



# Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes September 15, 2022

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 1:04 pm September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business**
  - a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Lee Hemmer motions to approve minutes, Carlene Anders 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. N/A
  - b. **Federal Update** – Kari Grover-Wier, District Ranger, Acting Chief of Staff, USFS, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. N/A
  - c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. Fire mobilization is on the west side at Goat Rocks, two strike teams from fire service supporting Packwood and Lewiston. Six strike teams on Bolt fire that is between King and Snohomish County on DNR forest and private lands. Have three strike teams out of state supporting Oregon. At peak last week had twelve strike teams deployed for fire service. State chiefs are working on a fall conference, Washington Fire Chiefs Fall Workshop, running November 7<sup>th</sup> through November 9<sup>th</sup>. Will be discussing insurance, private engines, and some of the new technology detection systems.

Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3. What is being experienced at the region level mirrors what we are experiencing at ours locally. Feel good where we are sitting but not out of the woods yet. Historic fires have occurred still past this point with the Spokane Firestorm event occurring on October 16, 1991, still prepared for fire until we get later in the season. The smoke can be a blessing and a curse, the shade helps with the heat, moderating the temps. We are coming into budgeting season as well, staffing issues being a major focus. Recruitment is an ongoing concern, not seeing the number of applicants that we've normally seen.
  - d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager. Based on wildfire activity we had in the past week, had all hands on deck in the division, to be prepared for the worst case scenario in a late season fire. Characterize response to these fires as good, given the fuel and wind conditions out there. Division personnel are rotating in and out of assignments and incident support work here



in WA. Region wide we are sitting at a preparedness level 4 for WA as well as nationally. Things are trending in the right direction and we are looking at going down to a preparedness level 3. We have four type one teams deployed, and four type twos deployed. Boulder Creek and Bolt Creek fires are on DNR jurisdiction. Goat Rocks fire is on US Forest Service orders. A NEMO team is managing fires in the North Cascades National Park. Had the potential for difficulties with the fires with the east wind event that came through but the weather change has kept the fire static. The Bolt Creek fire will likely be downsized to a type 3 team the following week. The Bolt Creek and Goat Rocks fires are hung up in steep terrain that makes it difficult to deploy people too, focus is on mitigating threats to communities. Prepared to ramp up if the weather warms and winds pick back up, forecast shows warm temps but not strong winds. We are starting to glide down on our aircraft contracts, dropping some of the more expensive assets that are not needed on incidents and their contracts time out. We still have the two large air tankers in Moses Lake until the end of the month, as well as two type one helicopters on contract until the 25<sup>th</sup> of September in addition to our normal type two Huey fleet and still have five fire bosses out there giving us good support for initial attack. This season has given us a great opportunity to get more personnel qualified for complex incident management. Region six, Rob Allen's been leading a team around conducting field evaluations on people who are at the type two level, about several dozen personnel, working toward full implementation of the new incident management team model through the next year and half. We also have a team supporting the upcoming Association of State Foresters meeting.

- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester. Report submitted to committee chair Allen Lebovitz due to scheduling conflict attending the first meeting of the Federal Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission (FWFMMC). The first meeting of the commission was successful with high quality products to be coming out of it. Work has also begun on developing a new Farm Bill, with the bill last being previously updated in 2018. Major items include the good neighbor authority, in particular making tribes and counties eligible to participate and allowing revenue generated by the program to be used on state and private lands in addition to federal land. Looking at the landscape scale restoration grant program, planning on adding an urban community forestry program there for eligibility of those funds and to promote cross boundary wildfire mitigation. There is an effort to increase the authorization of the appropriation in section 103 of the Healthy Forests and Restoration Act, adding new authority for the Forest Service to spend up to \$20 million on two state forest or hazardous fuel reduction projects across land ownerships and priority landscapes identified in forest action plans like in WA State. There is an item proposed to exempt the export ban west of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian for dead and dying trees to accelerate the removal of them from forests. Lastly for the Farm Bill, the landowner assistance and the emergency forest restoration program is being looked at, was codified in the 2018 farm bill but has proven to be inadequate and too cumbersome, attempting to streamline the process. Other highlights are the Community Wildfire Defense Grants are open for the application process, completed applications sent to DNR. Washington and DNR are hosting the National Association of State Foresters. Annual meeting, state foresters from every state will be in attendance along with



leadership from the USDA and FEMA, will receive a report of that meeting at next committee meeting.

**V. Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience Account (SHB 1168) WFAC/FHAC Joint Work Group Tasking**

- a. William Hannah – Proposed funding for the account subject to change based on recommendations from the AJW and DNR staff; 2021-2023 funding for Wildland Policy & Coordination \$176,050, Preparedness \$43,774,918, Fire Cache \$1,500,000, Firefighter Property & Assistance \$6,073,900, Post Release Crew Program \$4,404,500, Community Resilience \$6,071,900, Fire Science, GIS and Data Management \$3,927,300. 2023-2025 funding Wildland Policy & Coordination \$238,400, Preparedness \$23,855,200, Fire Cache \$0, Firefighters Property Assistance \$1,539,500, Post Release Crew Program \$3,156,000, Community Resilience \$1,455,400, Fire Science, BIS and Data Management \$3,475,500. Minimum pass thru funding DNR recommends Wildland Policy & Coordination \$0, Preparedness \$3,400,000, Fire Cache \$0, Firefighters Property & Assistance \$10,700,000, Post Release Crew Program \$0, Community Resilience \$4,335,400, Fire Science, GIS and Data Management \$0.
- b. Loren Torgerson – August a tasking memo was sent to FHAC and WFAC regarding the tasking of providing recommendations for pass thru dollars for HB 1168, giving allocation to unallocated funds. FHAC as well as WFAC received this tasking, utilizing their expertise and experience to propose allocations. Terra Rentz and I are the task leaders. Will provide all necessary information to assist in decision making on recommendations. Timeline, October – December 2022 convene AJW at a bi-weekly frequency to gain understanding of pass-thru programs. December – February 2023 develop program specific recommendations for use by DNR staff, provide recommendations through full committee. February – March 2023 complete gap assessment and develop funding distribution recommendations. March – May 2023 DNR leadership directs staff to evaluate and implement recommendations. May – July 2023 DNR staff finalizes recommendations informed by AJW and provide to Commissioner of Public Lands for final decision.
- c. Members Tony Craven, Carlene Anders, Cody Rohrbach volunteered to join the AJW. Opportunity open till next Thursday. Bill Slosson, K.C. Whitehouse, and new member Chris Martin volunteered after the meeting.
- d. Tasking memo attached

**VI. Report from the DNR Wildland Fire Detection System Implementation work group**

- a. Angie Lane – Earlier this summer we wanted to interview companies that had the technology, cameras and detection services, depending on the company. We were able to gather the information from companies that shared with us. We were then able to put all that into a work order. The contracting process is expected to go fairly smoothly. The work group will receive the draft contract that we'll put out for review and comment, and from that will go out for bids. The work group will be able to look those over as well,



we'll score them and choose the bidder. We have twenty sites selected, hoping to have ten sites done before the end of June, and the other ten after that. We may have to bring power and internet to some of the sites so that cameras can be installed and be connected to the internet. Ten appear to be relatively easy, with the other ten being more difficult and costly to do so. We also are looking to see if we want to replicate Oregon's Strategic Team for Detection Cameras, where all the agencies get together on where to put the cameras and reduce the chance of site duplication and facilitate interoperability. Working on identifying which organizations and personnel should be involved in this effort. Goal is to make sure all the major agencies and organization are not haphazardly implementing these programs, but that they support each other. Group identified forest service, fire service, and possibly some utilities for starting the coordination process. Recommend speaking at the Washington Fire Chiefs meeting later this fall.

## **VII. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics**

- a. Wade Pierce – Eastern WA are still at level 1 or 2, still getting lightning caused fires. Industry can be an asset in wildland fire suppression, but has not been fully leveraged. Can there be cost sharing to facilitate industry suppression work? Can there be a way to have fire related work done on industry lands with contractors and have a way to compensate that work.
- b. Carlene Anders – Seeing work on CWPPs, with conservation districts leading the way, and assisting community groups that are new in applying to CWDG. Not seeing matching funds being a significant factor affecting applications, with the options for low income areas.
- c. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – Washington State School Directors Association is starting its review of DNR's legislative priorities for the upcoming year. Hope that other organizations are doing the same and that we can deliver a unified message to be more legislatively effective.
- d. Lee Hemmer – Having issues with hunters driving on back country roads, mostly private, causing fire starts. Would like to see if these can be curtailed and roads closed for fire season, assistance provided for state roads.
- e. Tom Smith – Previously we discussed surplus equipment from DNR going fire districts. I know of small districts that have been trying to get equipment but they seem to consistently fall lower than larger, more urban districts. Would like to know the formula that decides the prioritization to see how to get these smaller districts that need this equipment and increase their chances.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:44pm

## **IX. Appendices**

- a. Attendance
- b. Joint Tasking Memo Account Work Group

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.