

BUTTE FALLS COMMUNITY FOREST PROJECT
Project Team Meeting #3
October 23, 2020, 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Meeting Minutes (written by Jennah Stillman)

Project Team Members Present: Dave Erickson (*Lone Rock Timber*), Dave Palmer (USFS), Trish Callahan (*Butte Falls*), Alan Dobney (*Southern Oregon Railway Society*), Chris Mathas (*Butte Falls Natural Resources Charter School*), Susan Bethers (*Oregon State Parks*), Kaola Swanson (*Sustainable Northwest*), Janice Shultz (*Butte Falls*), Austin McClister (*Representative Breese-Iverson's Office*), Jamie Trammell (*Southern Oregon University*), Roque Barros (*The Ford Family Foundation*), Colleen Padilla (*SOREDI*), Clint Nichols (*Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District*), Terry Fairbanks (*Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative*), Art Anderson (*ODOT*), Scott Beveredige

Conveners:

Mayor Linda Spencer (*City of Butte Falls*) and Bill Thorndike (*Medford Fabrication*)

Facilitation and Project Team:

Keith Tymchuk (*Oregon Solutions*), Karmen Fore (*Oregon Solutions*), Jennah Stillman (*Oregon Solutions*), Alex Campbell (*Regional Solutions*), and Kristin Kovalik (*Trust for Public Land*)

1. Welcome, Agenda Overview, Introductions and Updates

The co-conveners, Mayor Linda Spencer and Bill Thorndike welcomed everyone to the meeting and then Oregon Solutions project manager, Keith Tymchuk, overviewed the agenda, inviting the co-conveners to share an update on their respective communities, their status and impacts from the recent South Obenchain Fire.

Mayor Spencer reported that thankfully, none of the community forest property was damaged. Unfortunately, some of the Butte Falls residents involved in this project experienced property damages and have been dealing with clean-up efforts and insurance processes following. In learning from the fire, the community has acknowledged that this community forest acquisition is vital and that the proposed plan is moving in the right direction to prioritize fire resilience. In other local news, the Community Forest Commission has officially been approved by the Butte Falls Town Council and the first meeting will be held next week. It was noted that the Marketing/Communications and Economic Development leads are still vacant.

Bill Thorndike shared that there is an active statewide fire conversation underway, with potential opportunities for Butte Falls. He indicated that it would be advantageous for the town to obtain ownership of the land as soon as possible so that the town can start proactively managing for prevention in the next fire season to come. Bill also noted that he is convening a regional group appointed by the Governor for fire response.

The group engaged in discussion around the topic of funding. Colleen Padilla shared that SOREDI had created a low interest lending program initially connected to COVID-19, but would investigate as to whether additional funding could be accessible in relation to the wildfire response. Terry Fairbanks shared that the Medford Water Commission recently signed an agreement to work with venture capitalists to provide bonds that help fund forest management treatment costs and recommended connecting with Craig Harper to see the MOU for potential expansion and integration of Butte Falls.

2. Northwest Community Forest Coalition

Koala Swanson, the Forest Program Director at Sustainable Northwest, gave a brief presentation on the Northwest Community Forest Coalition, which they convene. It is a group of 25+ members engaged in community forest development and is focused on providing technical assistance, engaging in policy and advocacy, and providing learning and networking opportunities. She noted that they are seeking to expand community forest representation in Oregon and anyone is welcome to attend meetings or utilize the Community Forest Handbook that they created and can be found on their website ([here](#)).

3. Subcommittee Review and Next Steps

Keith acknowledged that the subcommittee work has begun to commence, but in varying sequencing due to the timeline of project objectives, along with mitigating impacts of COVID-19 and prioritization of post-wildfire response. The subcommittees include 1) Forest Management and Restoration, 2) Education and Research, 3) Economic Health, 4) Recreation and 5) Funding. The subcommittee updates are as follows:

Funding Subcommittee

Kristin Kovalik, chair of the subcommittee shared that the first meeting is coming up on October 27th. The objectives of this gathering will be to discuss the pending grants and to seek additional input on potential pathways for closing the acquisition gap. She acknowledged that there is a grant for \$350,000 currently being reviewed and will have feedback on the request in January about whether it was successful or not. There are still questions around the project qualifications for potential FEMA funding. In regards to the question of the 17 acre residential property acquisition, the town would like to have this development option but it may not be a possibility at this point in time if a funding pathway cannot be identified by the end of this year. The \$90,000-\$100,000 funding for this property, if it's intended for residential use, cannot be obtained by TPL.

Forest Management & Restoration Subcommittee

Don Hamann, chair of the subcommittee shared that the group met on October 19th and engaged in a professional review of the draft forest management plan. Feedback will continue to be collected over the next couple weeks and integrated by the contractor, Justin Cullumbine, and then will be recirculated to the community for final review and feedback, before the plan needs to be submitted to the USFS Community Grant Program by the end of this year. Don acknowledged that there is still a need for support from a professional planner and for the community to build a stronger definition of the desired end result for the forest. He noted that the meeting brought forth feedback like the integration of prescribed burns into the management plan and partnership interest with adjacent land neighbors to help support the long term vision.

Education & Research

Chris Mathas, chair of the subcommittee has connected with students and faculty at Southern Oregon University to discuss potential opportunities around capstone project planning. He acknowledged that in other outreach conversations, it has been challenging for potential partners to make any commitments that involve longer term commitments, given that the town does not yet have ownership of the forest. When the acquisition is complete, he feels that there will be more clarity and opportunity to move forward. The subcommittee will aim to meet before the end of the year to discuss objectives and action items.

Next Steps

Keith mentioned that the Butte Falls Community Forest project was featured in a news release [here](#) and then thanked the group for their hard work and continued commitment to this process.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.