



## MEMORANDUM

Presented at the July 21, 2021, City Council meeting

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Date: July 14, 2021

To: Arcata City Council

From: Forest Management Committee (FMC)

Re: Forest Management Committee Annual Report to the Arcata City Council for 2020/21 Activities

### Forest Management Committee

Chair: Dennis Halligan,  
Vice Chair: Michael Furniss  
Jack Naylor  
Russ Forsburg  
Yana Valachovic  
Danny Hagans  
Ken Hoffman  
Staff Liaison: Mike McDowall

*Community-based forestry is a participatory approach to forest management that strengthens communities' capacity to build vibrant local economies—while protecting and enhancing their local forest ecosystems. By integrating ecological, social, and economic strategies into cohesive approaches to forestry issues, community-based approaches give local residents both the opportunity and the responsibility to manage their natural resources effectively and to enjoy the benefits of that responsibility. -Aspen Institute*

### Introduction

The Forest Management Committee advises the City Council and City Commissioners on topics relating to forestry, ecology, and wildlife on City-owned forestland. In addition to making recommendations to the City Council on potential amendments to the City's Forest Management Plan, Committee members also review the City's timber harvest operations before they are filed with the California Department of Forestry and conduct a post-harvest field review when operations have been completed.

The following information is a summary of the various projects and activities that involved the Forest Management Committee (FMC) during fiscal year 2020/2021. The Committee meets every other month on the second Thursday at 7:00 am or at the call of the chair and also conducts public field trips and evening meetings or workshops on occasion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the FMC met less frequently during 2020/21; however, the Committee's input on forest-related activities within the City remained robust and many goals were accomplished.

## General

- The City with guidance from the Forest Management Committee manages the Arcata Community Forest for the long term goals of promoting a healthy, late seral forest ecosystem for wildlife and ecological benefits as well as providing quality of life resources (e.g. trails, access to natural areas) for community members. Management priorities include watershed restoration, wildlife habitat, recreation, carbon sequestration, and timber harvest revenue. The City of Arcata manages three separate tracts of Arcata Community Forest and Redwood Park that together comprise approximately 2,449 acres and include the Arcata Forest Tract (614 acres), Sunny Brae Tract (~336 acres), the Jacoby Creek Tract (~1,499 acres), and 25-acre Redwood Park.
- Timber harvests on City forestlands are developed to improve the health and ecological functioning of forest stands as well as to provide revenue for continued management of the forest and other priority projects such as land acquisition (both forestland and urban open space), road & trails upgrades, and new recreational opportunities. Approximately 25% of Arcata's Community Forest land base is situated in reserves that are mostly comprised of riparian areas, and sensitive habitats. Planned annual harvests are approximately one-half of the annual growth increment therefore, the forests are accruing volume, structural complexity, and age over time at a significantly faster rate than virtually all publicly owned and private timberlands in the western United States.
- A 2020 timber harvest was completed in the Arcata Community Forest Tract (ACF); 366 thousand-board-feet (MBF) gross scale was harvested using single tree selection from the ACF in three separate areas. For comparison, the average annual growth within the ACF is 1.2 MMBF, the 2020 harvest represents less than 31% of the annual growth. Current management direction in the FMP and NTMP call for maximum annual cut levels of  $\frac{1}{2}$  the annual growth increment. The annual growth on all of the city timberland acreage is closer to 2.4 MMBF including lands not yet amended into the City's Non-industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP). Therefore the 2020 harvest represents about 15% of the timber growth throughout the forest for the 2020 year. Silvicultural goals emphasize thinning that increases the average tree diameter and mimicking natural disturbance. The harvest was predominantly redwood with also whitewoods (Douglas fir and grand fir).
- \$15,000 in local donations were received for the placement of seven commemorative benches within the Community Forest. After purchase and installation costs, remaining funds support the City's Forest Fund.
- Delivered 17,835 metric tonnes (mT) of forest carbon (as per Climate Action Reserve Tonnes) to various buyers.
- Continued to provide carbon offsets available for purchase by individuals and businesses.
- The City acquired the 114-acre Swaner property for expansion of the Arcata Community Forest, Jacoby Creek Forest Tract.
- The Committee provided expertise for a Non-industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) amendment; a Substantial Deviation to amend the newly acquired Swaner parcel into the City's existing NTMP.

- The Committee completed review and input for the Forest Management Plan (FMP) 2021 update. The updated FMP shows new parcels and acreage added to the City's Forest. Additionally, new sections in the plan include carbon goals, fire resilience goals, and adds a process for closing non-authorized trails, changing recreational use designation, and camping in open spaces. The FMP and CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration drafts are complete and will soon be circulated for public review. Staff and committee expect to bring this to City Council in 2021.
- The Committee provided input to the Open Space, Parks and Trails Special Tax (Measure A) for the November 2020 ballot. The ballot measure passed and is anticipated to generate an estimated \$173,000 per year to support acquisition, improvements and maintenance of the City's parks, trails, forest and open space. The first identified priority project is completing the Arcata Ridge Trail and Fickle Hill crossing. The Committee will provide input on priorities for the special tax revenue going forward in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Committee and Wetlands and Creeks Committee.
- The Committee provided review and input on Timber Harvest Plans proposed by Green Diamond Resource Company adjacent to the Jacoby Creek Forest Tract.

### **Research and Monitoring**

- Staff continued to monitor for various forest Species of Special Concern. 2021 Pacific fisher surveys were successful in finding Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) on the newly acquired Swaner JCF tract. Fisher have now been documented in the Arcata Community Forest Tract, Sunny Brae Forest Tract and the Jacoby Creek Forest Tract. City staff also completed annual monitoring and surveys for northern spotted owls (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and barred owls (*Strix varia*) on all City own forestland. Northern spotted owl surveys in particular required a great deal of staff time with the bulk of surveys conducted between March and July. Owl survey information is shared annually with applicable adjacent landowners in a cooperative manner to help facilitate ongoing efforts for Spotted Owl recovery. Annual spotted owl survey information is also provided to State and Federal agencies as well as the California Natural Diversity Database.
- Staff conducted pre-field research, records search, and field surveys for archeology resources on the Swaner parcel for the NTMP amendment.
- Staff conducted rare plant botanical surveys on the newly acquired Swaner parcel for the NTMP process as well as for any proposed Notice of Timber Operations that may occur on the parcel in the future.

### **Roads/Trails/Watershed/Vegetation**

- Over 18 miles of roads and trails continue to be maintained at a high standard. Approximately one mile of road was repaired by PG&E following work on the power line through the Arcata Community Forest. City staff helped ensure the work was done to Community Forest standard and the proper materials and equipment were used.
- City staff began work on the Forsyth parcel "Jump" and "Peanut Butter" Trails in the newly acquired Forsyth parcel of the Arcata Community Forest Tract. Redwood Coast Mountain Bike Association and the Humboldt High School Composite Mountain Bike Team have also provided volunteer assistance at frequent trail workdays.
- City staff completed a recreational trail re-route on the Samuels conservation easement portion of the Arcata Ridge Trail to provide a single-track alternative to a steep multi-use

section of the Arcata Ridge Trail for walking, biking and equestrian use.

- Several community workdays involving **hundreds of volunteer hours** helped the city remove invasive plants, build trails and assist with litter cleanup.

## **2020/2021 PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

The Committee will:

- Conduct a field trip to visit the planned 2021 timber harvest in the JCF and/or other future proposed harvest areas.
- Continue to be involved in the Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) amendments.
- Continue involvement with completion of the Arcata Ridge Trail with a crossing of Fickle Hill and the half mile Beverly Avenue trail to link up to the Ridge Trail.
- Coordinate with other City advisory committees on matters of mutual interest such as the Redwood Park Master Plan and Open Space, Parks & Trails Special Tax expenditures oversight.
- Continue to strengthen cooperative partnerships with State and Federal agencies, Humboldt State University, USFS Redwood Sciences Lab and College of the Redwoods to involve students, faculty and scientists in additional forest research projects. Work with HSU on long-term upper Jacoby Creek Forest data sharing and planning.
- Continue to strengthen working relationships with the Wiyot Tribe for involvement in forest management planning and cultural use of forestlands.
- Obtain approval of a long-term northern spotted owl management plan with State agencies including CalFire and CDFW; (Spotted Owl Resource Plan [SORP]).
- Update carbon inventories on the Sunny Brae Forest Climate Reserve Project.
- Seek cost share funding from the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) for habitat, road and timber stand improvement work.
- Continued collaboration with adjacent landowners on corporative road use agreements and road improvements for City forestlands.

ACF 2020 timber harvest



2020 Post Harvest FMC Inspection





Terrain and forest encountered during owl surveying in the Jacoby Creek Forest

#### 2020 Post Harvest FMC Inspection

