



CALIFORNIA OAK MORTALITY TASK FORCE

Operating Guidelines for the California Oak Mortality Task Force

Section 1. Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives

Mission Statement

The California Oak Mortality Task Force (COMTF) is a coalition of educational institutions, public agencies, non-profit organizations, and private interests working to address the impacts of *Phytophthora ramorum* (the pathogen known to cause Sudden Oak Death) in forests and horticultural settings. Its primary purpose is to coordinate a comprehensive and unified program of research, management, monitoring, education, and public policy in an effort to minimize oak and tanoak mortality, impacts of the pathogen, and pathogen spread.

The Task Force was formed in August 2000 by joining two emerging efforts to address Sudden Oak Death statewide: 1) a resolution of the California Forest Pest Council (CFPC), and 2) an initiative from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The Task Force is overseen by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection as a committee of the California Forest Pest Council.

Goals

The Task Force goals are to:

- Minimize the impacts of *Phytophthora ramorum* on oak and tanoak ecosystems, as well as affected industries, and
- Coordinate an integrated response by all interested parties to address *P. ramorum*.

Objectives

The objectives of the Task Force are to:

- Assist communities affected and threatened by *P. ramorum* to maintain a safe and healthy environment;
- Develop and maintain an adaptive integrated pest management program for *P. ramorum*;
- Provide information and education to interested parties on all aspects of the pathogen, including its biology, impacts, and management strategies;
- Coordinate efforts to prevent the spread of *P. ramorum*; and
- Identify the needs for, and potential sources of, funding, staffing, and other resources for addressing *P. ramorum*.

Section 2. Membership

Any interested person may become a member of the Task Force by attending a COMTF meeting. There is no charge for membership. The members of the COMTF will avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest in making all decisions. In particular, if an Executive Committee member has a financial interest in any decision

before this body, that member will excuse themselves from discussions pertaining to that issue.

Section 3. Structure of the Task Force

The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the Task Force Chairperson, the Liaison, the Treasurer, the Public Information Officer, the Outreach Coordinator, Science Advisors, Special Advisors, and all Committee Co-chairs. This group contains those in the Task Force with the greatest expertise in their individual subject areas and is charged with developing and providing overall direction to the Task Force, as well as identifying strategic needs.

The Executive Committee establishes Task Force policy through a consensus process and coordinates the functions of the individual committees. It approves disease management recommendations and educational strategies based on the latest scientific information.

The primary responsibilities of the Executive Committee are to:

- Ensure that the organization operates responsibly as well as effectively;
- Work with the entities that hire and evaluate Task Force staff;
- Ensure that annual planning and budgeting are completed and approved;
- Support the work of the organization, staff, and volunteers;
- Review and adopt long-term strategic directions and approve specific objectives (financial and other); and
- Ensure, to the extent possible, that the necessary resources (including human resources) will be available to pursue strategies and achieve objectives.

Task Force Committees

A large portion of the work of the Task Force is achieved by committees. Committee co-chairs work to develop products from their committees that fulfill their objectives within the overall mission of the Task Force. Prior to the release of products, committees are to send the product to Executive Committee members for review and comment. Where a product involves the overall direction of the Task Force, and extends beyond the boundaries of a committee's responsibilities, approval of the Executive Committee is required. It is the goal of the Task Force to empower committees to achieve their goals. Additional committees may be created at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

Biomass Committee

The Biomass Committee develops recommendations for the removal, transport, and utilization of trees and plant materials affected by Sudden Oak Death based on the latest and best available information.

Education Committee

The Education Committee communicates information about *Phytophthora ramorum* to researchers, land managers, regulators, impacted industries and groups, policy makers, the media, and the general public. Its activities include preparing educational materials

(web pages, brochures, videos, interpretive guides, etc.), conducting workshops and trainings, providing press releases, and maintaining a speakers' bureau for presentations on *P. ramorum*. The committee remains in close contact with the other committees in order to identify educational needs and distribute the latest information to appropriate clientele.

Fire Protection Committee

The Fire Protection Committee identifies fire hazard changes in areas affected by *P. ramorum*. It also works to identify practices that will help mitigate increased fire risk.

Funding Committee

The Funding Committee works to secure additional resources for the *Phytophthora ramorum* program by identifying potential sources for funding and conveying this information to appropriate committees.

Management Committee

The Management Committee works to identify up-to-date management strategies to successfully mitigate the impacts of *P. ramorum*. It utilizes and evaluates all available sources of information and modifies recommendations based on new research findings and regulatory actions.

Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee maintains up-to-date information on the incidence of *P. ramorum*, including maps showing the geographical range and lists of species that are affected. It coordinates monitoring activities and develops monitoring strategies and protocols, including appropriate techniques for detection and surveying.

Nursery Committee

The Nursery Committee works to identify nursery industry *P. ramorum*-related impacts and needs. The committee works closely with the Regulation Committee regarding efforts to stop the artificial movement of the pathogen via the nursery system, and also works closely with the Education Committee to develop educational outreach material and professional training sessions for industry representatives.

Regulation Committee

The Regulation Committee works to identify needs for regulations relating to *P. ramorum* in California. The committee provides input into regulatory efforts aimed at preventing *P. ramorum*'s artificial spread. It works with the Education Committee to ensure that information about regulatory requirements is disseminated to appropriate clientele.

Research Committee

The Research Committee coordinates scientific research into all aspects of *P. ramorum* and identifies high-priority research needs. It serves other COMTF committees by addressing research questions that other committees need answered to function effectively.

Section 4. Duties of Task Force Officers

The Task Force Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Task Force will be selected by a majority vote of the Executive Committee members.

The Chairperson shall convene regularly scheduled Executive Committee meetings and shall preside, or arrange for other members of the Executive Committee to preside, at the meetings. Other responsibilities of the Chairperson include providing leadership to the Task Force, communicating on behalf of the Task Force with affected agency leaders, ensuring effective action of the Task Force, developing meeting agendas with Task Force staff.

Task Force Staff

The staff (Public Information Officer and Outreach Coordinators) attends all Executive Committee meetings, records notes, and distributes minutes of the meetings within 30 days after the meeting.

Central/Southern Outreach Coordinator

The Central/Southern Educational Outreach Coordinator (C/S-EOC) is the primary contact for non-media public inquiries and handles Tribal-related activities. The C/S-EOC also oversees all Task Force website-related postings and information and is the lead for all professional training sessions. This position ensures that all Task Force-related publications are disseminated for public and professional consumption and that relations between *P. ramorum*-quarantined counties remain ongoing and supportive. C/S-EOC-specific duties include:

- Fostering ongoing communications with Tribes;
- Maintaining ongoing communications with affected industry representatives;
- Addressing inquiries from the general public;
- Developing and writing educational outreach material for all affected user groups;
- Developing and implementing affected industry professional training sessions;
- Identifying new educational needs and identifying strategies for addressing the needs;
- Compiling accomplishment reports annually;
- Public speaking engagements on *P. ramorum*;
- Coordinating outreach efforts among all *P. ramorum*-infested counties;
- Coordinating scheduling for professional speaking engagements by COMTF members; and
- Ensuring all information on the Task Force website is up-to-date.

Northern Outreach Coordinator

The Northern Educational Outreach Coordinator (N-EOC) is the primary contact for non-media public inquiries and handles Tribal-related activities for the northern most counties of CA. This position ensures that relations between *P. ramorum* counties in the northern region of the state are ongoing and supportive. N-EOC-specific duties include:

- Fostering ongoing communications with Tribes;
- Maintaining ongoing communications and educational activities with affected industry and agency representatives;

- Addressing inquiries from the general public;
- Developing and writing educational outreach material for all affected user groups;
- Identifying and responding to new educational needs;
- Public speaking engagements on *P. ramorum*;
- Coordinating early detection activities in the north coast;
- Assisting with north coast *P. ramorum*-infested site management activities and research; and
- Assisting with COMTF trainings and other related activities.

Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer (PIO) is the official spokesperson for the COMTF, handling all media-related inquiries and activities, as well as legislative affairs and day-to-day coordination of the COMTF. The PIO also works with, and coordinates the efforts of, all agencies and PIOs working on *P. ramorum*-related activities. This position ensures that the COMTF is functioning as a whole, and facilitates communication between committees and between committees and the general membership. PIO-specific duties include:

- Advising Task Force members on issues relating to media contact and public affairs;
- Writing and distributing press releases and news advisories;
- Designing and implementing media events;
- Conducting electronic and print interviews;
- Developing and coordinating all aspects of Task Force-related meetings;
- Maintaining communication with politicians;
- Writing briefing papers and preparing briefing packages;
- Formulating strategic plans and budgets for presentation to and approval by the Executive Committee;
- Writing the monthly Task Force report to be presented to the Board of Forestry by either the Task Force Chair or the PIO;
- Public speaking engagements on *P. ramorum*;
- Making day-to-day operating decisions;
- Document development, editing, and review;
- Distribution of all Executive Committee meeting notes and notices; and
- Back-up for training professional training session implementation.

Committee Co-chairs

The role of the Committee Co-chairs is to provide committee leadership and to represent and report the progress of their committees to the Executive Committee. The Committee Co-chairs work closely with the Executive Committee to identify priorities and implement strategies.

Liaison

The Liaison will serve as an ombudsman and help with internal problem solving of the Task Force.

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall receive all payments, be custodian of the Task Force funds, keep an account of all monies received and expended, and make commitments and disbursements authorized by the

Executive Committee. In January of each year, the Treasurer will make a full report covering the financial affairs of the Task Force. The Treasurer will also provide requested financial information necessary to the California Forest Pest Council for their tax reporting requirements. All funds, books, records, and vouchers in the Treasurer's control are subject to inspection and verification.

Science Advisor(s)

The Science Advisor(s) will attend Executive Committee meetings to ensure that all discussions and decisions incorporate the latest scientific information on *P. ramorum*. In particular, the Science Advisor(s) will make sure the Executive Committee is informed of recent *P. ramorum* scientific discoveries or advances.

Special Advisor(s)

The Special Advisor(s) will attend Executive Committee meetings and provide input as it relates to their area of expertise.

Section 4. Terms of Office and Compensation of Executive Committee Members

The Science and Special Advisors and Liaison will serve two-year terms. They will be selected by the Executive Committee. Terms will begin in July of the appropriate calendar year, or as necessary to fill unplanned vacancies. Advisors and the liaison may be re-elected or re-appointed.

Committee Chairpersons, including the Task Force Chair, will serve one-year terms. The Executive Committee will appoint Committee Chairpersons with input from committee members. Appointments will be made in July of each year, or as necessary to fill unplanned vacancies. All officers may be re-elected or re-appointed.

Compensation

Task Force members, the Chairperson, and the Liaison shall serve without compensation. Task Force staff will be reimbursed for time and travel.

Section 5. Decision-Making Process

Decisions are made based on consensus. Business and general meetings are open to the public, and non-members may participate in meetings. Issues of concern that are raised by the membership will be brought before the Executive Committee to be addressed.

Executive Committee meetings are by invitation only.

At least one meeting of the general Task Force membership will be held each year, in the spring or fall. Dates are flexible.

Section 6. Finances

Expenditures

The Executive Committee, by consensus decision, may authorize expenditures of COMTF funds. Checks, orders for the payment of money, and other evidence of indebtedness of the Task Force shall

be signed by the Treasurer, Task Force Chairperson, or other person designated by the Executive Committee. The COMTF staff or Chairperson may authorize the reimbursement of reasonable incidental expenses in support of Task Force business.

Deposits

All Task Force funds shall be deposited to the credit of the Task Force in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as the governing board, or other person designated by the Task Force Chairperson, may select.

The COMTF will serve as a subcommittee of the California Forest Pest Council (CFPC) and utilize the 501(3)c non-profit status of the CFPC for tax obligations (94-324-8514).

Contracts

The Executive Committee may authorize any officer or agent of the Task Force to enter into a contract on behalf of the Task Force. Unless so authorized, no officer, agent, or employee shall have any power of authority to bind the Task Force to any contract.

Gifts

Any Executive Committee member may accept, on behalf of the Task Force, any contribution, gift, or bequest for the charitable or public purposes of the Task Force.

Fiscal Year

The Task Force fiscal year shall begin on the 1st of January and end on the last day of December.

Section 7. Amendments of Operating Guidelines

Amendments

Changes to these operating guidelines shall be presented to the Executive Committee for review. The operating guidelines may be amended by a majority vote of the Executive Committee at any time.