

Feb 11, 2026

# Amador CWPP: Working Group Meeting

Meeting records [Transcript](#)

## Summary

Ian Moore reviewed the CWPP action items, which incorporated survey input, and Nick Miley introduced the priority project areas via the Vibrant Planet platform, using community values and DiMAs to weight treatment priorities for 90,000 acres. Amanda Watson voiced concern that the prioritization tools undervalued strategic fuel breaks, which Nick Miley addressed by clarifying the model's limitations and presenting alternative planning scenarios, prompting a discussion on valuing treatment types, accessibility, and the need for clear project definitions (Charlie Blankenheim and Amanda Watson). The group, including Susan Peters and Charlie Blankenheim, discussed developing a clear CWPP narrative with criteria for project support, and Amanda Watson and Todd Bertwell introduced action items to formalize a Wildfire Mitigation Collaborators Group and a County Coordinator role to address coordination gaps, suggesting quarterly meetings with agencies like PG&E, AWA, and county roads, which Christopher Dow supported with scheduling flexibility. The group agreed that Amanda Watson as the AFSC Coordinator facilitate these coordination meetings and emphasized that the CWPP needs to incorporate public engagement, outreach, education, and infrastructure groups, concluding with Ian Moore's commitment to circulate the CWPP draft and the plan to finalize and prioritize action items during the next virtual meeting.

## Attendance

Aaron Watkins, AFPD Battalion Chief

James Thornock, USFS

David Wood, CALFIRE AEU Unit Chief

[Amanda Watson](#), AFSC & ARCD

Todd Bertwell, AFSC & ARCD

Chris Dow, SPI

Chuck Beckman, East Bay MUD

Ian Moore, SIG

Lucas Carthew, AWA

Nick Miley, SIG

Susan Peters, AFSC & AWA

Charlie Blankenheim, CALFIRE retired

## Details

- **Review of Previous Working Group Meeting and Action Items:** Ian Moore provided a review of the previous meeting, which focused on the action items list being developed for the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). They reported that input from a spreadsheet and survey has been incorporated, and the list is being formalized, with plans to discuss specific action items during the latter half of the current meeting ([00:05:07](#)). Ian Moore also clarified that the priority projects being discussed are the spatially explicit, large-scale fuel reduction and landscape restoration projects that will be part of the plan, distinct from the broader action items ([00:06:58](#)).
- **Introduction to Priority Project Areas and Planning Tools:** Nick Miley introduced the priority project areas using the Vibrant Planet platform, explaining that the county was segmented into different DiMAs (Distinct Management Areas) to weight treatment priorities based on elevation, vegetation, and infrastructure ([00:08:30](#)). They showed a table outlining community values used for weighting treatments, including assets, safety, recreation, biodiversity, and others, which were weighted on a scale of one to five ([00:09:55](#)). The planning focused on identifying 10 treatments per Dema, totaling 30,000 acres of treatment per Dema, or 90,000 acres for the entire county ([00:11:10](#)).
- **Concerns Regarding Landscape Scale Prioritization versus Strategic Fuel Breaks:** Amanda Watson raised a concern that the Vibrant Planet tool seemed to

prioritize landscape scale treatments and might not adequately account for strategic fuel breaks, which are a focus for the Fire Safe Council. They expressed worry that relying solely on the tool's "blobs" for high-level project prioritization could hinder future projects that strategically protect communities but fall outside the designated priority areas ([00:12:23](#)).

- **Model Limitations and Alternative Planning Scenarios:** Nick Miley confirmed that the Vibrant Planet model is a suggestion and not the final authority; projects outside the "blobs" still have value. They explained that the model balances a complex series of metrics and showed that the platform struggles to capture all dense housing clusters, even when safety and assets are weighted heavily ([00:14:37](#)). They also presented alternative scenarios from Planscape, which prioritizes single values, such as protecting the built environment or targeting areas with the highest propensity for high-severity fire, as supplementary decision-making tools ([00:15:37](#)).
- **Discussion on Valued Treatment Types and Strategic Approach:** The group discussed the need to clarify what types of treatments they collectively value most, such as landscape scale fuels reduction versus strategically developed fuel breaks. Amanda Watson provided an example of a strategic fuel break, the Mokelumne Rim fuel break, which protects assets by focusing on areas outside the dense community core, and asked the group if this strategic direction is the preferred approach for the county ([00:17:50](#)). Nick Miley clarified that the polygons are starting points and not suggestions to treat the entire area, and they can be altered or used as a backbone to connect multiple smaller projects ([00:20:06](#)).
- **Prioritizing Project Types and Accessibility:** Ian Moore suggested opening the discussion to prioritize project types, such as fuel breaks or expanding existing treatments ([00:21:07](#)). Charlie Blankenheim emphasized the importance of accessibility for fuel breaks, noting that if an operational chief cannot find the line in the middle of the night, it is less valuable ([00:24:33](#)). Nick Miley confirmed that both planning platforms address accessibility by generally limiting treatment targets to within a quarter mile of a road and slopes less than 40% (Planscape), or by increasing cost estimates for treatments further from roads or on steeper slopes (Vibrant Planet) ([00:25:23](#)).
- **Clarifying the Purpose of Fuel Breaks and CWPP Language:** Charlie Blankenheim suggested clarifying the overall objective of fuel breaks, distinguishing between forest health, neighborhood protection, and suppression fuel breaks ([00:28:50](#)). Amanda Watson agreed, stressing the importance of defining these project types

and their necessary attributes (e.g., meeting CalFire AFD requirements for a suppression fuel break) within the CWPP to ensure everyone uses the same definitions for successful project development ([00:30:03](#)). Nick Miley reiterated that the platforms set a high-level foundation for planning, allowing granular planning—such as specific treatment types or timing—to be done later within the platform on smaller-scale polygons defined by the users ([00:32:33](#)).

- **Need for a Narrative and Criteria-Based Project Support:** Susan Peters commented that the CWPP is a more generalized, dynamic planning document that requires a narrative explaining how the document was created and how it can be modified ([00:39:49](#)). Charlie Blankenheim agreed, suggesting that the CWPP needs clear supporting language for specific, large-scale projects (like continuous defense lines or suppression fuel breaks) that may not fully align with the geographical priority polygons but meet strategic goals ([00:41:12](#)). Ian Moore proposed that the document should outline criteria for projects (e.g., meeting a suppression goal, integrating with existing treatments, or being near a prioritized area) to be considered for support ([00:43:40](#)).
- **Future Facilitated Discussion on Project Priorities:** Amanda Watson offered to facilitate a dedicated conversation with the group to define and prioritize project types and their success metrics within the CWPP, ensuring the entire working group is aligned on the definitions ([00:45:01](#)). Todd Bertwell suggested incorporating this discussion into the next working group meeting, where the group could review and prioritize the preliminary action item list that Ian Moore, Nick Miley, and Amanda Watson will rough out beforehand ([00:47:53](#)).
- **Review of Action Items: Wildfire Mitigation Collaborators Group and County Coordinator:** Todd Bertwell introduced the action items regarding the Wildfire Mitigation Collaborators Group and the County Coordinator position, which Amanda Watson currently fills for the Fire Safe Council ([00:49:24](#)). Amanda Watson clarified that their coordinator role, which includes a coordination grant from the California Fire Safe Council, has been in place for about five years ([00:50:55](#)). They explained that the "burners group" is an informal annual meeting and could potentially be expanded, formalized, and used as the group to carry the CWPP forward for updates ([00:52:00](#)).
- **Identifying Gaps in Coordination:** Christopher Dow commented that the local RCD and Fire Safe Council activities already establish a form of the coordination group ([00:55:10](#)). Amanda Watson asked the group to identify specific gaps in coordination, such as whether an annual meeting is sufficient. James Thornock mentioned the need for better mapping products that centralize data on fuel

breaks, connectivity, and treatment history as a crucial gap that needs a centralized organizing body to manage ([00:57:06](#)). The group was left considering whether the existing collaborators group should be formalized and whether subcommittees would be useful ([00:58:12](#)).

- **Quarterly Meetings and Agency Involvement:** David Wood suggested incorporating PG&E as an additional agency in the coordination efforts, recommending quarterly meetings to ensure all agencies, including AWA and those working on county roads, are aligned with the overarching CWPP goals. Amanda Watson inquired if participants would commit to attending a quarterly meeting, receiving positive affirmations from multiple agency representatives, and they concluded that a quarterly meeting cadence is a great goal to establish and test ([00:59:16](#)).
- **Structure of the Working Group:** Amanda Watson asked whether the group was comfortable continuing with a loose structure, noting that PG&E, typically represented by Matt Waverly, has been involved in annual meetings previously. David Wood recommended keeping the working group informal so that no single agency influences the others, emphasizing that the focus should be on coordination and identifying connections between independent projects ([01:00:19](#)). They suggested that any formal governance or decision-making structure, such as a steering committee, should exist above this informal working group ([01:01:16](#)).
- **Facilitator Role for Coordination Meetings:** The group discussed who would be the best convenor and facilitator for the coordination meetings, given the benefit of having a single fire safe council. David Wood indicated that Amanda Watson, acting as the coordinator for the fire safe council, would be the most suitable person to facilitate these meetings. They also affirmed that these coordination meetings would help keep everyone marching in the same direction as new projects are started or existing ones are changed ([01:01:16](#)).
- **Flexibility in Meeting Scheduling:** Christopher Dow raised the importance of maintaining flexibility with the quarterly meetings, noting that peak fire season in the late summer and fall could impact attendance from CalFire and SPI personnel. Amanda Watson committed to developing a modified quarterly schedule that accounts for fire season and the seasonality of the work, presenting this draft at the next meeting, while also retaining the flexibility to cancel a meeting if necessary due to operational demands ([01:02:23](#)).

- **CWPP Planning Group Scope and Next Steps:** Todd Bertwell noted that the CWPP aims to fill gaps by incorporating components like public engagement, outreach, education, and infrastructure groups, alongside the fuels reduction projects managed by the fire safe council. Ian Moore confirmed that the feedback and suggestions will be incorporated into the action items, and they will circulate the CWPP draft for review to stimulate further ideas and prioritize actions ([01:04:25](#)). They will work on finalizing the action items and prioritizing specific treatment goals beyond just treating high-priority areas ([01:06:06](#)).
- **Steering Committee Planning and Meeting Schedule:** Todd Bertwell suggested setting aside time during the steering committee meeting next month to flesh out treatment priorities and talking points for the working group. Ian Moore agreed that this is a good idea and committed to organizing the discussion points from the current meeting on paper before the steering committee convenes. The meeting was adjourned, with the next virtual meeting scheduled for March 11th, at the same time and place ([01:06:06](#)).

## Suggested next steps

Amanda Watson will facilitate a conversation with the group to prioritize and define successful project types in the CWPP.

Ian Moore will review the action items to discuss during the next meeting.

Ian Moore, Todd Bertwell, Amanda Watson, and Nick Miley will rough out a preliminary list of project types and share it out before the next meeting.

The group will review and prioritize the definitions of action items during the next working group meeting.

Amanda Watson will send out a draft modified quarterly schedule for the meetings, taking into account fire season, to be reviewed at the next meeting.

Ian Moore will line out what was discussed and put it on paper before the next steering committee meeting for the group to walk through it.

Ian Moore will incorporate the feedback and suggestions into the action items and send around the CWPP draft for review.

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