.
3. Utility Wildfire Mitigation:
 - Site visit with PG&E on overhead grid hardening and undergrounding efforts in Butte County.
 - Identified Cooperative and Publicly Owned Utilities (POU) within CA that have their own infrastructure that intersects with State Responsibility Areas (SRA). Starting to acquire their contacts and GIS infrastructure data to assist with emergency response, firefighting, and prevention efforts.
 - In the Greensheet review process for an equipment exemption request from PRC 4292 pole clearance for PG&E on the S&C Electric Scada Mate switch.
 - Conducted Interagency Powerline Fire Prevention Training with Energy Safety Staff.
 4. California Incident Data & Statistics:
 - 2021 Redbook is now Final.
 - Sent out the 2022 Redbook quarterly update to the Units to ensure they are starting to review and quality control now. This is an attempt to complete future Redbooks more timely.
 - Sent out our first quarterly CalStats newsletter to all Fire Departments in the State that are reporting NFIRS data. This was focused on tips, tricks, and updates on how to import their NFIRS data into eNFIRS and how the validation process works.
 - CalStats Team has begun to develop our first CALFIRS dashboards using AGOL software and preparing for additional dashboards that will focus on CA eNFIRS data, "Live" Redbook, and other ideas that can showcase the statistical data that the program is working with.
 - CalStats program is hosting a two-day free National Fire Academy - Basic NFIRS training course in Monterey on November 15-16th.
 - Completed FY 21/22 Public Resource Code 4137 Annual Report.
 5. Fire Safe Regulations:
 - We are currently developing some training webinars for CAL FIRE & Contract County staff on interpreting and enforcing the regulations.
 6. Land Use Planning/Subdivision Review:
 - Staff have been actively engaged in numerous statewide projects of interest including: working with Cal OES on the State Hazard Mitigation Plan and working with OPR on the Wildfire Plan Alignment Guide.
 - Staff recently presented a pilot training for local planners on Land Use Planning for Wildfires, it was well received.
 7. Firewise USA:
 - California continues to lead the nation with 600 National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Firewise USA Communities in good standing, equating to over 25% of all NFPA Firewise USA Communities nationwide.

- We are currently in the process of preparing a news release to be distributed shortly and will also be presenting a “certificate of congratulations” to the 600th community to celebrate this momentous occasion.
8. Pre-Fire Planning:
- FHSZ (SRA) Training in mid-November “How to conduct a FHSZ public hearing” targeting Units & Contract Counties.
 - Draft FHSZ (SRA) maps are being finalized.
 - Public information (website/videos/FAQs/phone-AI) will be released in early December.
 - FHSZ (SRA) Public Hearing in 56 Counties will start Dec 15th and run for 45-days concluding Jan 30th, 2023.
 - CalMAPPER QA/QC cleaned up hundreds of projects (improving accuracy & reducing errors); this will be an ongoing process.
9. Grants:
- Currently working in the eCivis software to get everything entered to use it for the next solicitation period. Looking to launch in mid-December which will go through the end of February.
10. Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division Webinar Series:
- Join us for our next webinar on November 28th at 11:30 AM!
 - Featuring – Fire Hazard Severity Zones
 - This webinar is open anyone who would like to learn more about the Programs within the Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division.
 - All webinars are recorded and posted to our California Office of the State Fire Marshal YouTube Channel at [youtube.com/channel/UCelazGRRGPnrJ-1KbaMzqEA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCelazGRRGPnrJ-1KbaMzqEA) .
 - The Zoom meeting link for November 28th is available at https://bit.ly/CWPM_Nov28_Webinar.
 - Visit osfm.fire.ca.gov/wildfire-public-education/ to learn more.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Board of Forestry and Fire Protection – Claire McCoy Presentation:

i. Questions:

1. Roy Wright (IBHS) –

1. How are you handling mulch?

- i. Answer: Mulch is out, if it is combustible or if they are wood chips.

2. From a science perspective, how are we choosing which combustible plants are allowed in the 0–5-foot zone?

- i. Answer: We are not specifying by plant species, but we are saying that the plants need to be spaced 12 inches or 1 and a half times the plant, whichever is greater distance from both the building and each other and each plant. If they are more woody/shrubby plants, they will need to be in a noncombustible container and not directly beneath a window. Any window/planter boxes that are on the structure are also “out”.

Roy: This sounds like convenience, not science. We need to be concerned about the eaves. We watched small plants torch and affect windows and open eaves, and this is opening pandora's box. We have watched the type of torching that can happen in this space, and it is as if telling people that smoking cigarettes is bad, just smoke fewer of them. Cigarettes kill and I think that when we are in this kind of space, which have so many of the right elements in place, and yet we are opening up ourselves to a place that incongruent with CDI regulations in terms of what insurers have to recognize, but it is misleading the public in terms of the level of defense that they have. I hope that as you guys have more information, you're able to provide the science that this is indeed something that keeps someone safe.

BOF: We do recognize that the most scientifically rigorous thing to do to get close to a zero percent chance of ignition as possible would be no vegetation in that five-foot zone. In an effort to create a statewide minimum that could be applied in varied income and varied land use types in communities that on the local level can have more strict standards can be implemented and the insurance piece is outside of the board's purview. We are developing these at that baseline state minimum standard that can be added to on a discretionary basis, but the board's interpretation is to strike that balance between achievability and not creating an unreasonable goal.

Roy: I look forward to seeing the details on that. I will say California on the current rebuilt environment, there is already shrubbery and things that are much closer than what you are describing here that are already going to have to take action to scrap that so the idea that we are saying well scrap that part of it but not all of it just seems not to be what the science says. I am very concerned.

BOF: If the combustibles are well maintained and are not dead or dying, they pose a significantly less risk of ignition.

Roy: Also look at the drought conditions, when there are water restrictions and the ability to keep and maintain those and keep them green may be prohibited by other location actions.

BOF: We are not using any conflicting language around water use requirements or around drought messaging, we are not asking for any requirements that plants be watered or irrigated. We are asking that it is kept free of the dead material. There is also an aesthetic piece to asking people to remove some and keep others, there is a piece that we want the regulated public to understand

where the regulations are coming from and feel that they are achievable and they can actually picture their property as having and people are much more likely to do the landscaping work if they feel okay about how their house looks at the end of it.

2. Curtis Brown (CAL FIRE) –
 1. Are there any wood options as far as treating the wood rather than having a metal gate?
 - i. Right now, that is not something that we are proposing to allow, treated lumber. Had to bear in mind what a CAL FIRE could do on the ground, filling out the documentation, be able to differentiate.
3. Yana Valachovic (UCCE) –
 1. What you see now is what has been crafted out of the committee, what is going to go forward is public exposure of what that is and the chance of feedback and improvement.

B. Attorney General's Office – Nicole Rinke Presentation

C. University of California Cooperative Extension – Lenya Quinn-Davidson and Yana Valachovic Presentation

4. ROUNDTABLE

Mike Richwine

A. Topic Suggestions for Next Meetings – Link to Google Forms Suggestion Portal:
<https://forms.gle/Wefg6YnrnUGYS8ua9>

B. Roundtable:

- i. Sandy Cooney, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety (Energy Safety):

The public comment period has closed for Energy Safety's Draft 2023-2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plan Guidelines. You'll recall that the WMPs are three-year plans in the first year with annual updates for the next two. We are finishing the first three-year cycle and are headed into the next three-year cycle. We will issue a final report of the 2023-2025 WMP Guidelines in December.

Last week, we issued our first Annual Reports on Compliance for the electrical corporations' implementation of their 2020 Wildfire Mitigation Plans. We will be issuing the remaining ARCs in the coming weeks. The Annual Reports on Compliance are our summary report on all compliance activities we have conducted since 2020 through the compliance review period.

- ii. Steve Hawks, CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal:

Update on statistics for incidents for this year, we are at a little over 7300 incidents, which is a couple hundred below our five year average and we are at a little over 362,000 acres year to date acres burned.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Richwine

- A. No public comment.

6. UPCOMING MEETING DATES FOR 2022

Mike Richwine

- a. Third Tuesday of each month starting at 1 PM and ending at 3 PM.
- b. December 20, 2022, is cancelled due to the holiday.
- c. January 17, 2023, will be in a different conference room, same building.
 - i. CNRA Building, 715 P Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room **2-310**
Sacramento, CA 95814

7. MEETING ADJOURNED 3:00 PM

Mike Richwine