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STAFF REPORT

Date: April 17, 2019
To: Catastrophic Wildfire Committee
From: TRPA Staff
Subject: Committee Work Program

Summary and Staff Recommendation:

Staff will provide an informational update on recommended changes to Chapter 61 of the TRPA Code of Ordinances provided by the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFT). Staff will also present a draft workplan for the Committee that outlines a process to review the recommended changes and develop a Committee recommendation to the TRPA Governing Board for changes to the Chapter.

Background:

Wildfire prevention and hazardous fuel reduction in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) has been a priority for the Tahoe Basin for the last 15+ years. The TFFT collectively treats 3,000 – 6,000 acres each year within the WUI to protect human health and safety and prevent catastrophic wildfires. However, as climate change brings a variety of new threats to the basin such as drought, insect infestations, and disease, the TFFT recognizes the need to implement restoration projects not just within the WUI, but at a bigger scale extending into the surrounding forest. Implementing large-scale projects that focus on an entire ecosystem can improve forest health and build resilience to climate change. TRPA's current forest vegetation framework in the Regional Plan needs to be updated to catch up with the latest science, forest practices, and innovative technologies that support the implementation of large landscape projects on the ground. The Tahoe Region's implementation approach should also build upon the goals, policies, and practices of forest restoration across the entire Sierra Nevada. The result from this initiative will be **implementation of contemporary forest health goals, policies, and code that support the next phase of forest management in the Tahoe Basin.**

All land management agencies in the basin implement forest restoration projects in adherence to federal and state regulations, applicable management plans, and the TRPA Code of Ordinances. Within the last year, the state of California has revised their Forest Practice Rules, increased funding allocations, and urged local areas to streamline permitting and review of projects to allow land managers to move efficiently. To address this need in the basin, TRPA will review Chapter 61 of the Code of Ordinances and revise the chapter as needed to ensure it reflects the latest forestry best management practices and the best available ecological science used in the region.

Forest practices and policies in the Tahoe Basin have already changed significantly in the 12 years since the Angora Fire. Immediately after the Angora Fire, a Blue-Ribbon Commission (BRC) was formed to evaluate the state of forestry and fire work in the Tahoe Basin. The report resulted in several recommendations to increase the resilience of the forests to catastrophic wildfire, including suggested

changes in policy and regulations. At the same time, the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFT) formed to help coordinate the various fire prevention efforts occurring across multiple jurisdictions. Since the formation of TFFT, successful collaboration has increased the efficiency of project planning and consequently the amount of projects on the ground. Even with all the progress, however, more can be done to move the needle further towards collective TFFT target of decreasing fire hazard in the Tahoe Basin. A recent review of the BRC Report (2017) highlights the need to update the TRPA Code of Ordinances to align with regional policy changes to increase the pace and scale of forestry work. As the coordinating organization in the Basin, the TFFT has developed a Regulations Working Group to review and offer recommendations to Chapter 61 in the TRPA Code of Ordinances. These recommended changes will be reviewed by the Committee over the course of several months with a final recommendation for changes to Chapter 61 expected at the end of the 2019 calendar year.

Reading Materials:

The reading materials linked below summarize and highlight both the key challenges facing forest management and fire prevention in the Tahoe Basin and the progress to date to implement forest restoration projects. Please review Attachments 1 & 2 to understand the recommendation from the BRC Angora Fire Review and the current status of the recommendations. The 2017 Progress Review highlights that TRPA regulations can be further streamlined to expedite forest management and fire prevention work. Please review Attachment 3 (special attention to Sections 2-4) to understand the current condition of forests in the Basin and the expected benefits of fuels reduction projects.

Attachments:

Materials can be found at: <https://tahoe.livingwithfire.info/resources/partner-library/>

1. Angora Fire Commission Report (2008)
2. Angora Fire Commission 10 Year Progress Review (2017)
3. Lake Tahoe Basin Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy (2014) & Amendment to Incorporate Large Landscape Planning (2017)

Please view these materials ahead of the April 24th Catastrophic Wildfire Committee meeting.

Contact Information:

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