Last week, the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council held its 8th biannual meeting at the University of California’s Hopland Research and Extension Center (HREC) in Mendocino County. Like the Council’s two meetings in 2012, this meeting attracted a diverse audience of over 110 people from throughout northern California and beyond. Participants included private landowners and ranchers, volunteer fire departments and fire safe councils, state and federal agencies, researchers, students of all ages (high school, undergraduate, and graduate), and more. We like our audience to reflect the unique prescribed fire communities of our meeting locations, and this event was a great example of that!

On Thursday, April 25, we held an all-day conference at the HREC’s new Rod Shippey Hall. Presenters included Ken Pimlott, Director of CALFIRE; Sarah McCaffrey, Researcher with the USFS Northern Research Station in Chicago; Dennis Martinez of the Indigenous Peoples’ Restoration Network; Scott Stephens of UC Berkeley; and many more. Their presentations will be posted on our website very soon, so keep an eye out for those!

At the end of the day on Thursday, the Steering Committee and I presented Dr. Morgan Varner, the Council Founder and Chair since 2009, with an engraved drip torch. This meeting was Morgan’s last as Council Chair (he moved to Mississippi for a new professorship last year), but luckily for us, he will remain on the Steering Committee. The drip torch was engraved with a statement that I think many of us relate to when we think of Morgan: “Thanks for lighting a fire within us all!”

On Thursday evening, the group gathered at Ukiah Brewing Company to take in local food and drink and enjoy good company; these evening socials provide valuable time for conversation and networking, and they have become one of the highlights of each of our meetings! This one was even more fun, thanks to Dr. Ramona Butz, Province Ecologist with the US Forest Service, who gave an interesting photo presentation on her work in Africa over the years. Ramona had some amazing photos and stories of prescribed fire in Tanzania and Malawi, and we were lucky to have her share them with the Council!

During the Thursday meeting, we announced a new organizational approach for the Council. I will still serve as Council Director, and Steering Committee members will take the lead on three primary sub-committees to address specific Council needs: Training, Policy, and Communications. Sub-
committee leads will work to identify priorities and target efforts. Leads include Jeremy Bailey and Norb Szczurek for Training; Nick Goulette and Will Harling for Policy; and Paige Boyer, Yana Valachovic, and Michelle Medley-Daniel for Communications. These groups are open for participation by other interested folks, so please email me if you would like to be involved.

During the meeting, we also announced plans for a two-week prescribed fire training exchange (TREX) that will be held in northwestern California this fall. This TREX will be sponsored by the Council, and it will provide valuable training opportunities for burners of all backgrounds and experience levels. Jeremy Bailey and I are leading the planning effort for the TREX; please email me if you would like more information. The TREX will be formally announced in the coming month or so.

Field Tour
On Friday, April 26, we regrouped at the HREC for a field tour of some of their prescribed fire research projects. Unlike the fall meeting in Tahoe, where we were tromping through fresh snow, this field tour was blessed with sunny weather. Our first stop was at a prairie/oak woodland site where HREC staff used fire to manage invasive barbed goatgrass (*Aegilops triuncialis*). They burned the unit two years in a row, and though they saw a reduction in the two years after the burns, they were not successful in getting rid of the grass. Bob Keiffer, the Superintendent of the HREC, noted that continual maintenance would be needed to eradicate a species like barbed goatgrass.

After that first stop, we headed up the hill to some chaparral research sites, where Jennifer Potts, Kate Wilkin, and Erica Newman—all from UC Berkeley—discussed the challenges of burning in chaparral, and the differences between mastication and burning treatments from fuels and wildlife perspectives.

All in all, this meeting in Hopland was a huge success, and we are grateful for the interest and support of all the participants. We look forward to moving forward on the Council sub-committees and on more Council events, including the TREX and our fall meeting—and we’ll be grateful for your help!

I’d like to give a special thanks to our meeting sponsors: the Watershed Research and Training Center, the California Klamath-Siskiyou Fire Learning Network, the California Fire Science Consortium, and UC Cooperative Extension.

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