



Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes April 20th, 2023

Meeting Venue: Zoom

- I. Attendance**
 - a. Quorum met see attached for meeting attendance.
- II. Call to Order**
 - a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz called meeting to order 1:00 pm April 20th, 2023.
 - b. Introduced new committee members:
 - i. Laura Osiadacz Commissioner for Kittitas County, representing eastside commissioners. I have been Commissioner for 7 years, I have lived in Kittitas County for many years, served 13 years on Roslyn fire dept. Involved in establishing a better location for emergency management to help with our emergencies.
 - ii. Sami Schinnel Cooperative Fire Director for the Nature Conservancy and Fire Program Manager for the Washington chapter, state-wide environmental group representative. I have 25 years in wildland fire suppression and prescribed fire, I spent 20 years with the U.S. Forest Service all over the country. Had a prescribed fire business prior to my position at the Nature Conservancy, and I am a Washington native and glad to be back.
- III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business**
 - a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from March 17th, 2023. Tony Craven motions to approve minutes, Chris Martin seconds. All members vote yeah and there are no abstains.
 - b. No outstanding business discussed.
- IV. Agency Updates**
 - a. **State Mobilization Update** – Melissa Gannie, Assistant State Fire Marshall. Mobilization plan revisions are being submitted for approval and then will be posted to our website. Prepositioning of fire service resources utilizing our disaster response funds is being talked about as budget year comes to an end. Won't know until new budget is finalized. Still recruiting for one state deputy fire marshal positions, we are interviewing next week, hoping to get a candidate out of this round. June 20th will be a meeting with board of community technical colleges, and homeland security and emergency management center of excellence. Invited DNR to join, looking at workforce development from the skill center levels up to the 4 year degrees with higher level colleges. State patrol has longstanding relationship with WSU. About 5 years ago my division oversaw the accreditation program for fire service on the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress. We offer 21 levels of certification through those programs. We are working on mapping 5 years' worth of fire incident data that has been



reported through the national fire incident reporting system from agencies, looking to overlay that with DNR WUI map. Have done work with the Seattle FD on E bikes to respond to fires caused by them as they are used more, generated a lot of information and best practices.

- b. **Federal Update** – Kari Grover-Wier, District Ranger, Acting Chief of Staff, USFS, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. PNW Regional Forester Glenn Casamassa has retired, Liz Berger is the Acting Regional Forester while that position is filled. Wildfire Crisis Strategy work is well underway, including close coordination with DNR on both implementation and planning. We are moving from implementing shovel- ready projects to long term planning on both the Okanogan Forest and the Colville Forest. This work is primarily funded thru the Inflation Reduction Law and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. On IMTs and wildfire response this season, we will be using the Incident Strategic Alignment Process to evaluate and communicate risks and strategy. It is a really good method to identify the most important work using Critical Values at Risk, Strategy to protect those values, Identification of responder risk and Probability of Success.
- c. **Fire Service Update** – Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3. IMT gathered in the TRI cities this week, host of topics for those teams. Last time the teams gathered was pre-COVID in 2019. CIMT a big topic, UAS, seasonal outlook. Drought conditions improved across the state, east and central Oregon look to still have it and may be an issue this summer. Lot of prescribed fire going on.
- d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager. Operations section completed the first heavy equipment academy, with 10 operators trained, quality of training was high and experienced operators still took something away from it. This will help with the deployment of new 1168 funded equipment. Wildland fire management conference beginning of May, also going to get our first ever agency administrator training. Pivoting towards readiness for fire season. Logistics section supporting the academies and training sessions coming up. Plans section providing situational support going on, detection cameras going into implementation. Typical training going on, 3 academy sessions. Aviation section going to do a pre-season fire rehearsal with aircraft coming from multiple locations. Have multiple agencies participating. We can field 6 UH-1s, 2 Kodiaks in month of May. The 2 multi mission aircraft will have infrared capability. Resilience, have 3 Wild Fire Ready Neighbors events upcoming, launched already in Pierce, Thurston this Saturday, Mason County in May. Coordinating state agency readiness roundtable, EMD Fire Marshal, National Guard, Fire Chiefs, in early May. Hosting CIMT course in October. HB 1578 is on its way to be signed, requires DNR to update the WUI map, incorporating feedback from current WUI and local organizations.
- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester.
 - i. Account Joint Work Group 1168 Recommendations: The group was asked to provide recommendations based on a full funding and lower funding scenarios. The recommendations were based on how that money should be allocated related



to pass-thru funds, those granted out to either communities or organizations doing the work. They were delivered to myself and Alex Smith, the deputy who oversees the Forest Resiliency programs, to be forwarded to the CPL after we know what the budget appropriation is. Intent is to use the memo to inform discussion. Should have budget in a week or so.

- ii. Community Wildfire Defense Grants: outlined in bipartisan infrastructure law, charges the USFS with providing grants to implement their forest action plans in their states develop fire defense plans for communities. We were second highest state for funding, with 43 applications and \$25 million awarded. Several communities have received grants for updating their CWPPs. \$150 million was the intended cap, but the grant proposals were so good, we ended up awarding \$197 million. It's expected there will be 3 more rounds of grants under this program, next round mid to late May. Grants can be up to \$10 million for implementation, \$¼ million for developing community wildfire preparedness plans. WA has "opted in" to manage the funds, DNR receives funds and then we sub-award the funds to the communities, that way we can help with proposal preparation and other technical assistance. Dollars will come to the state no earlier than the 10th of May.
- iii. Complex Incident Management Team Transition: Workgroup on the implementation of the CIMT established by DNR, being led by Gary Berndt. Goal is to answer how we most effectively capitalize on the interagency system we have in WA, how we transition to CIMT, and how can we improve as we change to this model. Had first meeting. The end goal is for this work group to provide me recommendations to implement the transition and provide framework back to the National Multi-Agency Coordinating (NMAC). Timeline of early 2024 for when everyone will be transitioned over to CIMT.
- iv. Wildland Fire Commission: Federal commission outlined in the bipartisan infrastructure law, Cody Desautel is a voting member and Annie Schmidt is one of the lead facilitators. Their deliverables from Congress were first a recommendation regarding aviation (inventory, defensible equipment) which went out September 1st. They have gone through the Cohesive Strategy and an update will go out in May. Other topics include community response, landscape resilience, and suppression response. Expectation is a final report with recommendations to congress to improve the overall wildland fire issue in the U.S. Next meeting of full commission is in May in Boise.
- v. Inflation Reduction Act Funds: have money available for conservation related issues, one of which is for urban and community forestry. WA and DNR will receive 6 million dollars for helping communities with urban forest management and tree equity across the state. Fire resilience issues also come up within these urban groups.
- vi. USFS Wildfire Suppression Memo of Understanding with Forest Industry: The National Alliance of Forest Owners has signed a MOU with the USFS related to



wildland fire response. Washington Fire Protection Association asked if we wanted to do it at a state level. We are going through the MOU to see how it applies to the relevant RCWs and structures within the state to see if it is worth replicating at the state level.

- vii. National Wildfire Coordinating Group: There has been a lot of discussions about NWCG qualifications surrounding prescribed fire and the difficulty of becoming a burn boss. The coalition of prescribed fire councils has developed a prescribed fire practitioner series of qualifications that would provide another track for certification that does not require a suppression path to do the work. The National Association of State Foresters is choosing to sponsor this program. It will go into the NWCG for review, the review takes 18 months.
- viii. Q: Does DNR have an update on the NW forest plan? A: DNR's forest resilience team is working with the group. The old plan is not conducive to the current environment, we are looking at an amendment process to hopefully move through more quickly implementing changes.
Q: Is DNR working with conservation districts on the prescribed fire qualifications on a national level? A: Yes, DNR has close cooperation at the state level and the national association of conservation districts is a member of the wildland fire leadership council.
Q: Have we looked into the consequences of the proposed virtual fencing and how it interacts with our existing fencing laws? A: Virtual fencing is a new approach that is being tested. The method currently being employed is to use virtual fencing as interior fencing, with exterior fencing being used to keep livestock from entering other properties. The approach is going to be tested and adjusted over time.

V. Transition from IFPL to IFPAL

- a. Vaughn Cork, Fire Regulation Program Manager – Industrial Fire Precaution Activity Levels. National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) proposed changes in 2014, mostly fully implemented in 2022. Fuel model changes were significant, fuel moisture models changed as well. New models are hotter than the old, more reactive to changes in the weather. Work on IFPAL began in 2020, recognized the old system was discontinued due to changes. Recognized an opportunity to improve the system. Proposed changes, no significant change to level 1, Level 2 reduced shutdown time, level 3 has major changes, Level 4 not a total shutdown. ODF has pulled back before implementation, creates 2 standards rather than the intent of 1. USFS moving forward with 2024 implementation. In order to implement by April 15th, 2024 we need a decision to stay in or opt out by no later than July 1st, 2023.
- b. Q: What percentage of fires are started on industrial lands, how much is the effort worth it going through the process on our own? A: Data is by equipment cause, not who caused the fire, so will not provide an easy answer with this data set.
Q: Will this new system be overly restrictive on fuels reduction work, specifically how landings are defined? A: This is geared primarily towards industrial, but some of the



reductions in work are being moved from level 2 to level 3 so that should mitigate some of the restrictions to conducting fuels reduction work.

Q: What activities in homebuilding are spelled out? A: Can go to the draft that was sent out, it should cover all those restrictions, we wanted to cover and be clear what could be done and how it was differentiated.

c. Presentation attached.

VI. Developing “relative importance” weighting of Highly Valued Resources or Assets (HVRAs) for integration to Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment – Tasking Update

a. Ana Baros, Fire Scientist, Forest Health & Resiliency Division – QWRA is all lands risk assessment (Oregon & Washington). Update is being led by Chris Dunn, OSU, Ian Rickert US FS, Andy McEvoy OSU along with DNR and USDI. Risk is likelihood of fire and intensity impacting resource we value that are susceptible. There are 8 HVRAs. The relative importance survey goal is to collect feedback on the relative importance of various HVRAs, coming from the FHAC and WFAC. This is instead of forming a joint work group given the short turn around needed. Quantitative and qualitative feedback will be summarized and sent to State Forester. Goal to complete the survey by the end of April.

b. Q: I was interested in the fire modeling map you showed, is that going to be available as a GIS overlay or some other source? A: Yes the map will be available.

Q: Can this be used for other products other than strictly fire? A: Yes, we only really use 4 of the factors for our purposes, and there is interest in using it for other emergency management products.

c. Presentation attached.

VII. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics

a. N/A

VIII. Adjourn

a. Meeting is adjourned at 4:01pm

IX. Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. IFPAL presentation
- c. QWRA survey presentation

Draft minutes submitted by Bryan Perrenod, approved by Chairman Allen Lebovitz. Formal action to be taken to approve the minutes at the next general meeting.