

## **Committee Members**

Keri Cavin – Non-Commercial Boating Representative  
Darin Freeland - Member At Large/Vice-Chair  
Howard Penn - Business Representative/Chair  
Nathan Rangel - Outfitter Representative/Secretary  
David White - Landowner/Resident Representative  
Bob Bradshaw – Member At Large  
Vacant - Landowner/Resident Representative



## **COLOMA LOTUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA**

October 26th, 2021

**PLACE:** Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86903442906?pwd=ZFR2bnd0ZkxKdE0xMHZJUytNUmtudz09>

Meeting ID: 869 0344 2906. Passcode: 126328

**TIME:** 6:30 P.M.

**INFO:** <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/planning/Pages/Coloma-Lotus-Advisory-Committee.aspx>

The purpose of the Coloma Lotus Advisory Committee is to review and make recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors regarding matters within the Coloma Lotus valley area.

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call** – 6:30pm
2. **Approval of Minutes** from 5/18/2021 – 6:40 pm
3. **Public Comment** – 6:50 pm (Limited to 3 minutes per speaker on items not on the agenda and within the subject matter jurisdiction of the commission)
4. **Campfire and Air Quality Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations and Update – 7:00 pm**
  - 4.1. Review of draft recommendations for open flame ban ordinance
5. **Parks and Trails Ad Hoc Committee Updates and Recommendations – 7:30 pm**
6. **Economic Impact Analysis Ad Hoc Committee Update – 7:45 pm**
7. **Additional Topics?**

## **ADJOURN**

**Note:** Times noted in the agenda are for suggested time frames for that agenda item. Is not meant to limit committee members or the public from participating in the topic discussion. Only to help manage the meeting agenda and be respectful of everyone's time. Please help us manage the length of the meetings by focusing on the agenda item being discussed and by being as succinct as possible when addressing the matter. Thank you.

To: CLAC (Coloma Lotus Advisory Committee)  
From: CLAC Fire/Smoke Ad Hoc Subcommittee  
Re: Update on results of CLAC-approved Proposal to Address Wildfire Ignition and Air Quality in the Coloma Lotus Valley  
Date: October 26, 2021

The Ad Hoc Committee's Proposal to Address Wildfire Ignition and Air Quality was approved by the CLAC on May 18, 2021. This proposal leveraged fire and smoke management protocols already in use to determine *regional* Red Flag and No Burn Days, but instead applied these protocols using local data only, sourced from the Coloma Lotus Valley, to create and issue *local* Community guidance on outside open flames and other spark-risk activities. Community compliance with the Proposal's guidance to refrain from open flame or spark risk activities was strictly voluntary, and was directed at all property owners and their tenants, regardless of zoning.

Shortly after the CLAC approval of the Proposal, Jacqui Moore, a member of the Ad Hoc committee, began publishing about local conditions and advising of the Proposal's guidelines on CLNews. After some businesses requested a forecast of No Spark and No Open Flame days to help them manage customer expectations, a weeklong forecast of guidance was also provided.

The fire season was as bad as we had expected, though the extended and extensive impact of the Caldor Fire was still a sobering shock. The smoke alone from this wildfire seriously compromised nearly half of the summer recreational season in our county. Thousands of people were displaced during evacuations, and hundreds lost their homes. The Caldor Fire Incident Command reported that the Probability of Ignition (PIG) rose as high as 95% during the wildfire. For the first time in recorded history, embers flew across Sierra Nevada passes and lit wildfires on the other side, not only during the Dixie Fire, but during the Caldor Fire too. All of the USFS forests in California were completely shut down to visitors after the wildfires proliferated in August.

This update advises the CLAC of the details of the implementation of the Proposal, the response of the community, the results of a debriefing amongst members of the business and residential community, and recommendations for next steps.

1. Implementation of the Proposal:

*Purple Air monitors*

- a. Three Purple Air monitors were purchased and installed by Ad Hoc volunteers in the Coloma Lotus Valley to help track PM 2.5 pollution. Another was installed in a Marshall Gold State Park location. These alerted residents and businesses to particulate pollution, largely arising from smoke.
- b. The monitors initially provided a measure of smoke arising from local fires. As the summer progressed, these were overwhelmed by wildfire smoke, largely from the Dixie and later the Caldor Fires.
- c. Interestingly, one residence up at Chili Bar was contacted by an interested individual to ask if the owners were willing to install a Purple Air monitor, and within 24 hours the monitor had been crowdfunded and secured. This provided an interesting testament to the important role that pollution plays in planning recreation.

### *Community Spark and Open Flame Guidance*

- a. As previously discussed, after some businesses requested a multi-day forecast of No Spark and No Open Flame days to help manage customer expectations, a weeklong forecast of guidance was also provided.
  - b. The provision of multi-day forecasts of humidity, wind and PM 2.5 pollution conditions that would generate No Spark or No Open Flame Day guidance for future days proved to be a time consuming task for a volunteer.
  - c. Furthermore, the further out that the forecast went, the more the accuracy of fire/smoke risk conditions was compromised.
  - d. Despite its limitations, the multi-day guidance forecast was nonetheless useful, especially to businesses, but primarily during the spring shoulder season.
2. Community Response to the Proposal's flame/smoke guidance:
- a. The general reaction to this program was supportive.
    - i. Some residents found the guidance confusing and requested simpler guidance.
    - ii. Some would prefer a simple season-long restriction on open flames in the CL Valley.
  - b. In response to campfire restrictions at campgrounds, customers in 2021 reportedly reacted with more understanding in comparison to 2020. As wildfires sprang up across the state through the summer, attitudes increasingly improved.
3. Results of Business/Residential Debriefing:
- a. In practice, most businesses reached a point during this past summer when they independently decided to shut down open fires altogether, rather than repeatedly open and close the campfire option to customers, which created management challenges.
    - i. Some campgrounds initially warned customers proactively that there would be a chance that fires would not be allowed; later in the seasons, customers were advised that the campground was no longer allowing campfires.
  - b. Some additional comments from visitors and locals were:
    - i. We now have the technology (propane stoves, LED lights) to substitute safer options in lieu of open flames.
    - ii. The wildfire smoke was so oppressive for so many weeks that the desire for clean air was enhanced.
    - iii. Many local business owners are also local residents, which facilitated collaboration.
    - iv. With voluntary compliance with the guidelines so strong, nighttime visitors to the CL Valley no longer saw hillsides dotted with campfire flames. Because people tend to mimic the behavior of others, the lack of visible campfires was thought to inspire more safety awareness. The implicit message was that our community took fire risk seriously, and any campfire would be easily seen.
  - c. Later in the season, a separate grassroots effort created a petition to ban open fires altogether and reportedly gathered 500 signatures, an effort that was reported in the Sacramento Bee.
    - i. The particular concern was generated by a photo of a barbecue surrounded by coals that had been strewn around the county-owned grounds. The county removed the barbecues from its owned park facilities in response.
    - ii. This group continues to advocate for a ban on open flames.

#### 4. Conclusions:

- a. The flame/smoke guidance pushed out to CLNews was most valuable during shoulder seasons conditions, outside of the hot and dry summer months, when it was less clear when conditions might be dangerous.
  - i. These shoulder seasons will include the spring, and could conceivably include times in the fall after rains have occurred in some years.
  - ii. While the utility of week-long forecasts is questionable, campgrounds have indicated that they would benefit from forecasted guidance reaching 2 days into the future during those shoulder seasons, especially forecasts covering weekends.
  - iii. The workload of generating those two-day forecasts exceeds what can be accomplished by volunteers. There is some hope that a crowdsourced solution for local ignition risk forecasts may emerge.
- b. Longer, multi-week campfire restrictions during the peak dry season are likely to be supported by many, if not most, locals and businesses. An unanswered question will be when that dry season should start and when it should end.
  - i. A number of other communities, counties, districts and forests banned all open fires or closed this year due to wildfire concerns.
  - ii. This ad Hoc Committee has not researched what triggering measurements or conditions generated the USFS closures or broader fire bans.
  - iii. Conceivably, fire mitigation actions implemented by other entities might be used to trigger similar seasonal actions in our local communities or counties.

#### 5. Recommendations for CLAC consideration:

- a. Today, efforts to manage the first step of wildfires, namely, human ignitions, are largely unaddressed as a matter of wildfire policy.
  - i. A recent September 2020 study entitled “In the Line of Fire: Consequences of Human-Ignited Wildfires to Homes in the U.S. (1992–2015)”<sup>1</sup> analyzed wildfires in the US, including small ones for the first time, along with rigorous location data.
  - ii. It found that humans ignited 97% of all wildfires in the WUI and 59% of wildfires in more remote wildland areas. This result illustrates the importance of working to reduce or stop ignitions at their human source.
- b. The CLAC may wish to report to the BOS and the EDCFPD on its Community effort, and its findings and recommendations:
  - i. Section 307.1.1 of the California Fire Code<sup>2</sup> requires that open burning<sup>3</sup> be prohibited “*when atmospheric conditions or local circumstances make such fires dangerous.*”

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<sup>1</sup> [https://res.mdpi.com/d\\_attachment/fire/fire-03-00050/article\\_deploy/fire-03-00050-v3.pdf](https://res.mdpi.com/d_attachment/fire/fire-03-00050/article_deploy/fire-03-00050-v3.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://up.codes/viewer/california/ca-fire-code-2019/chapter/3/general-requirements#307>

<sup>3</sup> While the state fire code definition of open burning excludes recreational fires, the definition of recreational fires excludes any fire that is contained in a pit or structure, or is larger than 2 feet high and 3 feet wide.

- ii. The CLAC-approved Proposal to Address Wildfire Ignition and Air Quality in the Coloma Lotus Valley is an example of how this law can be implemented in practice in a local community, using scientifically established ignition and pollution risk protocols, paired with local data.
  - iii. Conceivably, the “atmospheric conditions or local circumstances that make such fires dangerous” could be stipulated locally by our county, with the agreement of its Fire Protection Districts, using metrics that are easily obtained and understood by residents and visitors.
  - iv. Ideally, to simplify guidance and reduce confusion, the county will specify that open burning includes all recreational fires during high ignition risk/high pollution timeframes.
- c. The State’s Insurance Commission is now drafting of a contemplated new regulation for the California Code of Regulations, Title 10, Chapter 5, Subchapter 4.8, Article 4, section 2644.9 entitled MITIGATION IN RATING PLANS AND WILDFIRE RISK MODELS.
- i. The goal of the proposed rulemaking is to require insurers, when setting insurance rates, to consider property- and community-level mitigation efforts to reduce wildfire risk.
  - ii. Currently, the proposed model does not include special community mitigation efforts to reduce human ignitions of wildfires. Instead, the current focus is on limiting spread, or reducing home ignitions, via defensible space, home hardening and similar programs.
  - iii. The potential for reduced fire insurance rates for communities that actively manage human ignition risk would deliver an added incentive.