



Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes August 18, 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 1:01 pm August 18th, 2022.

III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business

- a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from June 16th, 2022. K.C. Whitehouse motions to make correction to his title in notes, Cody Desautel moves to approve notes with correction, Melanie Bacon seconds. All members vote yeah and there are no abstains.
- b. No outstanding business discussed.

IV. New Member Introductions

- a. **Kari Grover-Wier** – District Ranger, Acting Chief of Staff, USFS, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest: Representing Federal Fire Agency, happy to join the group and looking forward to working with everyone.
- b. **Carlene Anders** – Executive Director, Okanogan Long Term Recovery: Representing Community Resilience, looking forward to community piece of this group and happy to work with some familiar faces.

V. Agency Updates

- a. **State Mobilization Update** – Melissa Gannie, Assistant State Fire Marshall. Right now we do not have any active mobilizations, are standing by and ready.
- b. **Federal Update** – Kari Grover-Wier, District Ranger, Acting Chief of Staff, USFS, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. There is a type 2 team on the White River fire, 720 acres, Irving peak, 200 acres, on either side of a ridge. Doing structure prep down below and getting ready to engage where we can. Has been a slow year. In stage 2 restrictions. FS released a Wildfire Crisis Strategy, implementing fuel reduction work through multiple means. Central WA was chosen as one of the 10 landscapes to receive funds related to this, 2.46 million acres covered by this. 1.1 million acres are non-federal lands that will benefit, not just federal lands. \$26 million from infrastructure law allocated for this year for this effort. Getting ready to implement 2023 and plan the next 10 years. In next month will be doing targeted community engagement, get ideas for partner work.

Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt: Any known impacts from Inflation Reduction Act? A: Not at this time, going to take time to filter down.



Annie Schmidt: Can you speak to the community wildfire defense grant program? A: It's a good opportunity CWPPs updated or written, but can't speak to more than that, it's on state/private forestry side. We have 5 or 6 requests so far and have liaisons talking to communities to get them apply. Going to hold webinars to provide assistance in getting communities to apply. Interest is light but building. \$200 million a year for the next 5 years.

- c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. N/A

Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3. Appreciated the slower start to the season, but concerned about the record fuels, especially regarding grasses. County response has seen resistance to control on any new starts. Fire danger is extreme in eastern Washington.

- d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager. George Geissler & Angie Lane briefed in Russ's Stead. We have been quiet as far as DNR concerned, watching White River fire. Initial attack has been light to moderate depending on wind/lightning, might see lightning next couple days. Most of our resources are back from states we were assisting as we enter our primary fire season. Nationally EL 3, regionally 3. Started with big ramp ups in other parts of US. We have had fires but initial attack has been very successful. Most questions have revolved around aircraft and aircraft usage. DNR has more firefighters than we have had, but still have vacancies from 1168. Vacancies revolve around pay and housing and vaccine mandate. Looking at new ways to incentivize people to join. Team has performed incredibly well.

- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester. In response to question on Inflation Reduction Act and Jobs Act funding, we have a national focus on forest fire landscape & community resilience. Inflation Reduction Act \$1.8 billion for hazardous fuel reduction on federal land, \$700 million to provide competitive grants to states to acquire land through the Forest Legacy Program, with priority given to grant applications that offer significant natural carbon sequestration benefits or provide benefits to underserved populations. \$450 million total in competitive grants and cost share payments to private landowners utilizing authorities of the LSR program. It provides payments but the USFS does not have authority to pay landowners, looking to have DNR be utilized as we do have authority to pay landowners. It does have provisions for urban and community forestry programs, providing \$1.5 billion in multiyear competitive grants. \$100 million to provide grants for Wood Innovation Grant program. Has provisions for \$50 million for the USFS to develop and carry out activities for the protection of old growth forests. Community Wildfire Defense grants are the main focus in relation to the Jobs act, developing as we implement, being pushed ahead of schedule. Additional money for state and private for which is the implementation of forest action plans, called unspecified funds, received for FY22, expecting next installment in November, First installment was used for prescribed fire, NWCG training, tree planting grants, forest health consultant and forest stewardship program. Continue forest stewardship program, tree planting, and wildfire prevention program. Another layer of \$1 million being put to local training and



fire districts. Dept. of Interior have a program Slip in grant program, funding tank systems for pickup trucks. Next month we will be hosting all the State Foresters for the annual meeting. Farm bill is in a holding pattern, no clear timeline to passage, likely related to midterm elections. A lot of discussion on how we can better utilize programs through NRCS. Impact to DNR trust lands, how to manage buffer with federal lands related to forest resiliency and road improvements. Some barriers in the legislation but being worked on.

VI. Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience Account (HB 1168) update

- a. George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester – Regarding the proposed 23-25 biennium budget. 125 million funding from HB 1168, included is expansion of organization and capabilities (e.g. aircraft, firefighters). Having established the new infrastructure, e.g. aircraft, we have a carry-forward of \$94.5 million with \$30.5 million as pass-thru. Draft plan for forest restoration, community resilience, and wildfire preparedness programs with pass-thru funds. Forest Resilience and Restoration programs; Building Forest Partnerships, All-Lands Direct investments, Prescribed Fire Implementation and Direct Investment, Post-Fire Recovery Direct Investment, Eastern and Western Washington Service Forestry Financial Assistance. Community Resilience Programs; Community Micro Grants for Firewise USA sites, Conservation District Community Response, Wildfire Preparedness Community Response, Equity and Inclusion Grants for Wildfire Preparedness, Capacity and Leadership Building. Fire Preparedness Programs; Operational Grants to Fire Districts, Fire District Assistance Program Phase I and II Grants, Fire District Assistance Surplus Engine Program. Minimum 30% to Forest Resilience, 15% minimum to Community Resilience in statute.
- b. Terra Rentz, we have had an evolving understanding of what was in the 1168 bill and what was available. OFM would expect DNR to provide our carry forward. The rest of the funds our intent is for it to get into hands of our partners and other agencies. There is no way for the state to directly allocate funds to non state entities, they have to come through a sponsoring entity and we have asked to be that entity. We wanted to use this as an opportunity to improve our systems. OFM has been asked that DNR be aware of those requests from other State agencies. Three state agencies outside of DNR; WDFW, State Parks and Conservation Commission. WDFW and State Parks has been successful in obtaining dedicated funding. Supporting Conservation Commission direct ask of 5 million 50% to community resilience and the other to forest restoration and resilience, leaving \$25 million in funding for pass thru programs. Propose over the next couple of months with members of the FHAC and WFAC to vet the allocation of funds, using objective based approach to determine funds.
- c. Loren Torgerson, we want to focus on how the dollars are meeting DNRs established strategies and forest health plan.
- d. Questions:
Annie Schmidt: Is step 2 subtracting state agency requests, and could that result in money being left for these programs? A: It could be possible but that is not what we



intend to happen with the process, goal is not to have state agencies take all the pass thru and to use the FHAC and WFAC to vet the funding based on goals and meeting the strategies and forest health plan.

Melissa Gannie: Is there a measurement of the effectiveness of these programs? A: Some of that info is going to be captured in the table that we will be bringing to future meetings.

Darcy Batura: In prep for these conversations over the coming months, could DNR provide committee members with a detailed breakdown on the carry forward \$94 million to help inform us on the pass through? Could DNR also describe what was delivered with the 2021-23 dollars? A: Yes. We will be confirming these numbers soon and will share them once we have done that.

Annie Schmidt: Is it feasible to establish a floor, carving out for these programs? It will not always be the case that State agencies won't request more. Can we establish baseline funding? A: The funding is not enough to fully meet the plans, we want to start this process to establish that need. We are not ready to establish the cumulative need, established programs can get more money than ones starting up and we want to avoid that. We have the minimum thresholds to help ensure that certain requirements are met.

Darcy Batura: When we look of the scale of the forest health problem, how can we make the bite sized impactful? How can we take these grant programs with a lense of equity? A: We have proposed specific questions to each program about how their programs address environmental equity and disparity and factors them into their decision making. We are trying to take an intentional approach where our programs are factoring these in.

Tony Craven: Is there going to be any forestry work with this \$30 million? Can certain allocations, e.g. setting aside \$10k for salary for personnel to do more work? A: That's the purpose of these meeting going forward, to get feedback on how to best get the funding to be effective on the ground. Want to see what you all see as limitations of current programs and what can we do better implement.

Melissa Gannie: Are there any limitations on what organizations can receive funding? Are we looking at other buckets of money that can augment these programs, and help local jurisdictions fill out grants? A: The money has to go to programs that implement the strategic plans and forest health plan. These can still be a wide range of organizations that can engage with these funds.

Cody Desautel: Are we thinking about how we can build capacity to show success to build the ability to utilize higher funding e.g. if we don't have enough burn bosses it doesn't matter how much money we have? A: it is something we are thinking about in various forms. We have identified the cost share programs, we need more personnel beyond just adding money to the pot. Does the funding in account have an associated capacity to deliver, is a question we are asking these programs. We are building the systems to analyze the future needs.

Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt: What do you see as the role of local funding sources, how will communities having skin in the game affect this? A: We are looking at how to build buy in, but not limiting it to provide funding, as this leads to certain communities getting funding consistently over others. Not going to exclude communities because they cannot provide funding.

Dave Cass: The pass-thru programs, how flexible are the programs to being changed from how they are organized or funded, as we add funds to these accounts where does the



funding to support the administrative burden of it? A: If there is any federal connection it can be difficult to change, but others can be changed. We would be judicious about changing things, but plan on reviewing things throughout the process and further down the line.

Jay McLaughlin: Was wondering if the whole team is on board? Are we going to be doing work to advance CWPP on State Lands? A: We are going to have to get with State Lands to get an answer to that.

Wade Pierce: Rabbits Tracks forest project is an example in Montana, is any of this funding going to be available to timber industry in a similar way? A: There are some programs that are not applicable to industry landowners. Have issue with providing funds that results in private financial gain, but there is a lot of work that does not result in a gain on these private lands that can be done and funded.

Annie Schmidt: What is the process moving forward? Is there a process to adjusting the language for state agencies getting first crack at the pass thru? A: This is this year's process that we have to go with for this biennium, but it will not be locked in for future bienniums. The timeline in the memo is still accurate. We want your feedback by NLT January.

- e. Presentation Attached

VII. Report on from sub-committee on DNR Wildland Fire Detection System Implementation

- a. Tony Craven – DNR is setting up approx. 20 cameras to detect fires earlier and monitor ongoing fires. Want to see what fire districts are setting up as well to coordinate where these cameras are being set up and by whom. Looking to establish a committee to deconflict issues. Angie Lane will follow up at next meeting.
- b. Conservation district cameras were used to determine start of fire in remote areas per Lee Hemmer

VIII. Chairman's Updates

- a. We wrapped up the surge of WFRN in new counties and shifted to. Program's reliant on local participation and has received enthusiastic interest. Work is still ongoing, shifting to a 52 week program vs the 6 week surge from the initial program last year. Learned from AAR from each launch that there is interest and capacity to do work throughout the year. Café Wenatchee is an example of this, they have been successful year round. Relaunching in Okanagan this fall, initiating 2 new counties: Kittitas and Klickitat. Piloting westside program in Pierce, with Thurston and Mason to follow. Expectation to see that demand grow and expand as resources are available. 2 levels of participation, 1st level is going to WFRN website and getting a basic preparedness plan done. 2nd level individuals can requests assistance.

IX. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics

- a. No public comment

X. Adjourn

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 4:09pm



XI. Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. Joint Advisory Committee Memo HB 1168
- c. HB 1168 WFAC-FHAC 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.

Draft