

**Plumas County Coordinating Council**  
(PCCC)

**MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF  
August 3, 2012**

**1. Call to Order / Roll Call - 1:04 p.m.**

**Present:** Robert Perreault, *Chair* – Plumas County Public Works Director  
Randy Wilson, *Vice Chair* – Plumas County Planning Director  
Sherrie Thrall – Plumas County Supervisor;  
Terry Swofford – Plumas County Supervisor;  
Frank Stewart – Counties QLG Forester.

**Absent:** John Sheehan – Quincy Library Group member

**2. Public Comment Opportunity**

**Public Attendees** (*per sign-in sheet and/or by verbal introduction*):

Lee Anne Schramel-Taylor, Public Affairs Officer – Plumas National Forest;  
Tracy Ball - Plumas County Resident (Quincy);  
John Olofson, Plumas County Planning Commissioner (District 5);  
Todd Anderson, Plumas County Resident (Crescent Mills);  
Chuck Dickson, Public Information Officer – California Interagency Incident Management –  
Region 5 - Team #1

Ms. Schramel-Taylor explains that the Chips Fire has reached a point of increased complexity and has triggered the need for a Type 1 Management Team. Schramel-Taylor introduces Chuck Dickson, Public Information Officer of California Interagency Incident Management Region 5 - Team #1. Ms. Schramel-Taylor says that Mr. Dickson will provide a briefing on the *Chips* fire. Mr. Dickson explains that when an Incident Management Team is called out to a fire of increased complexity, they utilize numerous resources (people and equipment). Mr. Dickson continues that as the Public Information Officer, it is his job to become familiar with local terminology and keep all parties informed. Mr. Dickson distributes maps that demonstrate the 4,350 acre footprint of the current fire and how it correlates to the footprint of the Storrie fire. Mr. Dickson points out an area on the map identified as a 400 acre spot fire. Mr. Dickson states there is heightened concern for spot fires due to the dry and windy conditions. Additionally, Mr. Dickson mentions that the rugged terrain increases the level of difficulty in fighting the fire. Mr. Dickson provides the following information pertaining to the fire:

- Five percent contained at this time;
- 426 people on the fire;
- Five injuries have occurred already;
- Problem with dry brush and snags from the Storrie Fire;
- Limited visibility (due to smoke) is hampering the use of aircraft to fight the fire;
- Caribou Road is closed;
- Dry lightning is expected on the weekend;
- This fire could reach the 10s of thousands acre mark;
- They are working with PG&E to reduce risk to their facilities;
- They plan to work with the local Fire Safe Council to determine structures at risk.

**3. Review and Acceptance of Agenda by the PCCC**

Mr. Perreault requests the following changes to the agenda:

- Item #6 – Replace the date *July 31, 2012*, with the date *August 1, 2012*;
- Item #8 – Replace the word *exemptions* with the word *exclusions*.

A motion is made by Supervisor Thrall and seconded by Supervisor Swofford to adopt the meeting agenda of August 3, 2012, as modified. Motion is passed.

**4. Approval of PCCC Meeting Minutes**

**A. Meeting of July 6, 2012**

Mr. Perreault states that the name *Bob Vancourt* can be inserted in the blank spaces on Pages 1 and 4.

A motion is made by Supervisor Thrall and seconded by Mr. Wilson to adopt the meeting minutes of July 6, 2012, with added information per Mr. Perreault. Motion is passed.

**5. Legislative Update and Litigation Update**

Mr. Perreault states that he again discussed the matter of the legislative and litigation update with County Counsel. However, vacation plans prevent County Counsel from reporting at this meeting.

Mr. Perreault states that litigation was filed on the Tahoe National Forest Travel Management Plan by a group of users in that area.

Mr. Stewart reports that the hearing of the 2004 Sierra Nevada Framework law suit has been rescheduled for Judge England's District Court in Sacramento on October 4, 2012. Mr. Stewart adds that this matter has now been combined with common issues that pertain to the Pacific Rivers Council (PRC).

Mr. Wilson asks Mr. Stewart if there is anything new regarding the Quincy Library Group Pilot Project renewal, and Mr. Stewart reports that it has passed through the House and is moving forward in the Senate.

Todd Anderson, resident of Crescent Mills, asks if the legislative/litigation portion of the agenda is new. Mr. Perreault responds that legislative and litigation updates have typically been on PCCC agendas. However, when Brian Morris was Coordinating Council's Chair, he listed these updates as two separate agenda items. Mr. Anderson suggests that Coordinating Council connects with the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) concerning upcoming legislation. Mr. Anderson adds that his primary concern is that legislative information can be presented enough in advance that citizens have ample opportunity to make their comments. Mr. Perreault explains that efforts are being made to have County Counsel's office research and present legislative and litigation updates pertinent to Coordinating Council projects and topics. Mr. Wilson comments that both he and Mr. Perreault receive emails and alerts through their professional organizations. Mr. Wilson adds that he does not recall any legislative or litigation information listed recently that would have a bearing on Coordinating Council.

Mr. Wilson reports that the new Cal Fire fees will be forthcoming and the Planning Department is preparing to answer any questions that may arise from the public. Mr. Wilson adds that Jerry Hurley of the Fire Safe Council has made available a summary information sheet pertaining to those fees. Supervisor Swofford mentions that the Jarvis-Gann group amendment may have an impact, at least temporarily, on implementation of these fees.

**6. Report by County Director of Public Works on Beckwourth-Genesee Hwy Improvements Project**

Mr. Perreault provides a handout illustrating the project location and explains that the Beckwourth-Genesee Highway Improvement Project begins at State Route 70 in Beckwourth and runs approximately nine miles. Mr. Perreault further explains the project with the following information:

- The project was identified and authorized for funding about ten years ago by the Federal Highway Administration;
- A project agreement was signed in 2006-2007;
- There are three agency stakeholders – the Federal Highway Administration (Central Federal Lands Division-Denver), Plumas County, and Plumas National Forest (PNF);
- The project Environmental Report is nearly completion;
- Resolution regarding the pending OHV matter:
  - There was a public hearing on the project in February 2012 at the Portola Library;
  - Prior to the public hearing in February, 2012, concern was expressed that OHV use needed to be a consideration with regard to this project;
  - The project roadway is presently paved about halfway, and then the northern half is an unpaved road (gravel);
  - The northern half presently appears in the County OHV ordinance as being permissible for OHV mixed-use with regular traffic;
  - The mitigation that Federal Highway Administration presently proposes is to construct an OHV corridor parallel to the proposed new roadway, but it would stay within the corridor that is already being established for the highway improvement;
  - Plumas National Forest staff identified concerns and wants the OHV new corridor to go through the forest, away from the roadway right-of-way;
  - A problem has been identified that the environmental studies of the highway were limited to corridor width issues and some relocations;
  - The new OHV corridor (through the forest), which is out of the initial corridor area, would not be eligible for federal highway project funding;
  - Plumas National Forest staff is proposing to use future Green Sticker Funds and apply for grant funds in order to fund the forest route planning and construction;
  - The State legislature has significantly reduced OHV Green Sticker funding by diverting half of it to the State Park system and there could be additional diversions in future budgets. Therefore, the Forest Service state that they can't guarantee this project will go forward and estimates a new corridor parallel to the roadway would cost approximately \$200,000;
  - PNF has performed field reviews for an alternate OHV corridor. Pete Hochrein has developed an alternate with a \$15,000.00 cost but the environmental work would have to start from scratch;

- Plumas National Forest is willing to pay for that environmental work but not fund construction;
- A time constraint on the part of the Federal Highway Administration is that a resolution between the County staff and the PNF staff is needed by the end of August;
- Weekly meetings between County staff and PNF staff have been ongoing to resolve this matter;
- The Plumas County Board of Supervisors (BOS) currently is aware of this issue under review and will most likely discuss it at their third BOS meeting in August;
- Sierra Access Coalition is willing to accept the alternate corridor; but it also needs some assurance that the construction will take place.
- The PNF District Ranger involved with this issue is taking the position that the new OHV corridor would result in safety issues due to dust generated by OHV use within the non-paved OHV corridor. However, Mr. Perreault explains the dust would only be generated by OHV use whereas today it is being generated by all motor vehicles and OHV use.

Following Mr. Perreault's presentation, a brief question and answer period takes place whereby Mr. Perreault essentially restates or verifies some of the points listed above.

## **7. Forest Service Project Updates -- Reports by Various Staff**

### **A. Lake Davis Summer Winter Recreation Management Plan**

Mr. Perreault distributes a handout (map) and begins his report on a public meeting that took place on July 31, 2012 at the Beckwourth ranger District headquarters in regard to the Lake Davis Summer Winter Recreation Management Project. Mr. Perreault points out the groomed and non-groomed snowmobile routes on the map and explains that an initial goal of the project was to provide a loop around Lake Davis. Mr. Perreault states that the cross-hatched area on the map (to the left of Lake Davis--intended for non-motorized traffic) became a subject of disagreement at the July 31<sup>st</sup> meeting. Mr. Perreault says historically that area, which is a flat meadow, has been used by families to instruct their young children on how to operate a snowmobile safely. Mr. Perreault elaborates that the situation gets complicated because eagles have nested in that area and there is concern, stated by the Forest Service, that the noise of the snowmobiles would impact the eagles. Mr. Wilson asks how long snowmobilers have been using this area and whether there has been degradation to the area due to the snowmobile use. Supervisor Swofford contributes that snowmobile use in that area has been happening for approximately 25 years and no problems have been identified with regard to the nesting eagles or degradation of the meadow. Mr. Perreault voices another concern that has to do with finding an alternate plan to close a gap that exists in the continuous loop around the lake. Mr. Perreault explains that Public Works has explored and put forth an option whereby a new bridge would be constructed at the south end of the lake in order to avoid the use of the County road located on the dam in order to reach the new corridors east of the lake. However, that option is not yet indicated on the map. Perreault clarifies that the meeting on July 31<sup>st</sup> was essentially a "pre-NEPA" meeting, as were previous two meetings. Now is the time to evaluate the pros and cons of all the various options. Ms. Schramel-Taylor states that the feedback she has received from Earl Ford, Forest Supervisor, and Laurence Crabtree, Deputy Assistant Forest Supervisor, is that the deciding official makes a final decision based on the factual analysis in the NEPA process. Ms. Schramel-Taylor emphasizes that this particular map does not constitute a final decision.

**B. Other – none discussed**

**8. Forest Service Proposed Rule to add 3 additional categorical exemptions to NEPA regulations**

Mr. Perreault calls attention to a draft comment letter he has prepared, for consideration by the Board of Supervisors at their August 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, pertaining to the Forest Service proposed rule to add the following three additional categorical exclusions to the Forest Service NEPA regulations:

- Restore the flow of waters into natural channels and floodplains by removing, replacing or modifying water control structures;
- Restore lands and habitat to pre-disturbance conditions by removing debris and sediment conditions following natural or human-caused events; and
- Restore, rehabilitate or stabilize lands occupied by non-National Forest System roads and trails to a more natural condition.

Mr. Perreault explains that he has structured the letter in the following manner:

- Introductory remarks;
- Item No. 1 – Lack of Coordination
- Item No. 2 – Disregard of Previous Policy in Plumas County
- Item No. 3 – Relevant Concerns (Issues A thru H)
- Item No. 4 – Conclusion and Recommendations

Mr. Perreault states that all three of the new exclusions would be applicable to Plumas County, particularly where roadways are concerned. Mr. Perreault continues that he believes the proposal is unacceptable for Plumas County as currently written. However, if the Forest Service could provide limiting language in each exclusion, then it would be more acceptable. General approval of Mr. Perreault's draft letter is expressed by the Council. A discussion ensues regarding the time frame in which notification concerning the exclusions was made by Washington DC headquarters to the County and to the local national forests. It is determined that the County staff and the local Forest Service staff received notification at the same time. Ms. Schramel-Taylor focuses discussion on possible modification of the last two paragraphs of the first page of the draft letter. Following discussion, these changes are made:

*“Coordination” is required. (See the Plumas County Resolution – Appearing as Attachment A to this letter – which sets forth the federal statutes that support this understanding.) Yet, the national office of the USFS failed to provide any advance notice to Plumas County, either directly from USFS headquarters or through one of the 3 National Forests located within Plumas County. Instead, Plumas County officials only became aware of the proposed new rule when it appeared in the Federal Register (Vol. 77, No. 114, beginning at Page 35323) on or about June 13, 2012.*

A motion is made by Supervisor Thrall and seconded by Supervisor Swofford to have the draft letter, with above revision included, presented to the Board of Supervisors at their August 7, 2012, meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

## 9. Discussion on NEPA and CEQA

Mr. Wilson provides the following handouts:

- CEQA Deskbook: A step-by-step guide on how to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act;
- 2008 California Environmental Quality Act: CEQA Guidelines;
- Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Mr. Wilson begins his discussion by saying there currently is an emphasis to have better communication and coordination with regard to the environmental document process. The following points are made during Mr. Wilson's presentation:

- The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is implemented by the CEQA Guidelines;
- You seldom see revisions to the CEQA enabling act itself;
- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is considered broad in scope and can be applied somewhat differently with every agency;
- CEQA is applied equally under the same circumstances;
- NEPA requires guidance to instigate mitigation;
- Mitigation is automatic with CEQA;
- Last Chance II project - Joint CEQA / NEQA;
- Need to understand differences in terminology when working jointly:
  - ❖ CEQA – Project Description = NEPA – Proposed Action;
  - ❖ CEQA – Responsible Agency = NEPA – Cooperating Agency;
  - ❖ CEQA – Categorical Exemption = NEPA – Categorical Exclusion;
  - ❖ CEQA – Initial Study = NEPA – Environmental Assessment;
  - ❖ CEQA – Negative Declaration = NEPA – Finding of No Significant Impact;
  - ❖ CEQA – Environmental Impact Report = NEPA – Environmental Impact Statement;
  - ❖ CEQA – Notice of Preparation = NEPA – Notice of Intent;
  - ❖ CEQA – Findings for Approval = NEPA – Record of Decisions;
- NEPA considers the economics more readily than CEQA;
- CEQA has a 30 day period to file a lawsuit;
- NEPA has a *reasonable length of time* to file a lawsuit;
- CEQA & NEPA – each stipulate that you have to *exhaust all your administrative remedies*.

Ms. Schramel-Taylor suggests that a visual timeline is created that shows the County process on top of the Federal process. Mr. Perreault requests that Ms. Schramel-Taylor distributes the three guidelines (handouts) to the District Rangers, and Ms. Schramel-Taylor agrees to do so. Ms. Schramel-Taylor offers an invitation to Mr. Wilson to attend an upcoming Forest Service leadership committee/work session where he can share his expertise on CEQA. Todd Anderson, resident of Crescent Mills, states that he believes NEPA information regarding economics would most likely be helpful in the CEQA process as it applies to waterway owners living below waterway projects. Discussion ensues regarding the use of a NEPA document when preparing a CEQA document and visa versa. Mr. Stewart suggests that the Council consider supporting a bill involving a categorical exclusion for 10,000 acres or less for hazard fuel reduction projects. He also states that he will supply more information on the subject in the future. Mr. Wilson mentions that there is a section in the CEQA Deskbook that says if there is going to be a joint document between CEQA and NEPA, there should be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two agencies on the matter.

**10. Strategic Planning Meeting: REVITALIZING THE NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEMS**

Mr. Stewart reports that he attended the 2-day Strategic Planning Meeting (July 17 & 18) pertaining to revitalizing the National Forest systems. Mr. Stewart states that the meeting was coordinated by Bruce Courtright and Larry Alexander of the National Institute for Elimination of Catastrophic Fire. Mr. Stewart adds that Mr. Courtright and Mr. Alexander are retired Forest Service employees that now work in Siskiyou County with the Fire Safe Council, the Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the College of the Siskiyous. Mr. Stewart says that about 70 people attended the meeting with the majority consisting of Forest Service retirees. Mr. Stewart related the following meeting highlights:

- Letter from Bruce Courtright and Larry Alexander to Congressman Herger regarding proposed amendments to Stewardship Contract & Agreement authorities:
  - Allow Forest Reserve Revenues (25% receipts) to be collected and distributed to affected counties if needed,
  - Allow a portion of SC revenues to be used for subsequent project NEPA, development and layout costs.
- Large effort on behalf of BLM to take over Forest Service land between now and the end of the year;
- Review of current Senate and House of Representatives legislation: Community Protection Act, Quincy Library Group Reauthorization, Travel Management Plan, Government Litigation Savings Act, Secure Rural Schools, Farm Bill/Reauthorization of the Stewardship Contracts.

Mr. Stewart believes that the National Institute for Elimination of Catastrophic Fire will be an active and enthusiastic group. Mr. Wilson asks if there was any discussion at the meeting concerning climate change. Mr. Stewart answers that they fully recognize the impact of climate change on the forest habitat. Mr. Stewart mentions the recent heat and drought records, throughout the western states, and that the situation is expected to worsen. Mr. Stewart adds that he expects more pressure will be put on Congress to do more in the future than simply dispatching fire-fighters. Tracy Ball, resident of Quincy, states that when he and his wife first moved to their property, they were alarmed to find out it was classified as indefensible by the fire department; but since then, they have been cleaning up their property, and it is now considered fire safe.

**11. Report on Visit to Plumas County by American Lands Council**

Mr. Perreault explains that on July 30, 2012, Elko (NV) County Commissioner Demar Dahl and Ken Ivory, President of the American Lands Council (ALC), visited Quincy, CA to meet with Plumas County and Lassen County Supervisors and other Plumas County officials and residents to discuss federal agency issues and the work of the ACL regarding disposal of public land.

**12. Firewise Communities / Community Wildfire Protection Plan / Quincy Library Group Pilot Project**

*No report*

**13. Other Meetings and Activities**

Mr. Stewart provides reminders that the QLG Pilot Project terminates at the end of the fiscal year, and that objections to the Creeks II project in the Almanor District need to be submitted by August 9<sup>th</sup>.

**14. Date and Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

**A. Confirm next meeting.**

Confirmation is made by the Council to schedule their next meeting for September 7, 2012.

**B. Future Possible Agenda Items**

The Council mentioned various possible topics for the future.

**15. Adjournment**

Mr. Perreault adjourns the meeting at 3:24 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert Perreault". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R" and "P".

Robert Perreault, Chair  
PCCC