



WORKING FOR A FIRE SAFE FUTURE

California Fire Alliance Granlibakken Convention Center, Tahoe City

May 13, 2003

Attendees

Members: Bruce Turbeville (CFSC), Amy Dutsky (BIA), Tim Segaris (OES), Ray Quintanar (USFS), Karen Barnette (BLM), Marti Liechester (NPS), Ken McDermond (FWS), and Jesse Bersiag (LA County Fire).

Others:

Chris Adams (OES), Rob Allingham (OES), Charles Altekruise (MS&L), Jennifer Arrowsmith (USFS), Amber Bach (DFC), Erica Bisch (FSC), Jack Blackwell (USFS), Ken Blonski (FSC), Louis Blumberg (CDF), Kimberly Bullock (FSC), David Caine (USFS), Blair Cenicerros (FSC), Julie Coen (Space Imaging LLC), Nicole Coons (P.A. Smith Concepts & Design, Inc.), Greg Dawson (MS&L), Susan DiMauro (Los Alamos County Defensible Space Project), William Donaldson (FSC), Pat Durland (BLM/NIFC), Jane Eckels (MS&L), Billy Ellis (USFS), Stewart Feldman (FSA), Randy Fortner (OES), Jim Francis (BLM), Kari Friesen (McElroy Communications), Carol Frimmer (MS&L), Patrick Gladden (So. CA Edison), Richard Hadley (US F&WS), Jan Hamilton (FSC), John Hardin (FSC), Will Harling (FSC), Kelly Hawk (FSC), Dick Hayes (CDF), Kathy Hemenway (Nat'l Academy of Public Admin.), David Henderson (FSC), Carol Hom (CDF), David Horne (FSC), Ken Hulick (FSC), Donna Hummel (BLM), Brian Jenson (Congressman John Doolittle's Office), Kim Johnson (FSC), Tracy Katelman (FSC), Bryce Keller (FireWise Facilitator), Pat Kidder (BLM), Kevin Lane (Hoopa Valley Tribe), Julia Lang (BLM), Victor Lyon (FireWise Facilitator), Dave Marlow (USFS), Karen Mayer (CDF), Leo McElroy (McElroy Communications), Elwood Miller (FSC), Dennis Orbus (USFS), Leona Parker (BLM), Gary Pavusko (US F&WS), Michelle Phillips (FSC), Joe Rawitzer (FSC), Steve Richmond (FSC), Jill Rushing (MS&L), Carl Sanders (FSC), Rich Schell (CDF), Paul Smith (P.A. Smith Concepts & Designs, Inc.), Don Steele (FSC), Frank Stewart (FSC), Karen Terrill (CDF), Rosalie Turbeville (Guest), Andrea Tuttle (CDF), Mark Valle (FSC), Rich Venn

(MS&L), Jay Watson (Wilderness Society), Troy Whitman (FSC), Robin Yonash (FSA), and Vicki Yorty (FSC).

Welcome and Introductions (Andrea Tuttle)

This is the confluence of three meetings to address community fire protection. The Fire Alliance has been in place since 1996 and has really gained momentum since the development of the National Fire Plan. The Alliance will meet this morning. The California Fire Safe Council will meet this afternoon. And the next two days will be a Firewise Workshop.

Current Issues in Alliance Agencies

CFSC – The State Fire Safe Council is now a 501 (3)(c). They are now working on several public information publications to help advise the public about fire safety.

BIA – Now working on several fire prevention projects with tribes

CDF – Now preparing for the fire season. A new Governor's budget proposal will be out next week that should affect CDF. CDF is giving tours of some of their fuels reduction projects to staff from other states.

OES - OES is working with FEMA to anticipate how they will respond to wildland fire disasters this year. OES is working with local governments to prepare for the coming fire season.

USFS – Chief has mandated the FS to become an all-risk fire agency. So the agency is now responding to the shuttle disaster, Newcastle disease, and other non-traditional work. The Regional Forester is committing funds to insure the region approaches its most efficient level (MEL) this year. Focus for fuels reduction in the coming years will be community fire protection. A great disaster potential exists this year in southern California and elsewhere.

BLM – The agency is also gearing up for the coming fire season. Rural fire assistance is a big focus now. BLM now has the authority to provide excess radio equipment to local departments and is moving to do that. The community assistance grant program is up and improves each year.

NPS – The Park Service now has John Jarvis as the new Regional Administrator. John has a strong background in fire management. Fire Plans will be completed for each national park by 2004. Some WUI projects underway with Marin and Los Angeles Counties. NPS is also working with the regional air boards to find ways of merging enhanced prescribed fire work with air quality management.

FWS – The agency has a relatively small role in land management programs, but has a key role to play in addressing species protection issues. FWS is now working to streamline the consultation processes for completing fuels reduction work.

LACF – The county is working to improve public awareness of fire protection needs. They are developing a more aggressive prescribed fire management program.

Review of Action Items from Last Meeting (Andrea Tuttle)

Last meeting was in March of 2002. Most have been addressed or will be discussed later in the agenda. One remaining issue is identifying ways of reporting results. The Alliance members will be placing more emphasis on finding success and reporting results in the coming months.

Staff Recognition (Andrea Tuttle and Pat Kidder)

Awards were presented to the following individuals for their contributions to the Fire Alliance:

Dana Cole, Wayne Mitchell, and Bryan Zollner (CDF)
Jim Francis (BLM)
Richard Hadley (FWS)
Mike Chapel (USFS)

And the following awards were presented to individuals for their contributions to the Firewise workshops:

Mike Wilkenson (LACF)
Dan Anglin (Kern Valley Fire Safe Council)
Brenda Rightmyer (Butte County Fire Safe Council)

Media Relations Program (Dick Hayes)

The Alliance has developed a communications plan to help the public and others understand the goals and work of the group. The key audiences include the full spectrum of private and government interests. An education kit has been developed for California to describe work by the Alliance. The material is available in hard copy or from the Alliance website. Any member agency can contribute to the material. An exhibit booth has also been prepared. Radio, print, and television sources have also been organized and are being used now to prepare the public for fire season. Samples of the radio and television products were played with strong support from the members and audience.

Louis Blumberg asked how the federal agencies count public service announcements in their reporting structure for the National Fire Plan. Karen Barnette and Ray Quintanar responded that the announcements are very important to the National Fire Plan, but are not reported as prominently as fieldwork accomplishments. Several representative from local fire safe councils asked that the materials be revised so they can be used locally. The Alliance staff agreed to do that.

Firewise Community Workshops (Donna Hummell)

Donna acknowledged Rich Schell as the primary coordinator of this work. The purpose of the workshops is to help communities develop their own fire-protection plans. The workshops are conducted by informing communities about existing fire plans and analysis capabilities from local, state, and federal agencies. Six workshops will be completed in 2003. Three have been completed in Los Angeles, Bakersfield and Chico. Three additional workshops may be completed if funds and resources allow. As follow up to the initial workshop, the Alliance staff is considering sponsorship of additional teams to develop and implement local fire protection plans.

One-Stop Shopping (Pat Kidder and Bruce Turbeville)

Pat described the work that is being done by the Alliance staff to help communities find easier ways to apply for funds to do fire-protection work. Currently, most of the state and federal fire-protection agencies have discrete processes for funding local projects.

Since the last Alliance meeting, staff has been working to merge agency programs. They have developed a broad outline whereby the application process for all funds would be provided by a single application and review process. Recently, the federal processes have changed so that considerable variation still exists in the funding processes among the agencies. Moreover, new national direction now calls for agency collaboration in making strategic funding at the regional scale as well as new project reporting guidelines. Pat indicated that there may be ways of integrating the new federal planning and reporting with one-stop shopping. He offered a diagram that described how this might be done. The diagram positions the State Fire Safe Council as the clearinghouse for funding advice to the agencies. The agency decisions would occur through discussions of the Fire Alliance members. There was considerable discussion about the proposal. Some recognized the difficulty in starting the process this year. Others questioned some of the process elements. A proposal was made to authorize the State Fire Safe Council to oversee the dispersal of funding for local work. While there was interest in providing stronger roles for the public, the funding agencies resisted the idea because they will remain accountable for accomplishing the overall program of work. Pat identified a list of actions that will be used to move forward with a pilot project for one year.

Enhancing Capabilities for Intergovernmental Wildfire Hazard Reduction Planning (Lyle Laverty)

The National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) was chartered by Congress to help government with efficiency issues. They have completed three studies on fire protection matters since August of 2000 in support of the National Fire Plan. Much of what the Academy has proposed for inter-agency work has been borrowed from the CA Fire Alliance. In 2003, the Academy completed another study on ways to support community-based fire-protection planning. Several workshops were held. Key finding was that results are the key to program continuation. Legislation is now being considered

to direct stronger coordination through support of local efforts. Mr. Lavery asked everyone to advise NAPA on this work.

Director Tuttle cautioned that new legislation should encourage a bottom-up approach to fire-protection planning. She advised that uniform direction for planning may not be the most useful approach. Moreover, the traditional approach to reporting accomplishments through acres treated may be problematic. Others cautioned against creating new bureaucracies through federal legislation.

Environmental Compliance (Ken McDermond)

Ken advised that the FWS is responsible for overseeing much of the Endangered Species Act relationships with fuels management work. He noted that processes have been revised to make consultation work go more smoothly. He asked for feedback on the new processes. A representative from a local fire-safe council responded that most of the processes focus on federal land-use issues. However, he noted that the work on private land is improving. Others asked for advice on getting pre-consultation so that ESA issues can be avoided early in the process. They also asked for the FWS to assign staff to assist in completing and tracking the ESA permitting processes. The FWS agreed to evaluate ways they can assist, including being more involved with the Fire Wise workshops.

A Template for Development of Local Fire Protection Plans (Joe Rawitzer, Monterey Co FSC and Tracy Katelman, Lower Matole River FSC)

Tracy described a draft template they have developed for use by local fire-safe councils as they develop local fire-protection plans. This product is being developed under a grant and is being supported by Fire Safe Council members and California Fire Alliance staff. She asked for comments from the Alliance and audience on the draft.