



Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes January 24, 2023

Meeting Venue: Harbor House Olympia

I. Attendance

- a. Quorum met see attached for meeting attendance.

II. Call to Order

- a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz called meeting to order 1:03 pm January 24th, 2023.

III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business

- a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from November 17th, 2022. Tony Craven motions to approve minutes, Cody Rohrbach 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. Have had no additional mobilizations. Looking to recruit deputy state fire marshal. Discussion on pilot project on prepositioning pilot project, we have requested additional staffing for the program. Plan was to move fire incident reporting system into the mobilization unit, partner with DNR for mapping.
- b. **Federal Update** – Kari Grover-Wier, District Ranger, Acting Chief of Staff, USFS, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Central WA Initiative is going to be focused on the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest and lands adjacent to it. The intent is to have a cross boundary approach, on a fireshed by fireshed basis. FS has a 5 year plan for the Central WA Initiative. Looking at how to integrate our partners into the plan. The Colville National Forest was added last week. Last year had \$20 million, this year looking at \$35 million. Goal is 35K acres treated per year, 20K on forest service and 15 off forest service lands. Outside of the CWI, filling our permanent positions out, having issues filling all. Working through the complex incident management change. Wood innovation grants will provide funding to mills and other infrastructure.
- c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. N/A

Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3. Selections for type 1 & 2 team complete, soon to be complex incident management teams, more to follow. Open application period closes early February. Saw the loss of another Type 2 team through consolidation and loss of qualified members.
- d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager. Have all our assistant division manager positions filled. Asked our staff to run more like an incident management staff, take on running the division collectively. One project we decided to focus on is critical incident support, identifying



training and contacts and establishing a standard to work from. We attended the CMS meeting in Albuquerque, lot of good information and interaction with other states. In the west there are 18 states that are represented. On aviation, broad interest in carding and letters of approval, ability to get timely inspections on aircraft, access to critical training. There is a huge bottleneck on the interagency trainings. Developed a position description for a Western States Fire Director, to help support the chiefs in the west. We are working on DNR wildfire conference in May. Going back to in person academies at the North Bend training academy, 3 ten day sessions planned. Working on a heavy equipment academy as well. We are working with Forest Resiliency Division on the pace and scale or prescribed fires. Fire district assistance front, 6 positions authorized by 1168, looking to get those positions hired by spring. Have 2 safety officers coming on board next month, deputy division manager on similar time frame. Sent offers to 2 operations specialists, be able to divide the workload and get work closer to the regions. Having challenges finding people for remote and/or high cost communities. Looking to assist meeting housing needs for entry level firefighters. Looking at reviewing qualifications that may be a barrier to hiring local and would not be necessary (e.g. someone in seat 4 on an engine does not need to have DL and 2 years' experience). Will have the heavy scoopers, have the 2 large air tankers in Moses Lake, 5 fire bosses, 2 air attacks. Trying to convert Kmax to Blackhawk. On UAS program, have program manager hired, in process of acquiring drone platforms. Working on training, build the train the trainer capacity. Focus on type 2 IA crews and getting those staffed up. Aerial supervision, making an offer for aerial supervision manager, so we can build our capacity to train our own personnel. Having challenges filling pilots for the Kodiaks. Fire service and aviation support, think we have good coverage for DNR and our partners. Going to stand up an interface in Pasco, utilize the portable air tanker base build through 1168 and to use the 1168 air tanker funding. Have the capability to push infrared products live, personnel on aircraft can create video and graphics and push it live. Had an opportunity to make additional investments, \$500k on drones, \$910K into kitchen support enhancement, acquiring 10 portable cellular units, 3 sterling dishes, 4 sim tables for training, expansion to the ROS network. Planning pre-season aviation exercise. Making an investment maintain fire line explosives program, buying a portable magazine.

- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester. At Denver Federal Wildfire Mitigation Commission meeting, finalizing aviation report going to congress. Continue on to develop the answer to congressional request. At national level the big items are the roll out of Federal funding from Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), majority of investments announced at this time going to CA. Still have funds going into the Central WA Initiative \$600 to \$1 million depending on program. Next item coming out is the Community Wildfire Defense Grants, we have 43 applications. To be announced. Intent is for funding to come to DNR and we will award the funds and administer the grants. Urban and Community Forestry money through the IRA, working through allocations now. We will be following up for specific projects in expansion to the Central WA Initiative. A majority of the funding will go to work on National Forests.

V. DNR Legislative Priorities and Briefing

- a. Brian Considine, Legislative Director DNR:



- b. Utility Wildfire Bill – There has been considerable back and forth on the bill, Commerce is excited about this bill and the Commissioner is engaged on it. Utilities are not conformable with Commerce taking lead on the bill. Not convinced the bill will go to passage.
- c. Wildfire Aviation Bill –Version has been proposed 8 times, does not appear likely to pass. DNR not supportive at this time.
- d. Cascading Impacts of Wildfire Bill – Intent to take Wildfire Ready Neighbors and add it to west side, and integrate additional smoke readiness and wildfire readiness resources into the whole program. Continue to build off of 1168 and to build buy in on west side.
- e. Presentation Attached

VI. 2022 Fire Year Briefing

- a. Angie Lane, Assistant Division Manager, Plans and Information, Wildland Fire Management Division:
 - b. Still finishing up year-end stats, only have first 9 months at this time. Had late start to fire season, drought relief April May and June. Goal is to keep 95% of fires under 10 acres. Still had cool weather in July that kept a damper on fire, August is when weather turned and lightening events sparked fires, September saw a similar event to Labor Day 2020 but not as intense. Bolt Creek took off on September 10th, wind event drove that expansion. October had another wind event kept fire going, late fall rains helped to put a damper on it, though still had a November event as well. In terms of acres, 4th least burned in 10 years. On average for 3 quarters kept 93.2% of DNR fires at 10 acres or less.
 - c. Next year, looking at colder March and April and wetter in eastern WA. Transition from La Nina to El Nina, potential for drying in June. Drought outlook is positive.
 - d. Smoke detection cameras update, we went out for bidding process. Have 21 selected sites for the cameras, with a potential to expand with 1168 funding. Sites were selected based on WUI, fire metrics. Pano AI was selected as the company, they have AI that will help with detection, so we won't have to have personnel watching video feeds 24/7. 1168 provided funding for systems, not personnel. By 2024 we will have all locations implemented and begun planning expansions.
 - e. Presentation Attached.

VII. Transition to Complex Incident Management Teams

- a. George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester –
- b. Issues identified that there is a reduced number of participants, reliance on retirees & AD employees without enough trainees, lack of standardization on IMT mobilization process.



- c. Incident Workforce Development Group identified to develop transition plan from IMT to Complex Incident Management Teams (CIMT). Decision to combine Type 1 and 2 teams into just one, now called CIMT. Deliberate transition process, with training and qualifications identified. Transition will be ongoing into 2024.
- d. For WA all our Type 1 and 2 teams are interagency and managed at region level. Expectation is that all teams that transition to CIMT will become national resources and part of national rotation. DNR evaluating the impacts on our wildfire response in WA, concern over potential unavailability of NW CIMTs to respond to fires in our state.
- e. No change to timeline for 2023. Intent to have small working group in the next couple months to evaluate the transitions impact to our wildfire response. Goal to have report completed by fall 2023.
- f. Presentation Attached.

VIII. Chairman's Updates

- a. Reviewed the WFAC Charter for new and old members.

IX. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics

- a. Multiple committee members emphasized the importance of maintaining dedicated DNR teams to respond to state incidents.
- b. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – Working on trust issues that are non-wildfire. Working to redirect common school trust revenue to small school modernization. Get funds out to school districts that have been left out for decades.
- c. Melanie Bacon – DNR should look at recruiting more intentionally from active military, if not doing so already.

X. Adjourn

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:59pm

XI. Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. Legislative DNR Decision Package
- c. WFAC Charter
- d. 2022 Fire Review
- e. Complex Incidence Management Teams Update

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.