

Mono Basin Fire Safe Council Minutes  
20 October 2021 (via Zoom)

Attendees: Glenda Bayless, Robbie Di Paolo, Margaret Eissler, Santiago Escruceria, Bob Gardner, Joseph, Duncan King, Paul McFarland, Dave Marquart, Connie Millar, Tom Strazdins, Nathan Taylor, John Warneke

- Public comment
  - RPAC thankful to have FSC Minutes provided for their recent meeting
- Updates
  - Mono City Fire no longer pursuing skid steer option due to cost of insurance and maintenance
  - Community members who have equipment may be willing to help out with clearing private lots
- Mono City fuel breaks
  - Becoming more difficult for Forest Service & BLM to have machinery available, and timing is an issue
  - How can FSC and/or Fire Commissioners work with land management agencies to get work done? (Robbie)
  - If the goal is to have community maintain own fuel breaks... Find contractors with equipment they maintain, and contract for regular clearing (Paul)
  - How to work with agencies concerning contractors and funding (Robbie)
    - Do we hire contractor to manage clearing with agreement with agencies? Funding for Forest Service to hire?
  - Most financially efficient for community to hire contractor; Community works with land agency on agreement; Having agency manage contractor may lead to same logistical challenges as now (Paul)
  - Reach out to contractors—maybe tree service companies and folks out of Crowley—for a cost assessment, then talk to Forest Service about willingness to have agreement with a third-party, then talk to contractors about possible work (Paul)
  - Previously reached out to Ana Maria about Fire Dept. taking on; She was open to the idea, and appreciates any help we can bring to this effort (Robbie)
    - Will reach out again about revised idea, and suggested contacts
    - Willing to sit in on any meetings to help with agreements (Paul)
  - Would be great to prioritize, and achieve in Spring before nesting season (Robbie)
  - Should learn how an area is cleared, and what happens to debris, for documentation (Robbie)
- Managing defensible space on private property
  - Proactive idea to talk about defensible space with community members, and offer small-scale clearing of brush with hand tools (John)
    - Meet with homeowners and/or Visit his property to see how strategic clearing is done

- Attention to taking action now and not waiting for someone else to do the work
- Multi-faceted idea (Robbie)
  - Show that help is available with lot clearing; Raise awareness about need to do this, and who is already doing it; Land ownership responsibilities
  - Great idea for workshops, promote support, develop understanding of who is interested
  - Offer resources for people who are thinking about this, and show through example
- Having the brush dumpsters helps immensely, and people are making good use of them (Margaret)
- Successful endeavor to offer the bins, and regularly empty them; Mono City Fire funding; Need more documentation and advocacy for use (Robbie)

#### FSC Goals

- Achieved during 2021
  - Fire safety banner; Campfire safety flier; Brush bin
- Ideas for winter and the 2022 fire season
  - Mono City fuel break; Promote fuels reduction on private property (Robbie)
  - Mono County applied for regional fire safe council position, to coordinate with agencies and advocate for projects regarding fire education and outreach (Robbie)
  - Assignments for FSC participants so that action items happen (Connie)
    - More engagement with & participation of land management agencies— Sheriff, Forest Service, BLM, DWP (Robbie)
  - Whole of Mono Basin in efforts
    - Attention to fire safety awareness for residents and visitors to all areas (Glenda)
    - Areas along Hwy 167 often get forgotten about but concerns by those living out there cannot be overlooked (Robbie)
    - Could talk to Conway area residents about fuel breaks; Get them in on discussions (Connie)
  - Stewardship Event
    - Work with agencies to get agreement/framework before fire restrictions for volunteer cleanup days of fire rings outside campgrounds; Reduce fire risk; Allow for dispersed camping but take away idea that camping always needs to include a campfire (Paul)
    - Visit places that see many dispersed campers—Lundy Canyon, 167 area, LV Canyon, around Mono Mills; Remove rings, etc. to start with a clean slate and revisit at end of season; Reduce potential ignition threats and realize what we've done (Paul)
    - Could advertise event with permission of land agencies (Robbie)

- Good event to teach people; Leave lasting impression on visitors, and introduce new places, not only recreation routines (Paul)
- Map of areas of concern
  - For FSC internally, and for enforcement by land management agencies (Robbie)
  - Met with Stephanie Heller—new Mono Lake District Ranger— to reinforce attention to Mono City fire concerns; Asked removal of lower Lundy illegal campsites; Residents add rocks to block sites and remove fire rings; Need Forest Service Order to make sites illegal, with attention to where they are located (Duncan)
  - FSC should send letter to Forest Service, stating what risks exist and where, and ask that Order include Mill Creek sites (Bob)
  - Mono City is directly downwind of sites and in line of fire danger (Dave)
  - Sites located along marked Forest Service road (Duncan)
  - How to proceed with mapping areas? (Robbie)
    - Google Earth map and file; Can add places (Connie)
    - Will talk more at next month's meeting (Robbie)
  - Margy Verba created website to report illegal camping & OHV concerns (Duncan)
- Fire restriction information & enforcement
  - Camp Like a Pro campaign was great first step; Moving forward need to communicate better with local agencies for more awareness to improve upon prevention and ideas (Santiago)
  - Need for better coordination with enforcement agencies; Promote more understanding of how great community concern is; Illegal campground sites still being used, signs placed are removed, fire rings put back; Problems persist (Santiago)
  - Removing fire rings and signage on utility roads works to deter campfires; Need attention to Hansen area & County property with downed dead trees, dried willow thickets; Also attention to home hardening with houses made of wood with brush & trees alongside; Past experience with big fires showed that houses with defensible space survived; Defensible space both increases ability to fight fire and decreases need to fight fire (Tom)
  - Frustration with enforcement by Sheriff & Forest Service... Photographed vehicles/license plates at large unattended campfire near Dunderberg Peak during fire restrictions; Reported but Sheriff & District Ranger ignored (Connie)
  - Always call and report; Calling creates a record, and necessitates where more personnel are needed (Bob)
  - Confusion with enforcement agencies—Sheriff & Forest Service—about fire restrictions; Fire Dept. patrols met campers in violation & aggressive attitudes (Tom)

- More clarity needed on what restrictions are, communicate effectively, and eliminate ambiguity (Tom; Robbie)
- Kutzadika’a federal recognition
  - Will the FSC support federal recognition with a letter? (Glenda)
  - To Glenda: On behalf of the FSC, could you reach out to Charlotte Lange and let her know that we are interested in supporting the tribe and advocating however they deem helpful; See if there is a letter we could write (Robbie)
  - Obernolte introduced bill on 1 June; Not moving forward; Need everyone to email, [obernolte.house.gov/contact](mailto:obernolte.house.gov/contact), to show support for federal recognition and put pressure on him; Tribe working with lobbyist (Bob)
    - In your email, state, “I know you introduced a Bill, thank you. What are you doing now to get it passed and enacted so that there will be federal recognition for this tribe?” (Bob)
    - Will talk more about this at next month’s meeting (Robbie)
- Banner
  - Take off truck? Relocate truck? New banner for next year? (Bob)
  - New banner needed; Redesign for larger font depends on funding (Robbie)
- Future agenda items
  - Map of areas of concern
  - Letter for Forest Service regarding illegal campsites and fire risks for Mono City
  - Support for Kutzadika’a federal recognition
  - Fire banner redesign
  - More engagement with land management agencies at meetings, and on email list
  - Include the June Lake community regardless of having their own FSC
- Next meeting to be held on 17 November 2021 at 5pm