**SPECIAL MEETING OF LASSEN COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL, INC. (LCFSC)**

**LCFSC DIAMOND MOUNTAIN INITIATIVE**

Wednesday January 28, 2015

6:30PM

Susan River Fire Protection District

705-145 Hwy 395, Johnstonville, California

The LCFSC Diamond Mountain Initiative meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm on January 28, 2015 at the Susan River Fire Protection District Office, 705-145 Hwy 395, Johnstonville, California.

1. Welcome and Introductions: Lassen County Fire Safe Council (LCFSC) Chairman Lloyd Keefer welcomed all and asked for introductions.
2. Overview of the Diamond Mountain Region: Tom Esgate, LCFSC Managing Director, stated he met with Dave Hays, Lassen National Forest Supervisor who was supportive of organizing a group composed on Forest Service (USFS) reps looking at the entire area to identify where a project can be implemented. He did have one message to be brought forward, that USFS has been involved with LCFSC in several projects in the last 10 years where approximately $1 million dollars of USFS funding has been used in and around the communities. He agreed now is the time to look further up the mountain. Tom stated going forward we want to look where we can implement treatment prescriptions.

Karl Todd/BLM provided maps of the area. Tom explained the Community Wildland Protection Plan (CWPP) process involving all agency reps both public and private who meet yearly to review projects and set priorities. The focus is to establish a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area adjacent to communities. The area of concern along the Diamonds is from the highway to the escarpment. He explained the problems with winds and challenges to firefighters. The USFS requires completion of environmental review known as NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) prior to working on public land; private land is different.

Recent fire history in the area includes the Devil, Cheney Creek, Boulder, Eagle, Babcock, and Moonlight fires. The behavior of the Eagle was severe causing problems with air tankers, a helicopter crash, and an engine fire. During the Moonlight, the Office of Emergency Services (OES) developed evacuation plans for all areas.

1. Partnership Opportunities: Tom stated the Diamond Mountain project received the highest priority at last year’s CWPP meeting. The group felt LCFSC should try to create a public/private partnership including all agencies to address the concerns. The USFS is a major player and unfortunately has been pared down placing them in reactive mode instead of prevention. They are having to react to the recent major fires directing energy into removing the burnt wood. Tom explained LCFSC’s partnership with Alturas BLM placing NEPA on a fast track for the Butte Creek project. LCFSC received $540,000 in funding for 8 watershed restoration and fuel reduction projects from Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and Department of Water Resources (DWS). LCFSC is able to use private specialists certified to work on the ground. Plumas National Forest has projects in the wings for the Mt Hough and Beckworth Ranger Districts. LCFSC is working with Modoc County and SPI on Cal Fire Green House Gas applications. This will be the 5th major project with SPI. Tom feels none of this would have happened without partnerships.
2. Desired Treatment Prescriptions: Tom stated treatments make a difference in fire behavior and watershed improvement. We want to make a safer forest. Forests today are packed with trees and logging opportunities have changed. In forming a working group for Diamond Mountain, it should include people that know what is treatable and what’s not; mostly because it doesn’t “pencil out”. As grantors, the Fed, with the exception of NRCS, will not allow grant fund work on Federal land. SNC is heavily invested; CA Fire Safe Council’s has WUI funds, from the Western States Foresters Association; and Cal Fire Conservation Crews under Jim Barry guidance, are used on private and public land mostly where the mechanical work is restricted. Most all grantors require 50% match which include chips, saw logs, etc. The DWS’s open period for submitting grant applications will end December 2015, but environmental reviews must be complete. The Integrative Water Resource Cooperative (IRWC) is another grantor. Next week the SNC will be releasing grant guidelines for public comment on Prop I projects. Application period will be from July 1st with the project start date of December 1st and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental reviews would be after that. They are looking at shelf ready projects $75,000 per grant, $500 of that for Planning.
3. Public Comment: Lloyd Keefer recognized Supervisor Jeff Hemphill and Dave Lile, with UC Cooperative Extension.

Ann Carlson/Lassen National Forest asked Terri Pearson-Ramirez to share what they’ve accomplished so far on the Diamond Mountain project. Terri directed attention to the map, identifying the riparian and aspen areas and indicated how the project will move out from there. They’ve been working on the wildlife/botanical/etc. surveys for the last 5-6 years and have a lot of GIS info. The NEPA has been put on the back burner due to resource issues. To complete the NEPA, they need bodies on the ground for the steep work and help with surveys. Of course, it’s subject to change. She wants to locate viable timber sales and weave them into the plan.

Joe Hoffman, USFS Plumas/Mt. Hough, stated they have a proposed Wildcat project of 3500 acres which has been through the scoping phase and is out in draft with a target date of October 2015. It shows the identified defensible profile zones.

Paul Czeszynski, USFS Plumas/Beckworth, provided a map of the district identifying the east side under burning project at Cradle Valley. He also provided a map of the fire history in the area commenting on re-fire intervals of 100 years. He identified the area as “tractor ground”.

Dena Eastwood/Rancher stated they’ve had their family ranch for over 100 years and are very concerned about the fire possibility and don’t see how they can wait any longer to have something done.

1. Appointment of Diamond Mountain Working Group: The Group meetings will be scheduled prior to the LCFSC General meetings at 6:00 pm on the first Monday of each month, except December. Tom Esgate asked the following to join the Working Group –

LCFSC – Lloyd Keefer/Tom Esgate/Don Hansen

Cal Fire – Jim Barry for Crews/Scott Rosikewiez will provide rep names

USFS/Lassen – Terri Pearson-Ramirez/Ann Carlson/Bobette (technical rep)

USFS/Plumas Beckwith and Mt. Hough – will provide rep names

Honey Lake Valley RCD – Tim Keesey

Beaty & Associates – will provide rep name

Honey Lake Power – Mark Shaffer

Private Landowners – Hannah Tangeman, Dave Schroder, Bob Andrews