



BOARD MEETING AGENDA SUBMITTAL

TO: GCSB Board of Directors

FROM: Peter Kampa, General Manager

DATE: November 14, 2023

SUBJECT: Agenda Item 6C: Discussion and Input for Items or Issues to be Addressed by the Tuolumne County Natural Resources Committee

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends the following action:

I move to support and recommend the strategic priorities as amended for the Tuolumne County Natural Resources Committee

BACKGROUND:

Recently, the county of Tuolumne abolished its water policy advisory committee and combined their water resources responsibilities with that of the county's natural resources committee. In doing so they also added committee membership for each of the county's water providers. Please find attached the most recent natural resources committee agendas.

Your GCSB general manager has been attending these meetings and will continue to do so unless our board wishes to appoint a different representative. These committee meetings are open to the public, but typically not held in the Zoom platform.

At its last two meetings, the natural resources committee has considered the adoption of strategic priorities that will guide the efforts of county staff and drive agenda items for the committee. Committee members were requested to review the priorities as listed below and provide input. I have recommended some additions (underlined red text) to the priorities considered by the committee on November 1, 2023. As this is the first opportunity for our board to discuss this matter, staff is seeking board input, addition or modification to and consideration of approval of the initial committee strategic priorities:

- Support our local water and wastewater utility partners in their effort to modernize and improve water supply, treatment, and distribution; wastewater collection, treatment and reuse; and mitigate risk.
- Maintain awareness of pertinent legislation and policy regarding water and natural resources and provide recommendations for advocacy as appropriate.

- Facilitate public land use access and recreation while balancing and mitigating natural resource impacts from overuse/misuse
- Promote forest health and watershed resilience through innovative solutions and capacity building.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this action or participation on the committee.

ATTACHMENTS:

October 4, 2023 and November 1, 2023 committee agendas

Tuolumne County
Administration Center
2 South Green Street
Sonora, California 95370
Phone (209) 533-5521
Fax (209) 533-6549

Heather Ryan
Clerk of the Board
of Supervisors

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF TUOLUMNE**

David Goldemberg, First District
Kathleen Haff, Fourth District

Ryan Campbell, Second District

Anaiah Kirk, Third District
Jaron Brandon, Fifth District

**Natural Resource Committee
Wednesday, October 4st, 2023 @ 10:00 am
Board of Supervisors Chambers
2 S. Green Street, 4^h Floor, Sonora, CA 95370**

AGENDA

1. Call the meeting to order and introductions
2. Public forum – The public may speak on any item not on the printed agenda. No action may be taken by the Committee. The amount of time allocated for the public forum is limited to 15 minutes.
3. Consideration of approving the minutes of the meeting held on June 7th, 2023.
4. Consideration of Comment letter for the State urban water supply conservation regulation (AB) 1668
5. Partner agencies updates
 - A. USFS updates:
 - B. CalFire updates:
6. Committee business
 - A. Staff reports and recommendations
 - a. WaterSMART Grant proposal
 - B. Committee member reports
7. Discussion Items
 - A. Topic recommendations for 2024 committee actions and work plan (to be developed at subsequent meetings)

In accordance with Government Section 54954.3(a), the public may comment on any item on the agenda. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance (i.e., auxiliary aids or services) in order to participate in this public meeting, please contact the County Administrator's Office, (209-533-5511). Notification 48 hours prior to the start of the meeting will enable staff to make reasonable accommodations to ensure accessibility to this public meeting.

8. Adjourn
The next regular meeting scheduled for November 1st, 2023.

Membership Roster

Name	<u>Position</u>	Group
Anaiah Kirk	<u>Chair</u>	County
Kathleen Haff	<u>Vice Chair</u>	County
Jim Phelan	<u>Member</u>	TCRCD
Jim Maddox	<u>Member</u>	F&G PFAC
Dick Gaiser	<u>Member</u>	TC Ag
Chris Trott	<u>Member</u>	At-Large
Delegate	<u>Member</u>	Tuolumne Me-Wuk
Delegate	Member	Chicken Ranch Me-Wuk
Delegate	Member	Hetch Hetchy
Delegate	Member	GCSD
Delegate	Member	TUD
Sean Hembree	<u>CAO Staff</u>	County

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**Natural Resource Committee
Wednesday, June 7, 2023 @ 10:00 am
Board of Supervisors Chambers
2 S. Green St., 4th Floor
Sonora, 95370**

Minutes

Call the meeting to order

Supervisor Kirk called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. and confirmed a quorum was present.

Members present: Anaiah Kirk, Jaron Brandon, Jim Phelan, Jim Maddox, Dick Gaiser

Public Forum – The public may speak on any item not on the printed agenda. No action may be taken by the Committee. The amount of time allocated for the public forum is limited to 15 minutes.

Members of the public provided comments on the ruling regarding the use of fire retardant.

Stan with CSERC provided comment on the ruling regarding the use of fire retardants and permitting with the EPA.

Consideration of approving the minutes of the meeting held on May 3, 2023.

Jim Phelan made a motion to approve the minutes of May 3, 2023. Dick Gaiser seconded the motion. Supervisor Brandon noted an error in the title of his handout. The minutes were approved unanimously with title change noted.

4. Partner agencies updates

- A. USFS updates: none
- B. CalFire updates: none

- C. TUD updates: Don Perkins, TUD General Manager, provided a report on the treatment facility, testing for clean water happening in October. Recent construction on Mt. Elizabeth Road including the installation of 6 fire hydrants, Mt. Provo transmission lines, and road repairs to include an emergency exit. Committee members provided comments.

5. Committee Business

- A. Staff reports and recommendations
 - a. Eric Erhardt provided a report and handout titled “Federal Court sides with counties cities, and forestry groups, ruling USFS may continue use of aerial fire retardants to fight wildfires”.
 - b. Eric Erhardt noted that the Board of Supervisors voted not to renew the water agency consultant contract and approved the elimination of the natural resource analyst position and that the Board of Supervisors voted not to renew the water agency consultant contract and approved the elimination of the natural resource analyst position.
- B. Committee member reports - None

6. Discussion Items

- A. Letter on AB625 – Forest Biomass Waste Utilization Program

Mark Fischer, Administrative Analyst provided a report that AB625 is held until at least January 2024. Committee members provided comments with the direction that this item is to be re-visited in January.

- B. Discussion regarding fire hazard clean-up and available resources

Dore Bietz, Office of Emergency Services, provided a report on storm clean-up, green waste planning calendar, applying for grants, and tree hazard clean-up. Responding to opportunities with RCD and staying in contact with Lindsey Mattos and other partners. Wildfire defensible space projects will begin July 01, 2023.

Supervisor Kirk requested topic suggestions for the next meeting. Water Rights and related topics were mentioned.

Adjourn

Supervisor Kirk adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m. and announced the next meeting scheduled for July 5, 2023

To: The California State Water Resource Control Board

Subject: Comment Letter – Proposed Making Conservation a California Way of Life

This letter is written on behalf of the County of Tuolumne Board of Supervisors and Urban Retail Water Suppliers within Tuolumne County. It will provide a brief context followed by recommendations for locally appropriating the efficiency standards mandated by AB 1668.

Vulnerable Conditions

To craft an equitable conservation standard for Tuolumne County, and many similar settings, the following conditions need to be understood as they are prevalent in most rural, headwater communities.

Economic vulnerabilities: Our County has a low per capita population density and widespread economically disadvantaged communities (DAC). This results in decreased economic drivers to affect efficiency improvements. Widespread improvements in infrastructure modernization or monitoring to be implemented on a short timeline are simply untenable when these cost increases are disproportionately assigned to ratepayers.

Physical vulnerabilities: Rural communities such as ours are at inordinate risk for the related disaster conditions of drought, flood and wildfire. Resources to respond to these events and community infrastructure to mitigate these risks are outpaced by changing climate and other factors. Water supply systems, including fire water, have less storage, diversification and redundancies than those in more developed regions. Any efficiency standards in the name of drought resilience must also consider all resilience risks and benefits.

Recommendations:

Economic Feasibility: Compliance standards need to be commensurate with communities' ability to fund these improvements. The currently available assistance from State grants and agreements is insufficient to offset the cost borne by taxpayers and utility ratepayers. Moreover, compliance schemes that focus on punitive actions of fines or grant ineligibility will only function to push the most disadvantaged communities further under.

Standards Flexibility: Avoiding overly prescriptive standards requirements will allow for local innovation and best practice identification appropriate for the setting and conditions of local jurisdictions. This is especially important as it applies to CII requirements.

Streamlining monitoring and reporting requirements will need modification and safeguards to ensure that costs are not arduous. This will ensure that efficiency dollars go toward best practice improvements, not accounting red-tape.

Consider all risks and benefits: There is a need for cautious avoidance of unintended consequences. Standards need mindful intention to leverage multiple benefits and avoid risk. Consider, for example, the risks associated with sustained outdoor water use restrictions in community settings. Over time, this would lead to more dead and water-stressed trees and landscape vegetation. This in turn would lead to increased community wildfire risk, higher insurance rates, decreased property values,

decreased air quality, increased home and workplace cooling costs, etc. By contrast, augmenting rate structures or other means to allow increased outdoor water use during above-normal water years would mitigate these risks to mature trees and vegetation together with these embedded impacts. In Tuolumne County this could be done without decreasing usable water supply for downstream users in most wet years. Moreover, this would have a throttling effect on drought/flood conditions for downstream water users. As is the case with agricultural land, rural mountain communities can function to infiltrate ground water infiltration when excess water is a liability so that it is available when it is scarce.

At the risk of oversimplification, this example demonstrated the importance flexible system guidelines that are matched the conditions of their setting. When empowered with the needed additional resources, rural communities can be responsible stewards of California's water system. Thank you for your consideration and commitment to building equitable solutions for California's rural communities.

DRAFT

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Natural Resource Committee
Wednesday, November 1st, 2023 @ 10:00 am
Board of Supervisors Chambers
2 S. Green Street, 4th Floor, Sonora, CA 95370

AGENDA

1. Call the meeting to order
2. Public forum – The public may speak on any item not on the printed agenda. No action may be taken by the Committee. The amount of time allocated for the public forum is limited to 15 minutes.
3. Consideration of approving the minutes of the meeting held on October 4th, 2023.
4. Partner agencies updates
5. Committee business
 - A. Staff reports and recommendations
 - a. Update on submitted grant proposals and pertinent upcoming events
 - B. Committee member reports
6. Discussion Items
 - A. Topic recommendations for 2024 committee Strategic Priorities
7. Adjourn
The next regular meeting scheduled for December 6th, 2023.

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Item 6.A. Attachment

Natural Resource Committee Strategic Priorities (*Proposed*)

- Support our local water utility partners in their effort to modernize and improve water supply and mitigate risk.
- Maintain awareness of pertinent legislation and policy regarding water and natural resources and provide recommendations for advocacy as appropriate.
- Facilitate public land use access and recreation while balancing and mitigating natural resource impacts from overuse/misuse
- Promote forest health and watershed resilience through innovative solutions and capacity building.

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**Natural Resource Committee
Wednesday, October 4, 2023 @ 10:00 am
Board of Supervisors Chambers
2 S. Green St., 4th Floor
Sonora, 95370**

Minutes

1. Call the meeting to order
Vice Chair Haff called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M. and confirmed a quorum was present.
2. Members present: Kathleen Haff, Jim Phelan, Jim Maddox, Chris Trott, Adam Mazurkiewicz (Hetch Hetchy), Dianna Beasley (Tuolumne Me-Wuk), Pete Kampa (GCSD), Ron Ringen (TUD), Sean Hembree (staff)
3. Public Forum – The public may speak on any item not on the printed agenda. No action may be taken by the Committee. The amount of time allocated for the public forum is limited to 15 minutes. – None
4. Consideration of approving the minutes of the meeting held on June 7th, 2023.
Jim Maddox made a motion to approve the minutes of June 7th, 2023. Jim Phelan seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously with title change noted.
5. Consideration of Comment letter for the State Urban Water Supply Conservation Regulation (AB) 1668
6. Partner agencies updates
 - a. USFS updates: Ben Cossell gave a report on the status of prescribed burn projects in the Stanislaus Forest noting that there had been approximately 17,000 acres burned this year. He indicated that a new Summit District Ranger and Deputy District Ranger appointments had been made. NEPA scoping for non-motorized trails is underway. It was noted that a locality adjustment from the Forest Service Office of Budget Management was not expected to include allowances for Tuolumne County staffing in the coming year.

- b. CalFire updates: none

7. Committee Business

- a. Staff reports and recommendations
 - i. Sean Hembree gave a report about planned WaterSMART Grant proposal in partnership with UC Merced, Turlock Irrigation District, US Forest Service

8. Committee member reports

- a. Pete Kampa (GCSD): Multiple projects are underway or near completion including: planning for a 100,000 gallon alternative water supply tank to service the Big Oak Flat area – a water filling stations for drought contingency – replacement of backup generators for sewer lift stations – completion of the Hetch Hetchy Railroad Trail (1.8 miles)
- b. Ron Ringen (TUD) EN2 Contractor identified raw water drafting locations for fire suppression.

9. Discussion Items

- a. Topic Recommendations for 2024 Committee priority actions and work plan
 - i. Engagement of NEPA public scoping period
 - ii. Fuel thinning of WUI communities
 - iii. Additional topics will be considered by members and will be brought for discussion at the next meeting

- 10. Adjourned: Vice Chair Haff adjourned the meeting at 11:06 A.M. The next meeting scheduled for Nov 1st, 2023