

Thursday, December 04, 2008 (file cac176)

To: Dan Breedon

Fr: Ed Miller

Subj: Highlights of 2nd annual wildfire safety summit meeting on Dec 3, 08

1. Discussion with SPI re cogeneration and herbicides: SPI does not have any immediate plans for expansion or new construction of cogeneration facilities. There is concern about expansion of electrical power output beyond 50 Mw because of California State supervision. A common output rating is 49.9 Mw to avoid this apparent barrier. They utilize registered herbicide applicators for pre and post treatment of their seedlings. They try to minimize the use of herbicides by progressive treatment over long periods using increasing application concentrations. He noted that their use is considerably less than for Ag applications in the valley.
2. Discussions with a group concerned with escape route congestion, bridge strength and brush clearance: The ability to bypass stalled vehicles under one-way operating conditions in the presence of emergency vehicles operating in both directions was identified as a critical issue. Widening of shoulders and availability of frequent turn-outs was recommended. The group believed that yearly removal of brush near escape routes was necessary. Bridge strength enhancement on east-west roads was recognized as a significant cost factor.
3. The large group was concerned with terrorist/criminal/deviate activities.

Comments/afterthoughts re to the safety element and Firesafe Council/emergency organization participation:

1. We need statistics/lessons-learned on dwelling survival/loss as a function of vegetation and structural features based on recent wildland fire experience. Finding patterns in "apparent chaos" together with some limited anecdotes is a worthwhile exercise for stakeholder guidance and can be helpful in soliciting outside funding for mitigation.
2. An increased utilization of "relatively safe" herbicides is the key to cost-effective maintenance of vegetation in a firesafe state. The county or state may need to fund a licensed applicator or at a minimum provide knowledge of safe practices for individual property owners who do not have "deep pockets".
3. Extended multi-function zones such as fuel reduction for localization of wildland fire, fire suppression crew protection, recreation/work trails, contiguous wildlife routes/nest sites, community small scale food production, energy distribution, high pesticide/herbicide farming isolation, low chemical usage organic farming isolation and extractive/major industrial activities need to be examined. Special interest centers on government, industrial forestry, grazing land and energy system ownerships.
4. Expanded biomass facility geographic distribution is a key to reducing wildland fire risk, providing improved energy reliability, providing a source of high quality employment/investment, reduction of energy for circulation and improved safety. In the limit,

government may need to take on critical tasks similar to gas production at the Neal waste management site.

5. Social isolation in remote rural areas featuring cluster/affinity type organization may be the key to minimizing vulnerability to weapons of mass destruction, arson, drug production and other anti-social activities.
6. Emergency routes on nominally industrial/private road systems needs to be widely publicized and emergency access provided. Frangible chains, locks and window covered keys with or without alarms may need to be provided to minimize unauthorized use and provide rapid emergency access to escape routes.
7. El Dorado County is in the process of adopting the new International Building Code. This code provides straightforward, accessible design constraints for DIY and higher level building/architectural organizations with a special emphasis on fire safety. I believe that Butte County needs to compare and contrast the current UBC and the International code to determine if the transition would be beneficial.
8. Specific infrastructure/measurement/study projects applicable to particular non-county governmental agencies and deep pocket donors need to be debated, a consensus developed and priorities established.
9. We need to get together with Butte County road specialists, SPI, the Lassen Park civil engineering organization and outside specialists to determine the appropriate structure for sustainable rural roads for a variety of uses in Butte County.