



# Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

February 21, 2024

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Meeting Venue: Rm 172, Natural Resources Building

- I. Attendance**
  - a. Quorum met see attached for meeting attendance.
- II. Call to Order**
  - a. Committee Chair Loren Torgerson called meeting to order at 1:02 pm on February 21, 2024.
- III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Introductions**
  - a. Committee chair Loren Torgerson entertained a motion to review and approve minutes from November 15, 2023. Elizabeth King motioned to approve November minutes, Jim Smith seconded. All members vote yeah, there are no abstains.
- IV. Mitigation Plan Template Feedback & Discussion**
  - a. Mel Stewart, Managing Consultant, Cybersecurity and Compliance; Guidehouse – Incorporated feedback received from last committee meeting. We have received one piece of feedback and will be opening to public comment next week. Deadline for feedback from utilities is March 15. We will hold two webinars on February 28, 2024, and March 6, 2024 to solicit feedback from the public.
  - b. Ronda Strauch –Question: Do you have a link to view the public comment? How closely aligned are utilities plans expected to be to the template? Answer: Yes, we have put a link in the chat to review public comment. There is no expectation to complete all sections of the template. A particular section may be relevant to one utility but not another.
  - c. Allen Berreth – We reviewed it, have no major comments. Have feedback on some formatting and clarifications. We'll send that along.
  - d. Brett Conrad – PSE will be submitting feedback on changing the section on recloser settings as it's kind of mixed with PSPS. We feel those should be separated out. We'll be sending that out before the deadline. Answer: Captured your feedback, and you can always note that its discussed further in another section.
  - e. Jim smith – Appreciate considering the issues from the utility's perspective. No more substantial changes recommended. Will concur with other comments on PSPS, it is a significantly different process than recloser.



- f. Loren Torgerson, Committee Chair, DNR – What is the committee’s opinion on providing a DNR person to assist with technical support of drafting their plan? What needs the most assistance?
  - i. Allen Berreth – For smaller, or newer utilities this could be quite helpful.
  - ii. Jim Smith – There is a wide range of diversity. Nicolas will reach out to smaller members and get feedback to you on it and what would help most.
  - iii. Elizabeth King – We have established a utility workgroup and other assistance as well, making sure that we are aligned.
- g. Template attached.

**V. 2023 Wildfire Season Review**

- a. Loren Torgerson, Committee Chair, DNR – Presented the 2023 wildfire season review.
- b. Brett Conrad – Is there a way to access that GIS layer so we can overlay that over our territories? Answer: Yes, we can send out that.
- c. Ronda Strauch – Do you support all fires, are there fires on the map all fires in the state? Answer: No, the map shows DNR supported fires, not all fires. There are jurisdictional responsibilities for fires, we don’t track fires on federal land such as the U.S. Forest Service.
- d. Presentation attached.

**VI. Department of Commerce Update**

- a. Elizabeth King, Emergency Resilience & Emergency Management Director, Washington Department of Commerce. – Elizebeth King provided an overview of the final Wildfire Commission Report, published September 2023. The report contains 148 recommendations; no single recommendation can be considered alone. Specific recommendations related to utilities are:
  - i. Congress should consider development of federal standards for electric utility wildland fire mitigation plans and should encourage the adoption of those plans by all transmission and distribution electric utilities.
  - ii. Congress should direct agencies to support implementation of consistent rules and processes for federal rights-of-way and develop a guide for states to adopt similar rules and processes.
  - iii. Continue federal investments in energy infrastructure systems at the generation, storage, transmission and distribution levels for reliability and resilience of the whole system.



- iv. Congress should invest in wood processing facilities and the wood utilization sector more generally.
  - v. Fund more research and pilot projects for biofuels and biomass utilization technologies and opportunities through a new collaboration between the Forest Service Research & Development and the Department of Energy.
  - vi. Incentivize the adoption of new technologies and processing systems to produce value added, and demand-driven innovative wood products.
  - vii. Loren Torgerson – Who owns the report after the commission ends? DNR has a vegetation management for rights of way document that could help with broader rights of way consolidation. A: Who will own the report is still to be determined.
- b. Public Safety Power Shutoffs Working Group – Team was established before covid. One of the issues that came up consistently was PSPS but other issues have come to the fore. The Camp fire was the big inciting incident in this issue.
    - i. Loren Torgerson – Question: What is the end goal of this workgroup? Answer: The utilities have been the drivers to make sure a guide or best practices for a PSPS policy. Getting Feedback from utilities on what they need if this is the direction they're heading.
  - c. Pre-Wildland Fire Season Workshop – April 4, 9am-5pm at Wanapum dam near Ellensburg. Hoping to have a 2-day event next year. October will be our end of season workshop.

## **VII. Closing Comments**

- a. Committee Members –
  - i. Ronda Strauch – Question: One of the issues we have been kicking around, how are you capitalizing mitigation? A: Some of it is Operations and Maintenance and it really doesn't change our capitalization. You can capitalize the work you are doing and include the mitigation work along with it.
- b. Committee Chair Loren Torgerson – Entertains motions to move the May meeting to May 22, 2024 due to room scheduling conflicts. Allen Berreth motions, Jason Callahan seconds, there are no abstains and all members vote yeah.

Loren Torgerson, Chair - Question: I have been requested by a company to provide a presentation on a new fire-retardant product. Is there any interest in dedicating time to a presentation? Answer: No, they can utilize the comment period.

## **VIII. Public Comment**

- a. Ron Gibbs – Question: Related to section 5.1 listing specific roles to wildfire mitigation work. If we did not have specific roles for that work, would we be negatively impacting



the review of our plans? Answer: DNR nor the Advisory Committee have a regulatory role for approving the plan. We are required to maintain them. But those are your decisions to make.

- b. Jim Smith – Ron we also do not have specific roles related to just wildfire mitigation. We highlight where someone is doing that work as part of their duties, but they don't only do that.
- c. Adam Daly, we understood that it may be unrealistic for smaller utilities to dedicate Full-time Equivalents to mitigation work.
- d. Nicolas Garcia – I would include RECA, Associations of Washington Cities, Water utilities to get feedback from. Can you send me the information on feedback dates? Are the 148 recommendations included in the wildfire Commission report are they directed to utilities or someone else? A: The recommendations contained in the Wildfire Commission report are to congress only.

**IX. Adjourned**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 2:53 pm

**X. Appendices**

- a. Attendance
- b. Mitigation Plan Template Draft
- c. 2023 Wildfire Season Review
- d. PSPS Workgroup Draft Document

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