



**MEMORANDUM
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER &
SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES**
County of Placer

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors DATE: August 23, 2022
FROM: Josh Huntsinger, Agricultural Commissioner
By: Phoebe Rogers, Regional Forest Health Fellow (CivicSpark)
SUBJECT: CivicSpark Fellowship Service Term Overview

ACTION REQUESTED

Receive a brief informational report from the Regional Forest Health CivicSpark Fellow on the activities of the 11-month Fellowship Service Term, split between the Agricultural Commissioner’s Regional Forest Health program and the Placer County Air Pollution Control District’s biomass program.

BACKGROUND

CivicSpark, a program of Civicwell (formerly the Local Government Commission), was created in response to the Governor’s AmeriCorps Initiative, dedicated to pairing young professionals with local public agencies in need of capacity support for new programs addressing community resilience issues such as climate change, water resource management, housing, and mobility. CivicSpark Fellows serve at least 1,700 hours over an 11-month period with their host agencies, providing research, planning, outreach, and community engagement support for sustainability and resilience projects, while also building long-term capacity to ensure the work is sustained after their service terms are completed. The CivicSpark program offers a unique opportunity for emerging professionals to gain experience in the sustainability and resilience sectors, hone professional and technical skills, and build a strong statewide network of professional connections, all while having a lasting impact on communities.

Regional Forest Health (RFH) Project Overview:

The RFH program was created in 2021 to integrate forest management and wildfire risk reduction strategies and activities across county departments and coordinate the County’s forest health- and wildfire resilience-related work with state and federal agencies and local partners to preserve vital resources while reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire impacts on Placer County residents, property, and critical infrastructure. The FY 2021-22 CivicSpark fellowship work consisted of foundational stakeholder, programmatic, and technical research to support future community engagement around forest health, fire resilience, and biomass utilization project planning and prioritizing. The Fellow’s efforts also supported stakeholder collaboration and intra-agency strategy coordination to position the County to be more competitive for future funding and project approval.

Goals:

At the outset of the service year, RFH Coordinator Kerri Timmer and CivicSpark Fellow, Phoebe Rogers identified the following goals for the fellowship term:

1. Align strategies from the County’s Sustainability Plan and other related plans to inform creation of a countywide Forest Health Plan and project pipeline and assist staff in gaining a stronger understanding of County and project partner needs and priorities around forest health, fire risk reduction, and biomass utilization.
2. Foster departmental collaboration on forest resilience projects in the region.
3. Assist in the design and implementation of the regional forest health program and work towards creating a model for other forested counties to follow in launching similar programs.

4. Build an outreach database as the underpinning of future community engagement to foster relationships between county staff and external partners working in collaboration to improve forest health and reduce the risk of large, damaging wildfires.

Outcomes/Highlights:

Accomplishments of the CivicSpark Fellow during the 11-month term with Placer County:

1. Conducted thorough intra-agency planning document review to identify forest- and fire-related goals and strategies across various County departments and divisions (CWPP, LHMP, PCSP); worked with Planning Services Division staff to align strategies for future planning and implementation efforts.
2. Supported research and program development related to planning and streamlining project identification for forest and community resilience to make the County more competitive for future funding.
3. Created searchable stakeholder database to support collaboration and future community engagement and outreach around forest-related issues in Placer County.

Placer County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) Project Overview:

Wildfire is not only a land management issue but also an increasing public health issue. More smoke-filled days in California are linked to greater negative health outcomes. The Placer County APCD is focused on forest resilience as a vehicle for improving air quality and public health throughout the district. The opportunity to work with both programs, RFH and APCD, provided a clear understanding of the interconnection between and among forest resilience projects, sustainable disposal of forest waste, and improved conditions for County residents, visitors, and businesses. The CivicSpark Fellow assisted APCD staff in researching technological advancements and other information to improve decision support regarding biomass development in the region. The Fellow also focused on research to build the APCD's understanding of and capacity to integrate black carbon climate impacts into ongoing biomass planning efforts.

Goals:

The following goals and capacity-building objectives were identified by the Fellow and APCD project manager Christiana Darlington for the service term:

1. Develop knowledge on the state-of-the-art technology that converts forest biomass waste into electricity, heat, and/or liquid or gaseous fuels, including air pollution control alternatives and performance.
2. Understand the black carbon emission impacts of wildfires and open-pile and prescribed burning of biomass wastes.
3. Stay informed on local, state, and federal forest management and renewable energy policy.
4. Develop outreach material on available biomass technology to share with other state agencies.

Outcomes/Highlights:

1. Achievements during the fellow's term with the APCD: Researched and developed biomass technology spreadsheet for APCD report on available technology that was shared with a statewide network of biomass stakeholders.
2. Conducted literature review on the climate and public health effects of black carbon.
3. Reviewed and provided information on California Air Resources Board (CARB) Draft Scoping Plan on behalf of APCD.
4. Supported research on available biomass technology and its benefit to forested communities.

FISCAL IMPACT

No action is being requested as a result of this presentation; therefore, there is no fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENTS

None

On file with Clerk of the Board for Review – Regional Forest Health Program CivicSpark Overview

