

Tuolumne County
Administration Center
2 South Green Street
Sonora, California 95370
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Heather Ryan
Clerk of the Board
of Supervisors

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF TUOLUMNE**

David Goldemberg, First District
Kathleen Haff, Fourth District

Ryan Campbell, Second District

Anaiah Kirk, Third District
Jaron Brandon, Fifth District

**Natural Resource Committee
Wednesday, October 4st, 2023 @ 10:00 am
Board of Supervisors Chambers
2 S. Green Street, 4^h Floor, Sonora, CA 95370**

AGENDA

1. Call the meeting to order and introductions
2. Public forum – The public may speak on any item not on the printed agenda. No action may be taken by the Committee. The amount of time allocated for the public forum is limited to 15 minutes.
3. Consideration of approving the minutes of the meeting held on June 7th, 2023.
4. Consideration of Comment letter for the State urban water supply conservation regulation (AB) 1668
5. Partner agencies updates
 - A. USFS updates:
 - B. CalFire updates:
6. Committee business
 - A. Staff reports and recommendations
 - a. WaterSMART Grant proposal
 - B. Committee member reports
7. Discussion Items
 - A. Topic recommendations for 2024 committee actions and work plan (to be developed at subsequent meetings)

In accordance with Government Section 54954.3(a), the public may comment on any item on the agenda. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance (i.e., auxiliary aids or services) in order to participate in this public meeting, please contact the County Administrator's Office, (209-533-5511). Notification 48 hours prior to the start of the meeting will enable staff to make reasonable accommodations to ensure accessibility to this public meeting.

8. Adjourn
The next regular meeting scheduled for November 1st, 2023.

Membership Roster

Name	<u>Position</u>	Group
Anaiah Kirk	<u>Chair</u>	County
Kathleen Haff	<u>Vice Chair</u>	County
Jim Phelan	<u>Member</u>	TCRCD
Jim Maddox	<u>Member</u>	F&G PFAC
Dick Gaiser	<u>Member</u>	TC Ag
Chris Trott	<u>Member</u>	At-Large
Delegate	<u>Member</u>	Tuolumne Me-Wuk
Delegate	Member	Chicken Ranch Me-Wuk
Delegate	Member	Hetch Hetchy
Delegate	Member	GCSD
Delegate	Member	TUD
Sean Hembree	<u>CAO Staff</u>	County

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Jaron Brandon, *Fifth District*

**Natural Resource Committee
Wednesday, June 7, 2023 @ 10:00 am
Board of Supervisors Chambers
2 S. Green St., 4th Floor
Sonora, 95370**

Minutes

Call the meeting to order

Supervisor Kirk called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. and confirmed a quorum was present.

Members present: Anaiah Kirk, Jaron Brandon, Jim Phelan, Jim Maddox, Dick Gaiser

Public Forum – The public may speak on any item not on the printed agenda. No action may be taken by the Committee. The amount of time allocated for the public forum is limited to 15 minutes.

Members of the public provided comments on the ruling regarding the use of fire retardant.

Stan with CSERC provided comment on the ruling regarding the use of fire retardants and permitting with the EPA.

Consideration of approving the minutes of the meeting held on May 3, 2023.

Jim Phelan made a motion to approve the minutes of May 3, 2023. Dick Gaiser seconded the motion. Supervisor Brandon noted an error in the title of his handout. The minutes were approved unanimously with title change noted.

4. Partner agencies updates

- A. USFS updates: none
- B. CalFire updates: none

- C. TUD updates: Don Perkins, TUD General Manager, provided a report on the treatment facility, testing for clean water happening in October. Recent construction on Mt. Elizabeth Road including the installation of 6 fire hydrants, Mt. Provo transmission lines, and road repairs to include an emergency exit. Committee members provided comments.

5. Committee Business

- A. Staff reports and recommendations
 - a. Eric Erhardt provided a report and handout titled “Federal Court sides with counties cities, and forestry groups, ruling USFS may continue use of aerial fire retardants to fight wildfires”.
 - b. Eric Erhardt noted that the Board of Supervisors voted not to renew the water agency consultant contract and approved the elimination of the natural resource analyst position and that the Board of Supervisors voted not to renew the water agency consultant contract and approved the elimination of the natural resource analyst position.
- B. Committee member reports - None

6. Discussion Items

- A. Letter on AB625 – Forest Biomass Waste Utilization Program

Mark Fischer, Administrative Analyst provided a report that AB625 is held until at least January 2024. Committee members provided comments with the direction that this item is to be re-visited in January.

- B. Discussion regarding fire hazard clean-up and available resources

Dore Bietz, Office of Emergency Services, provided a report on storm clean-up, green waste planning calendar, applying for grants, and tree hazard clean-up. Responding to opportunities with RCD and staying in contact with Lindsey Mattos and other partners. Wildfire defensible space projects will begin July 01, 2023.

Supervisor Kirk requested topic suggestions for the next meeting. Water Rights and related topics were mentioned.

Adjourn

Supervisor Kirk adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m. and announced the next meeting scheduled for July 5, 2023

To: The California State Water Resource Control Board

Subject: Comment Letter – Proposed Making Conservation a California Way of Life

This letter is written on behalf of the County of Tuolumne Board of Supervisors and Urban Retail Water Suppliers within Tuolumne County. It will provide a brief context followed by recommendations for locally appropriating the efficiency standards mandated by AB 1668.

Vulnerable Conditions

To craft an equitable conservation standard for Tuolumne County, and many similar settings, the following conditions need to be understood as they are prevalent in most rural, headwater communities.

Economic vulnerabilities: Our County has a low per capita population density and widespread economically disadvantaged communities (DAC). This results in decreased economic drivers to affect efficiency improvements. Widespread improvements in infrastructure modernization or monitoring to be implemented on a short timeline are simply untenable when these cost increases are disproportionately assigned to ratepayers.

Physical vulnerabilities: Rural communities such as ours are at inordinate risk for the related disaster conditions of drought, flood and wildfire. Resources to respond to these events and community infrastructure to mitigate these risks are outpaced by changing climate and other factors. Water supply systems, including fire water, have less storage, diversification and redundancies than those in more developed regions. Any efficiency standards in the name of drought resilience must also consider all resilience risks and benefits.

Recommendations:

Economic Feasibility: Compliance standards need to be commensurate with communities' ability to fund these improvements. The currently available assistance from State grants and agreements is insufficient to offset the cost borne by taxpayers and utility ratepayers. Moreover, compliance schemes that focus on punitive actions of fines or grant ineligibility will only function to push the most disadvantaged communities further under.

Standards Flexibility: Avoiding overly prescriptive standards requirements will allow for local innovation and best practice identification appropriate for the setting and conditions of local jurisdictions. This is especially important as it applies to CII requirements.

Streamlining monitoring and reporting requirements will need modification and safeguards to ensure that costs are not arduous. This will ensure that efficiency dollars go toward best practice improvements, not accounting red-tape.

Consider all risks and benefits: There is a need for cautious avoidance of unintended consequences. Standards need mindful intention to leverage multiple benefits and avoid risk. Consider, for example, the risks associated with sustained outdoor water use restrictions in community settings. Over time, this would lead to more dead and water-stressed trees and landscape vegetation. This in turn would lead to increased community wildfire risk, higher insurance rates, decreased property values,

decreased air quality, increased home and workplace cooling costs, etc. By contrast, augmenting rate structures or other means to allow increased outdoor water use during above-normal water years would mitigate these risks to mature trees and vegetation together with these embedded impacts. In Tuolumne County this could be done without decreasing usable water supply for downstream users in most wet years. Moreover, this would have a throttling effect on drought/flood conditions for downstream water users. As is the case with agricultural land, rural mountain communities can function to infiltrate ground water infiltration when excess water is a liability so that it is available when it is scarce.

At the risk of oversimplification, this example demonstrated the importance flexible system guidelines that are matched the conditions of their setting. When empowered with the needed additional resources, rural communities can be responsible stewards of California's water system. Thank you for your consideration and commitment to building equitable solutions for California's rural communities.