CAMBRIA FIRE SAFE FOCUS GROUP
GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 27,2026

ATTENDANCE: Marshall Hamilton, Keith Seidel, Kristine Fox, Greg Alex, Deborah Boynton, Bob Putney, Roberta Vitols, Baxter Boyington, Keith Hinrichsen, Andrew Fricker, Andrew Johnson, Cheryl McDowell, Debbie Hori, Jim Dantona, Kitty Connolly, Jeff Hilland, Tony Safford, Tony Freeman, Michael Castellanos, Christina Galloway, Matthew McElhenie

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS: Deborah Boynton opened the meeting at 3:00 PM and invited everyone to introduce themselves around the table. She noted that the agenda has time limits for speaking to allow for each topic to be heard.
Boynton expressed gratitude for the work of this committee, for the generosity of the FSC, for the grants they procure and the work that brings results to Cambria. She thanked the donors, for Debbie Hori and her committee and their successful fundraiser, for the special guests who share their expertise.

CERT UPDATE: Bob Putney reported that he has been meeting with other CERT groups in SLO County in preparation for El Nino. He has a waiting list of 75-80 people for another CERT class. He reminded us that he has a November 20 deadline for submitting his Firewise USA report and he needs people to submit hours and money spent to him.

FISCALINI RANCH: Kitty Connolly, Executive Director, reported that work is completed on the Reserve and they did a great job. The recent heat wave caused seedlings to pop up. She submitted a proposal to complete tree work on the East and West ranches and hopes for a positive result in December. There are plans to replace some grasses with shrubs.

OTHER: Baxter Boyington reported that the FSC would approve our representative and alternate at their January 28, 2027 meeting.
Greg Alex reported that the FSC has applied for Prop 4 funds for work in different places in the County. FSC has applied to be the sub-grantee to prioritize and implement grants in SLO County.

CAMBRIA FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATE: Michael Castellanos gave the report in the absence of Chief Burkey. He said that the Pickle Ball fundraiser brought in $65,000 for the new water rescue craft including training. The kitchen work is underway and will take two months to complete. His crew learned first hand that people are not prepared for emergencies in Cambria. Following the power outage they were inundated with calls. Dantona reported that Supervisor Gibson told PG&E to address concerns of the community. Greg Alex wants an after-action report on the outage. Castellanos reported that the grant for a Fire Marshall has been approved, providing for a 2-year contract. McElhenie added that after the salary schedule has been set recruitment would begin.

Debbie Hori reported that a meal train has been set up for the fire fighters and people can go to m4gfish@yahoo.com to sign up and donate. Her team is working on plans for a May 2028 fundraiser.

CCSD: Matthew McElhenie reported that the water reclamation project is done. The CCSD can write citations and levy fines for people who don't comply with abatement rules on occupied properties. He also reported that the San Simeon Services District is going through dissolution and questions remain as to who will take on the services for San Simeon and Old San Simeon Village.

NEIGHBORHOOD LIAISON PROGRAM: Tony Safford reported that a meeting on November 2nd will focus on alerts, preparedness, and evacuation planning.

STUDENT ART PROJECT: Roberta Vitols reported that Coast Union students have submitted posters and five winners have been selected in the Poster Contest depicting the theme: One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire. Bob Putney reported that he visited Kirsten Wothe's art classes and talked about embers and fire danger. The winning posters will be made into 4' by 8' posters to be mounted into the Firewise frames located around town. There was discussion about how to display all 26 posters in the community and it was decided that Greg Alex would display them on the firesafeslo.org website.

ANDREW SWAN JOHNSON, CAL POLY WUI PROFESSOR: Dr. Johnson introduced himself and shared his research on decision making during fire emergencies. He found that there are both prepared decisions and those made in the moment. He is currently interested in helping Cambria make decisions re fuel management and treatment options. He believes that home hardening is a critical step even though motivating communities is difficult.

DEBORAH BOYNTON: Deborah Boynton read a report by Ben Higgins, Director of Agriculture Operations for the Hearst Corporation regarding Hearst Ranches – Top Issues dated September 2026. Topics covered were wildfire, efforts & results of the CalVTP Hearst Ranch Forest Health Fuels Reduction Project, SLO County Beef Cattle/Agricultural Industry issues.

Wildfire issues continue to plague our area and we need to support efforts toward fuel reduction on both public and private property. Additionally, preparations are underway for the "super El Nino" expected later this year.

Detailed records of this meeting are available at firesafeslo.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Vitols99