

Forest Health & Wildlife Mitigation Committee Minutes

Date: 19 October 2021

Time: 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Location: MOC

Attendees

Michael Hughes	Maureen Latham
Michelle Blake	Bill Latham
Tracy Braddock	Scott Alford
Kelly Braddock	Kristen Alford
Marc Wilson	Nanci Dixon
Kenneth Dixon	

Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves along with their location on the ranch.

Topics

- Past Projects:

Discussed past work done on Gallinas, Cottonwood, and Mountain View. There are ~14 canyons surrounded by roads. Ranch roads may be considered the easiest to mitigate because the POA has a right of way 30' from the centerline, which eliminates the need to gain permission from individual lot owners. Maintaining these breaks on POA roads might be something that could be funded through the POA budget.

Interior access roads, such as the G2T were described. These access trails (which often follow existing old jeep trails) were developed as collaboration between individual lot owners. The goal was not to achieve a fuel break, but rather to create safe access paths for firefighting equipment to reach interior portions of the ranch to rapidly respond to a fire while it is still small and manageable. The G2T trail was utilized by volunteers and the fire department to put out a small lightning strike fire before it could spread. Also, reviewed the CWPP map of mitigation efforts through 2016, and the proposed projects.

In the past the FHWM committee received several large grants. Some of these grants allowed property owners to mitigate their land with the grant providing a match (up to a certain threshold). These grants are ideal because they provide a unique opportunity to bring a large piece of forestry equipment onto the ranch to do the work. This is usually not feasible for small, individual projects. SFTR was not awarded the most recent grant that it applied for, in part due to the lack of watershed and partnership emphasis.

- CWPP
The CWPP needs to be renewed every five years and is due to be renewed now. A current CWPP is required to maintain the SFTR FireWise status. Some of the CWPP is boiler-plate information, but approximately 50% needs to be updated including a new structure survivability assessment, inclusion of new mitigation efforts (with maps), and updates to the watershed and ecosystem health. The POA had \$30k in the 2020 budget for FHWM efforts, but this has been reduced to \$15k for 2021. Michelle agreed to spearhead this effort, starting with researching the cost of having the plan updated.
- Current Survey:
There is a need to develop a current survey of mitigation efforts completed since 2016, including maintenance of existing fuel breaks, cul-de-sacs that need to be enlarged (radius that could support a large fire truck turning around) and work done on individual properties. This information is needed for the CWPP, but will also help direct project proposals for 2022.
- Grants
Historically, most of the large mitigation projects were funded with grant money. FHWM might be more competitive with future grants if there is an emphasis on watershed protection and SFTR's proximity to two state parks. Tracy offered to research available grants and take the lead on the grant writing.
- 501c3 Status:
One important component of this is the committee's 501c3 status. In order to receive grant funds, the committee will likely need an active 501c3. Maureen offered to reach out to POA members for information on the 501c3 status, and Tracy offered to look into the IRS side of things to see if any money is owed and if the status is still active.
- Board Member Representation:
One question that was raised was the need for a board member to chair the committee. This might be a by-law requirement (especially if the committee wants to receive any funds from the budget). Although board members have been on the committee in the past, it is unclear whether a board member *always* served on the committee. Maureen offered to look into this.
- Collaboration/Communication
It will be necessary to routinely communicate with the POA committees (Roads, Common areas, Preparedness), especially if the FHWM projects will include work in the road or common areas. Additionally, support for the FHWM projects (which benefit the entire ranch) needs to be developed. Tracy offered to coordinate with the POA committee members and possibly produce a Newsletter to generate support and enthusiasm for FHWM efforts. The goal is to have something to present at the December board meeting.

- Partnerships with FFPF, Vermejo, Wootton and other neighbors:

It was decided to table this topic until the committee is more established. (Someone mentioned the Vermejo is under new management.)

- FHWM website:

Michael has already developed a Google website that contains a copious amount of historic documents dating back to 1992. The Google website requires special permission to view, and at this time the POA will not link to it from the official ranch website. Both this historic information and new information (upcoming projects, meetings, educational programs, grant involvement etc) is very valuable and needs to be accessible to everyone. Mark, Michelle and Michael will work on this project.

- Other topics/discussions:

These questions were raised, but no one was certain of the answers. Does the ranch own any firefighting equipment? Who owns the fire station? Is there firefighting equipment in the fire station now? Are there any firefighters on the ranch? Does the FFPF have the most recent map with the new addresses? Are there any legal issues for the FHWM volunteers during mitigation projects?

Possible Projects

Creating defensible zones around the three water tanks:

This was proposed as a possible first project because mitigating around the water tanks will help to protect the ranch's water supply during a fire. This is a low-hanging fruit project because it would not require a lot of effort, and could likely be done by volunteers with chainsaws, mowers and loppers. This effort would help generate interest and support for the FHWM committee because it benefits all ranch residents and the Metro.

Due outs

1. Research cost of updating CWPP - Michelle
2. Research available grants - Tracy
3. Determine the 501c3 status - Maureen and Tracy
4. Prepare FHWM update for December board meeting - TBD
5. Work on FHWM website - Michael, Mark and Michelle
6. Start communication with POA and Metro – Tracy and Maureen

Next Meetings

An email will be sent to determine the best date for the next meeting.

For information about the FHWM committee and its next meeting contact the committee at this email: sftr.fhwm.committee@gmail.com
