

Bylaws for the Southern Sierra Nevada Prescribed Fire Council

Article One: Mission Statement

The mission of the Southern Sierra Nevada Prescribed Fire Council is to serve as a venue for practitioners, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, tribes, non-governmental organizations, coalitions, and interested individuals to work collaboratively to promote, protect, conserve, and expand the responsible use of prescribed fire and cultural fire in the southern Sierra Nevada's fire-adapted landscapes and fire-dependent landscapes, and to promote public understanding and acceptance on the ecological and cultural importance of burning.

Article Two: Name

The name of this organization shall be the Southern Sierra Nevada Prescribed Fire Council, hereafter referred to as the "Council."

Article Three: Geographic Location

The geographic area of the Council includes the Sierra Nevada mountain range from Lake Tahoe south towards the Tehachapi Pass, in addition to the surrounding foothills and the San Joaquin Valley and Owens Valley. This area is can be approximated by the area south of Interstate 80, east of Highway 99, west of U.S. Route 395, and north of Highway 58 (Tehachapi Pass).

Article Four: Purpose

The purpose of the Council is to promote and facilitate an increase in the responsible use of fire as a management tool in the southern Sierra Nevada region.

The following approaches will be used to accomplish the purpose of the Council:

- Provide a focus for successes and challenges regarding prescribed burning in the southern Sierra Nevada region.
- Facilitate the exchange of information regarding the appropriate application of prescribed burning and its effects.
- Promote a general public understanding the role of fire in ecosystems, and the role of prescribed fire in ecosystem management.
- Promote safety, training, and research in the art and science of prescribed fire.
- Provide an open forum for discussions on prescribed fire practices, natural ignitions, cultural fire, smoke applications and management, regulations, and policies as a means to encourage the use of prescribed burning.

Article Five: Participation

5.1 Structure

The Council is organized and led by the Steering Committee. Organizations and individuals engage and participate in the Council through working groups, attendance at open meetings, and various field tours. There are no membership dues nor electoral or voting requirements in the

Council's decision-making process, and participating organizations speak for themselves. Rather than selecting a single organization to formally speak for the coalition, we opt to collaborate and support each other to develop common ground and enhance working relationships.

5.2 Council Participants

Council participants shall be any practitioners, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, tribes, non-governmental organizations, coalitions, and individuals with an interest in the appropriate use of prescribed fire in the southern Sierra Nevada region. Council participants include Advisory Members that serve in an advisory role to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee and working groups will seek out additional Advisory Members as needed.

5.3 Steering Committee

A Steering Committee, composed of representatives from the following stakeholder groups, is established to guide the organization, develop positions, and coordinate meetings. The Steering Committee will be made up of 10-12 representatives from the following categories. These include but are not limited to the following categories.

A. Federal agencies

- Bureau of Land Management
- USDA Forest Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- US Geological Survey
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Department of Defense
- Southern Sierra Nevada Fire Science Working Group
- Sierra Nevada Line Officers Working Group

B. State agencies

- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Cal Fire
- California Air Resources Board

C. Local

- Air Pollution Control District
- Air Quality Management District

D. Tribes and Tribal Coalitions

- Big Sandy Rancheria
- Cold Springs Rancheria
- North Fork Rancheria
- Picayune Rancheria
- Santa Rosa Indian Community
- Table Mountain Rancheria

- Tule River Indian Reservation
- American Indian Council of Mariposa
- Chowchilla Tribe
- Dumna Tribal Government
- Dunlap Band of Mono Indians
- Kern Valley Indian Council
- Kawaiisu Tribe
- North Fork Mono Tribe
- Traditional Choinumni Tribe
- Tubatulabals of Kern Valley
- Wukchumni Tribe
- Dumna Tribe of Auberry
- Northern Band of Mono Yokuts
- Squaw Valley Tribe
- Tejon Indians
- Tejon Indian Tribe
- Wuksachi Indian Tribe
- California Choinumni Tribal Project
- Kings River Choinumni Farm Tribe
- Sierra Mono Museum
- Sierra Nevada Native American Coalition

D. Educational and outreach institutions

- University of California Davis
- University of California Berkeley
- University of California Merced
- University California Cooperative Extension
- California Fire Science Consortium

E. Conservation organizations

- The Wilderness Society
- The Nature Conservancy
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Sierra Forest Legacy

F. Other NGOs

- Fire Safe Councils and Community based NGOs
- Land Trusts

G. Private and Industrial landowners

- Southern California Edison
- Sierra Pacific Industries
- Consulting foresters

5.4 Steering Committee Role

The Steering Committee members are responsible for contributing expertise in their field, to serve as a liaison to communicate information to and from their organization or constituencies, and act in a manner that will enhance trust among all partners and interested parties. Members are responsible for reviewing material in advance and being prepared to engage in substantive discussions during meetings. A Steering Committee member is also tasked with promoting the mission and objectives of the Council by promoting the Council's activities and actively engaging in the distribution of information on the Council's behalf.

5.5 Open Steering Committee seat

If there is an opening in the Steering Committee, a person may be suggested to the Chair in writing by a Steering Committee member 10 days prior to a meeting. 2/3 vote of approval is required for acceptance of a new member.

5.6 Term Limits, Removals and Resignations

There are no term limits on participants of the Steering Committee. If any issues arise with a Steering Committee member, the Chair may lead the discussion during either of the two annual Steering Committee meetings. A written notice to discuss at the upcoming meeting must be sent to the Chair 10 day prior to the Steering Committee meeting. A 2/3 vote by the Steering Committee is required to remove a Steering Committee member.

5.7 Proxies

In the event that a Steering Committee member must be absent from a meeting, he/she may designate an alternate representative.

5.8 Working Groups

The Steering Committee may form working groups to work on issues relevant to achieving the mission of the Council. A written request outlining the goals and objectives and designated group leader must be sent to the Chair 10 days prior to the Steering Committee meeting. The Chair will announce the work group at the following meeting with an open discussion. 2/3 vote of approval from voting Steering Committee members is required for work group formation. Updates on the progress of work groups will be presented at each Steering Committee meeting.

5.9 Council Positions

Once a formal communication is drafted, discussed, and edited through a working group and supported by two-thirds of the Steering Committee members present (given at least two weeks' notice), it will be sent out to the larger Council network for sign-on. All partner organizations and interested parties then have an opportunity to read the document and decide whether or not to sign on. All supporting organizations may be listed in the final document, upon request. It is okay for an organization to elect to sign on to one Council paper and not another. Council participants and individuals outside of the Council can sign on to letters and issue papers.

Article Six: Organizational Leadership

6.1 Appointed Officers

At minimum, appointed officers shall include a Council Chair, Vice Chair, and Administrative Coordinator.

6.2 Officer Term

The term of the office will be for one year. There will be no limit on successive terms of service.

6.3 Appointment

The officers shall be selected by a two-thirds vote of the Steering Committee.

6.4 Resignation and Removal

Any officer may resign by presenting written notice to the Steering Committee. An officer may be removed from office by two-thirds Steering Committee vote at a meeting.

6.5 Vacancies

If an officer position becomes vacant for any reason during the office's term, the Steering Committee shall, by two-thirds vote, appoint a replacement to complete the remainder of that office's term.

6.6 Duties

The Chair of the Council is responsible for setting agendas for Steering Committee and general participant meetings, running said meetings, and communicating with working groups and coordinating efforts with other like Councils in the interim between meetings.

The Vice-Chair is responsible for assisting the Chair. In the event the chair is absent from a meeting, the vice chair shall act as the Chair.

The Administrative Coordinator shall support appointed officers, track participation in the Steering Committee and Council Meetings, record the minutes of Steering Committee and Council meetings, distribute those minutes to the Steering Committee and make available to Council participants, and provide other administrative and organizational support as needed.

Article Seven: Meetings

7.1 Frequency

A minimum of one Council meeting and two Steering Committee meetings will be held annually.

7.2 Scheduling

Meetings will be scheduled prior to and/or after “fire season” (spring and fall). The Chair will coordinate with all Steering Committee members to maximize participation.

7.3 Notice

Notices of Council meetings shall be sent to members at least two months prior to all such meetings. Both e-mail and written notices may be used.

7.4 Meeting Content

The Steering Committee will assist the Chair in development of the meeting agendas. All working groups formed will update the Steering Committee on the progress of the group at each Steering Committee meeting. The Chair, Vice Chair, and Administrative Coordinator will take the lead on organizing meetings, and Steering Committee will be requested to give additional assistance as needed.

7.4 Quorum

At meetings of the Steering Committee, a majority of the committee or their proxies shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

*Some agency liaisons may be able to not participate in voting process per the USDA and DOI policy.

7.5 Requirements for Collective Action

Except as otherwise provided in these bylaws, the act of a majority of Steering Committee members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present at the time shall be the act of the Steering Committee.

7.6 Telephone, Web-based and Similar Meetings

Steering Committee members may participate in and hold a meeting by means of a conference call or similar communications equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear and/or actively communicate with each other. Participation in such a meeting shall constitute presence in person at the meeting.

Article Eight: Amendments

8.1 Amendments

Bylaw amendments will be proposed by a two-thirds vote of the Steering Committee. Approval of amendments will require a two-thirds vote at the following meeting of those present at an official Steering Committee meeting.

Article Nine: Definitions

9.1 Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire is the knowledgeable and skillful application of a planned ignition specific environmental conditions (e.g. fuel moisture, temperature, smoke dispersion, topography etc.) to achieve biophysical resource (e.g. enhancing wildlife habitat, meadow enhancement, reduction of surface fuels) or cultural resource (see additional section below) objectives.

9.1.2 Cultural Fire

Cultural fire is a form of prescribed fire. Cultural fire is the intentional application of fire and smoke to create and sustain ecosystems and plant communities, including especially the culturally defined resources (food and materials as well as aesthetic and spiritual resources) within those systems and communities. Like prescribed fires with biophysical resource objectives, cultural burning may include such goals as enhancing wildlife habitat or water resources, but cultural fires may also address aesthetic goals (such as creating a “park-like” landscape) and fulfill spiritual obligations. Distinguishing features of cultural fire regimes include specific patterns of fire seasonality, frequency, intensity, severity, site selection, ignitions, controls, and smoke application.

9.1.3 Natural Ignitions

Natural ignitions are those caused by natural events, such as lightning, and not by any anthropogenic actions. Under Title 17 definitions, a natural ignition managed for resource benefits is considered to be a prescribed fire, and as such, would subject the burn to the requirements of Title 17. These requirements may include the submittal of a Smoke Management Plan to the local Air District or ARB.