



# San Luis Obispo County Fire Safe Council

www.fscslo.org



## Board of Directors and State Coastal Conservancy Regional Forest and Wildfire Capacity

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

0900-1130 hours

Pavillion on the Lake, Atascadero

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ed Waage – Citizen at Large	Debbie Arnold – Citizen at Large
Dan Ponti – Farm Bureau	Chad Pankey – Fifth Supervisorial District
Jeff Jones – Citizen at Large	Keith Aggson – County Fire Chief’s Assoc
Bill Cochrane – Cattlemen’s Association	Skip Dyke – Range Improvement Assoc
Matt Mohle – SLO County Parks	Spencer Gordon – US LT RCD
Bob Neumann – Second Supervisorial District	Brendan Cosgrove – Building Industry
Martin Scott – Ranchita Estates Focus Group	Paul Patti – Paso Robles Focus Group
Stacy Korsgaden – Insurance Industry	Garrett Veyna – CAL FIRE / SLO County Fire
Russ Johnson – Lake Naci Focus Group	David Pierson – Cambria Focus Group
Jim Sasules – First Supervisorial District	Cody Gibbons – Air Pollution Control District
Scott Johnson – Citizen at Large	Greg Saenz – PG&E
Lilian Thaoxaochay – UC Cooperative	

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS ABSENT:

Freddy Otte – City of SLO Focus Group	Ashley Grupenhoff – Cal Poly State University
Heather Moreno – President / BOS	Scott Hallett – Fourth Supervisorial District
David Van Son – Atascadero FD Focus Group	Chris Slate – Third Supervisorial District

### STAFF PRESENT:

Dan Turner – Executive Director	Loree McRoberts – CAL FIRE/Recording Secretary
Greg Alex – SLO FSC Webmaster	Baxter Boyington – Focus Group Coordinator

### GUESTS:

Steve Crawford – PG&E	Tony Freeman – Cambria Focus Group
Dan Dulitz – Retired Board Member	Jonathan Gee – CAL FIRE
Deborah Boynton – Cambria Focus Group	Paul Lee – CAL FIRE / Pismo Beach Fire
Todd Tuggle	Steve Calvert – Knollwood HOA
Casey Guenther – 4 <sup>th</sup> Generation Tree	Sophia Marquez – Althouse & Meade
Brian Brintle – Oak Shores/Lake Naci FG	Susie Johnson – Laki Naci Focus Group
Kelly McFadden – CA State Parks	Jay Karl – Cal Trans
Mason Alex – SLO FSC Coordinator	Dane Mumford – SLO FSC Coordinator
Michael Burkey – Cambria Fire	Scott Jalbert – SLO County OES
Steve Negro – Retired Board Member	Hannah Newby – GIS Contractor

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### CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Ed Waage at 9:00 a.m. followed by introduction of directors, staff, focus groups and guests.

### CONSENT AGENDA

#### Prior Meeting Minutes

- November 2025 Board of Directors meeting minutes were presented for approval
- December 2025 Executive Committee meeting minutes were presented for review

**It was moved, seconded and approved to approve Consent Agenda Prior Meeting Minutes as presented: Arnold Second: Pierson**

### PRESENTATION

#### SLO FSC 2025

The year 2025 saw record grant awards and projects completed. Over 40 vendors were used to expend more than \$5 million on projects throughout the County. We experienced a major challenge with CEQA mid-year. CAL FIRE changed procedures so we could no longer use their CEQA. This caused us to cancel some projects, modify others and make substitutions. Due to the Palisades and Eaton Fires, the governor ordered two states of emergency orders that could suspend CEQA. Along with SB131 we have been able to classify a majority of our projects into the conditions allowing us to be exempt from CEQA. Our scholarship program awarded more than \$75,000 to students seeking higher learning in Fire Sciences and career paths with Allan Hancock's Fire Academy. Local grants contributed in excess of \$100,000 helping programs such as Cal Poly WUI Institute, SLO County Fire, Range Improvement and SLO Botanical Gardens. A significant project we took on this year was FireShed. It examines the fire problem in San Luis Obispo County, historically, currently and recognizes issues that need attention. For the first time ever, SLO FSC has an office. It's located at the Cal Poly Tech Center. We facilitated the move to include the Cal Poly WUI Fire Institute, CAL FIRE Community Risk Reduction and Cal Fire Resource Management. The groups can collaborate, strategize and coordinate efforts. Looking forward to 2026, we have been named as the designee to coordinate a multi-million-dollar block grant for San Luis Obispo County.

### ROUNDTABLE

Paso Robles:	Chipping events being planned along with work in riverbed.
CAL FIRE:	Working towards having ten engines fully staffed for the entire year and an addition of two defensible space inspectors. Zone 0 should have a clearer definition in the next 6 months. Training being held March 24-25 in Paso Robles, qualifying individuals to be defensible space inspectors.
Pismo Beach:	Chipper Day introduced to the City; new Focus Group kick off meeting scheduled for March 2. City spent a lot of money on projects in Chumash Park and Northern Shell Beach to better protect the reservoir and homes.
Avila Beach:	Very motivated on being prepared, looking forward to the next grant cycle. A lot of treatment work, including burning, at an apple orchard that is under the main electrical lines going to Diablo Canyon.

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- Insurance Industry: California Insurance Commissioner, Ricardo Lara, has issued a one-year moratorium protecting over 147,000 policy holders in 5 counties, one of them being SLO, against non-renewal and cancellation. Contaminants are being found in the land of the major fires and land is not covered by homeowner's policies.
- District 1: Heritage Ranch's FireWise Community status has been renewed for another year.
- Cambria: New members Tony Freeman and Deborah Boynton will be taking over upon David Pierson's retirement this spring.
- UC Coop Extension: Upcoming Ag Pass and Post Fire training starts in February. Royce Larsen has set June 2026 as his retirement.
- APCD: 600 backyard burning permits have been issued in the first month of opening.
- Lake Nacimiento: Planning for the second Fire Safety Fire Wise event/picnic on April 25. Chipping preparation is in full swing.
- Building Industry: Code changes have taken effect.
- Range Improvement: Two prescribed burns in Huasna completed, Huasna Ranch 700 acres and Porter Ranch 600 acres. Annual meeting and BBQ being held in May.
- Ranchita Focus Group: More chipping is in the near future.
- Toro Creek FG: Baxter is no longer living in the area so Brendan Cosgrove will take over as the Focus Group Leader.
- SLO County Prev: A countywide food truck inspection program is being developed to ensure consistency throughout the County. An annual decal will be issued upon compliance.
- PG&E: Grant cycle is opening soon with February due date. Grid Resource Integration Portal (Grip.pge.com) is up and running. This program can be used as a planning tool to find PG&E infrastructure in your area of work.
- SLO County Parks: Off season hazard abatement is going on.
- Cattlemen's Assoc: Rains have been helpful and it's branding season.
- US LT RCD: Drew Loganbill has been named the new Executive Director. Pile burning workshop this weekend. Working on plans to get herbivory into Strawberry Canyon, it will need Coastal Commission approval. Working with Santa Rita Ranch and SLO Conservancy to open emergency access roads connecting Highway 46 to McGinley Ranch with 30-foot fuel clearance on either side of road. Rancho Marino burned 300 piles, 50-80 more to burn. Salinan Tribe Willow Creek Conservancy recently had a 5-acre cultural burn. Actively seeking funding to implement larger cultural burns at Willow Creek Conservancy. Grant awarded for 32 acres in Cambria close to Rancho Marino and Strawberry Canyon. Coastal Conservancy awarded us a grant to develop a strategic plan for the SLO Prescribed Burn Association.
- State Parks: Black Hill burning and more in the next few months in Morro Bay, San Simeon and Montana De Oro. Also, eucalyptus removal along Pecho Road, around Horse Camp and Camp Keep in Montana De Oro approved. Work will happen over the next 2 years, probably extended to 5 years.
- Cal Trans: SLO office vegetation management team manages 14,000 acres. Project slated for Highway 41, 900 acres, from just outside Morro Bay to Atascadero. Intent is to get 21 feet from edge.

**FIRE SAFE COUNCIL BUSINESS**

Website Overview/Review

Our website continues to grow and evolve every year. It's become a good place for resources and information from all agencies, a one-spot stop. Our interactive evacuation viewer and FireShed dashboards are great resources for the community. These tools are designed for the public to increase their knowledge, improve community awareness and emergency preparation. The links we have to other agency websites and resources are proving to be invaluable resources. Our new chipping program details being pushed out to NextDoor is garnering an increase in our website views. The live informational links like Pulsepoint, Alert California, ReadySLO.org and Watch Duty are all good sites for emergency information not only locally but statewide and nationally. We're always looking for information opportunities and pictures so please share. AI has become a popular tool for website content creation with both information and imagery. Our current website traffic is 1,500 hits a month. NextDoor, which we use to spread information about chipping in neighborhoods, receives an enormous number of views and impressions. Our latest post had 64,000 views and 4,635 impressions.

Fiscal Summary – Year End

- SLO FSC Operations Account Summary
- SLO WUI Account Summary
- SLO Foundation Account Summary
- 2025 Contract Summary
- Abbreviated Bank Statement ending December 31, 2025
- Scholarship/Local Grant Report for 2025

**It was moved, seconded and approved to approve the Fiscal Summary items as slated and presented: Pierson Second: Arnold**

Grant Summary – Year End

2025 Closed Grants

19 SLO Countywide Fuel Reduction 5GG19145	Closure date:	3/15/2025	Award:	\$ 1,888,304
2020 CWPP-E Arroyo Grande 5GG19146		3/15/2025		\$ 221,026
2021 Zonehaven Evacuation 5GG20171		3/15/2025		\$ 385,179
2021 Lake Nacimiento Contract 3CA05554		6/30/2024		\$ 399,999
2022 CA FSC County Coordinator 399536		12/30/2024		\$ 175,000
		<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$3,069,508</b>

2026 Active Grants

2022 SLO County Fuels Reduction 5GA21137	Expires:	3/15/2026	Award:	\$ 4,483,721
2022 SLO County Planning Projects 5GG21161		3/15/2026		\$ 441,687
2023 VMP Support Contract 5GA21212		3/15/2026		\$ 628,040
2024 State Coastal Conservancy		7/30/2026		\$ 270,250
2023 CCI Wildfire Prevention 5GA22227		3/20/2029		\$ 2,857,954
2024 Wildfire Prevention 5TR23211		3/15/2030		\$ 3,112,344
2024 Monterey Pine Forest Health 8GG23617		3/15/2030		\$ 6,678,635
		<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$18,472,61</b>

**It was moved, seconded and approved to approve the Grant Summary as slated and presented: Scott Second: Arnold**

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### Executive Committee Interim Actions

- Executive Committee received a presentation from SLO Credit Union regarding the banking services they can offer us. We are investigating alternatives to our current bank, Columbia Bank, due to their continued selling to other banks that are not locally rooted.
- SLO County Office of Emergency Services has requested a seat on SLO FSC Board of Directors. Executive Committee recommended accepting their request and appointing them a seat on the Board of Directors.
- A local grant award up to \$20,000 was approved for the SLO Range Improvement Association for support in prescribed fire operations, safety equipment and logistics. A portion of the local grant request may be offset by other grant funding.
- A scholarship was approved for Christian Morin, Allan Hancock Fire Science student, in the amount of \$2,500.

**It was moved, seconded and approved to affirm the Executive Committee actions as slated and presented: Pierson Second: Dyke**

- SLO FSC Policy 009, Check Signing, was updated to reflect changes made to our check approval and signature requirements to better serve our needs and remain transparent.

**It was moved, seconded and approved to approve the revisions made to Check Writing Policy 009 as presented: Scott Second: Dyke**

## **ELECTIONS 2026 – BOARD OF DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### Board of Directors

1. Bob Neumann selected by Bruce Gibson - 2nd District representative
2. Chris Slate selected by Dawn Ortiz-Legg - 3rd District representative
3. Chad Pankey selected by Heather Moreno - 5<sup>th</sup> district representative
4. Brendan Cosgrove - Building Industry
5. Davis Pierson - Cambria Focus Group
6. Vacant - City of San Luis Obispo
7. Stacy Korsgaden - Insurance Industry
8. Russ Johnson - Lake Nacimiento Focus Group
9. Vacant - Los Osos Focus Group
10. Paul Patti - City of Paso Robles Focus Group
11. Reuben Brand - PG&E
12. Lillian Thaoxaochay - UC Cooperative Extension
13. Michael Burkey - Fire Chiefs Association of San Luis Obispo County

**It was moved, seconded and approved to affirm the slated organizational representatives to the 2026 SLO FSC Board of Directors as presented: Arnold Second: Patti**

### Proposal to Add Designated Board Seat

- SLO County Office of Emergency Services (OES) is requesting a designated voting member seat on the SLO FSC Board of Directors. Scott Jalbert, OES Director, is the designated nominee and Scott Milner, OES Coordinator, is his alternate.

**It was moved, seconded and approved to add SLO OES as a designated seat for the 2026 SLO FSC Board of Directors as presented: Mohle Second: Scott**

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### Open Nominations for Members at Large

1. Ed Waage nominated by Martin Scott
2. Debbie Arnold nominated by Jeff Jones
3. Scott Johnson nominated by Russ Johnson

**Nominations for 2026 San Luis Obispo Fire Safe Council Board of Directors closed, approved unanimously, no oppositions, no abstentions**

### Alternate Member Changes

1. Anthony Freeman – Cambria Focus Group
2. Keith Aggson – San Luis Obispo Fire Chief's Association
3. Royce Larsen – UC Cooperative Extension
4. Steve Crawford – PG&E

**It was moved, seconded and approved to approve the alternate members of the SLO FSC Board of Directors as presented: Pierson Second: Dyke**

### Officers and Executive Committee

#### 2. **Officers-Open nominations**

- President – Debbie Arnold nominates Heather Moreno
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Martin Scott nominates Ed Waage
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Ed Waage nominates David Pierson
- Treasurer – David Pierson nominates Stacy Korsgaden
- Secretary – David Pierson nominates Bob Neumann
- Member at Large – David Pierson nominates Dan Ponti

**It was moved, seconded and approved to seat the new Board of Directors and Executive Committee as presented: Cosgrove Second: Dyke**

### 2026 Meeting Calendar

Reminder: Odd months of the year are full Board of Director meetings and even months are Executive Committee meetings.

**It was moved, seconded and approved to approve the 2026 Meeting Calendar as presented: Mohle Second: Scott**

### Proposed 2026 SLO FSC Operations and Scholarship Budgets

1. Recommend \$65,910 for SLO FSC Operations Budget
2. Recommend \$850,000 minimum Working Capital retention
3. Recommend \$240,000 for Scholarship and local grants fund

**It was moved, seconded and approved to approve the 2026 SLO FSC Operations and Scholarship Budgets and the Working Capital retention amount as presented: Pierson Second: Arnold**

### SLO Blues Baseball Sponsorship

- Foul ball sponsor for one 2026 home game
- We will receive 100 tickets and continual organization promotion throughout the game

**It was moved, seconded and approved to approve the Foul Ball sponsorship of one 2026 home game for the San Luis Blues as presented: Scott Second: Dyke**

## **NEW GRANT OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2025-26 Wildfire Prevention grant
  - Four application packages submitted by SLO FSC, only one awarded
  - Roadside and Communication sites \$936,286
    - Scope of work will need to be amended due to Gifford Fire clearing some of the targeted project areas:
      - Pozo-La Panza road- 5 miles
      - Hi Mountain road- 4 miles
      - Navajo Flat road- 4 miles
      - West Cuesta road- 7 miles
      - East Cuesta road- 5 miles
      - TV Tower road- 3 miles
      - Black Mountain comm site
      - Cuesta Peak comm site
      - Ontario Ridge comm site
      - Mt Lowe comm site
      - Tassajera comm site
      - La Panza peak comm site
- Upper Salinas Las Tablas RCD was awarded a grant for 2 projects in Cambria Monterey pine
- Proposition 4 resubmit will need to be made after it was determined that CAL FIRE/Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) had no regulatory authority to award. Submissions will reopen once the regulations have been put in place, tentatively identified as January 2026.
- Amendments made in accordance with CAL FIRE CEQA changes:
  - 5GA21137 – deleted Miossi and Sunstorm projects, added Chispa, Coyote and public infrastructure fire resistance inspections
  - 5GA22227 – added 8 projects throughout County, decision pending
- 2026 REGIONAL FOREST FIRE CAPACITY BLOCK GRANT
  - New program - Dept of Conservation will brief SLO FSC at Feb meeting
  - This could be a multi-million-dollar block grant for San Luis Obispo County
  - SLO FSC would serve as reviewers, approvers, and administrators of the block grant.
    - It can be awarded to sub grantees
    - Our new FireShed project and dashboard will serve as the basis for review of proposed projects
    - SLO FSC Grants Committee will need to expand

## **GOOD OF THE ORDER**

- Scholarship meeting with new class of cadets from Allan Hancock scheduled Friday, January 23 at 0900 hours
- Cal Poly Tech Park Ribbon Cutting ceremony February 5

## **NEXT MEETINGS**

### **Executive Committee Meeting**

- Wednesday, February 18, 2026
- Location: Atascadero City Hall

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

- Wednesday, March 18, 2026
- Location: To be determined

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Vice President Ed Waage adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m. Please join us for a BBQ lunch provided by the SLO Fire Safe Burners.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Loree McRoberts*  
Recording Secretary

DRAFT