

Hardwood Advisory Report to Board, Meeting December 6, 2018

In May of 1993 the State of California Board of Forestry reviewed impacts to Oak woodlands and recommended that local governments address local hardwood management and conservation in lieu of statewide regulation. The Committee was formed as the result of the Board of Forestry's suggestion.

The Hardwood Advisory Committee was formed by Resolution 96-284 of The Calaveras Board of supervisors with the purpose of making periodic reports and recommendations to the board with regards to Oak woodland management.

It was felt by the committee that the current voluntary guidelines set forth in the Voluntary Oak Woodland management Guidelines are adequate. See Exhibit A
[http://ema.calaverasgov.us/Portals/EMA/Documents/Ag/Oak Woodland Management Plan.pdf](http://ema.calaverasgov.us/Portals/EMA/Documents/Ag/Oak%20Woodland%20Management%20Plan.pdf)

Population in Calaveras is not growing as fast as predicted in the Oak Woodland Management plan and has actually stabilized between 46,000 and 48,000 residents.

Calaveras County has a lot of ground under fuel breaks maintained by Cal Fire and Fire Safe Council. Homeowners have to sign a right to entry to have fuel break work on their property but even with a 90-10% cost share, it's an uphill battle to get homeowner participation. Grant money is available for fuel break work, and with climate change initiatives probably going to increase. Blue Lake Springs has a Fire Protection Plan and has assisted, along with Cal Fire, in Calaveras RCD's two new grant proposals. Communities in higher elevations have smaller tracts of land and more paperwork involved with more landowners. Gordon Long said that the RCD sent out 120 right to entry letters to West Point area residents with 117 landowners responding to their Fuel Reduction project, so there is support for fuel breaks and willingness to participate in some cases. Insurance companies payed out 13 billion last year. Over 20 billion fire loss insurance payments estimated this year. Fire insurance is going up. Some insurance companies are no longer writing any new policies in some areas. High risk pool may be the only way to get insurance. Insurance companies may be the agent of change requiring homeowners to maintain fuel breaks and larger buffers near their homes

The Hardwood Advisory Committee recommends that a map of the proposed and established fuel breaks be added to county maps if not included in a layer already. Cal-Fire and RCD member Gordon Long are able to furnish data to county. Kevin Wright will check with county GIS and get their feedback.

Prescribed burns seems to be a tool that will be used more in near future. Susie Kocher from UC Extension gave a talk in Arnold and a presentation to board of Supervisors in county on prescribed burns. She was looking for possible demonstration sites for a burn.

Oaks stumps have re-sprouted after the Butte Fire. It would be a good practice to trim multiple sprouts back to one or two stems. Kevin Wright said he would check with Sean Kriletich from Calaveras Grown for a handout for stump trimming and see if a write up could be placed in the paper or online.

Scott Oneto with UC Cooperative Extension reported that the fungal foamy bark canker incidents have diminished. No new pests on oaks have been reported in the area. Limbs and trees splitting may be due to difference between drought and wet years.

Tim Tate, Sierra Pacific Industries said that pine mortality went down dramatically in 2017 after the rains. We may be over the hump if we receive normal rainfall. Cultural practice for planting trees has changed and now SPI collects seed stock from 500 feet below where the new site is to be planted. It takes 35 years to grow a tree to market size.

Planning director Peter Maurer said the administrative draft of the Final EIR for the General Plan should be out in week or two. There were several hundred pages of comments on the Draft EIR which much be responded to. Hearings will be scheduled in early 2019 for the Planning Commission with the hope that the Board can adopt the plan in the spring. The County will have what state law requires as far as oak tree preservation. There are not many new projects. Emergency egress issues for fire protection is something that will be addressed throughout all the communities in the near future.

Mike Kirkley, retired member of Mother Load Land Trust and professional forester, explained conservation easements. They are agreements between landowners and conservation organization where the landowner extinguishes development rights to their property to preserve the agricultural operation, open space, oak woodland or wildlife habitat. A Land trust typically does not manage the property but oversees the property for compliance. Cattle grazing is beneficial for fire protection, so a subdivision can be compatible with a strong ag element. Rangeland trusts may front appraisal money that is necessary to evaluate value of an easement.

Mitigation banking is used to provide critical habitat from development and other projects such as road improvement where habitat is lost from the project. It allows the developer to pay into a mitigation account/bank rather than trying to mitigate on or off site. If planned in advance it helps mitigation dollars stay in the county and provides a larger area with suitable habitat for the impacted species as development projects and species habitat can be combined. County could help facilitate by being knowledgeable of landowners who are interested in providing habitat and matching them with planned development, such as Cal-Trans road improvement projects.

Hardwood Advisory Committee recommends to the Board of Supervisors and The Planning Commission to modify the general plan and add: "Support the use of Conservation Easements and local Land Banks for the preservation of resource production lands and provide a tool for project managers to mitigate the loss of rangeland, woodland and riparian corridors that may be habitat for native oak, wildlife and special status and sensitive biological species." Cal Fire is working on controlled burns for fire breaks and medusa head weeds. Fire Safe Council has a lot of projects for fuel reduction. Personnel that had to leave to fight fires are coming back now and are available for fuels management activities. It might be a good time to burn for medusa head this time of year but short time frame if you can get grass to burn and is so thick that it doesn't affect winter feed.

Dianne Severud suggested that voting membership be reduced to make it easier to achieve a quorum and change membership requirements so you don't have to be property owners with oak trees on property. No one has been checking the applications for that requirement but that is in the ordinance. We will need to adopt by-laws and there is a template for that. We will provide written report. Tim Tate has searched government code in regard to membership requirements and found that the only place they are spelled out are in Calaveras County resolution # 96-284. Currently there are two Board of Supervisor voting members and an alternate. We need to recommend changing governing document to modify membership requirements to reflect reality. After further discussion it was felt that as an

informational group it is good to have diversity in the makeup of the Hardwood Advisory Committee to get a diversity of experiences and viewpoints.

After discussion, to support Dianne Severud's suggestions The Hardwood Advisory Committee recommends:

1. *Reduce voting members by one Board of Supervisor, and eliminate the woodcutter, if after review we find that there is no requirement for a woodcutter in any state statute. This would leave nine voting members and a quorum of five.*
2. *Be the first to review the applications for new members and recommend our choice to the Board of Supervisors*
3. *Remove the Committee membership qualification requiring ownership of land in Calaveras County upon which oak trees are growing and replace it with owning land in Calaveras County or being an agent of an entity that owns land or conducts business in Calaveras County.*
4. *Remove the ex-officio members except the agricultural commissioner and farm advisor. As stated in Resolution 96-284 The Committee may request participation in an Ex-Officio capacity of such other public agency representatives as it deems appropriate.*
5. *Allow the Agricultural Commissioner and The Farm Advisor to chair the committee and perform duties of vice chair and secretary to facilitate conducting business.*

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Wright
Ag Commissioner