

**WILDLAND FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

December 16, 2021

Zoom Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Allen Lebovitz – Wildland Fire Liaison, Chair
Tony Craven – Small Forest Landowner
Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – State Land Trust Beneficiary
Cody Desautel – Tribal Nations Representative
Melissa Gannie – Assistant Fire Marshal
Lee Hemmer – Industry Landowner (Range)
Randy Johnson – Fire Chief (Eastside)

Committee Members Absent:

Vacant – Cowlitz County Commissioner
Vacant – Statewide Environmental Representative
Vacant – Industry Landowner (Timber)
Vacant – Fire District Commissioner
Vacant – USFS Deputy Forest Supervisor
Leonard Johnson – Fire Chief (Westside)
KC Whitehouse - Washington State Council of Fire Fighters
Jim DeTro – County Commissioner (Eastside)

Guests/Other Attendees:

Shelly Goodwin – WFAC Coordinator
Bill Slosson – Assistant Fire Marshal
George Geissler – Deputy Supervisor for Wildland Fire Mgt. and State Forester
Russ Lane – Wildland Fire Management Division Manager
Loren Torgerson – Wildland Fire Mgt. Policy Advisor
Jason Callahan
Eric Vaech
Darcy batura
Eliseo Juarez
Marissa Aho
Karen Zirkle -
Jessica Kimmick -

I. Opening, Roll Call

The meeting of the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee was called to order at 1:00 p.m. on December 16, roll was taken, 7 members were present by Zoom or in person and 8 members were excused, constituting a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 18, 2021 council meeting were presented in draft and reviewed. Motion to approve draft minutes made by Committee member Cody Desautel, seconded by Committee member Tony Craven. Motion carried unanimously.

III. **Chairman's Report** – Doing a lot of HB1168 Fire assistance & support, Community Resiliency. Reaching out to Fire Districts. DFWL shrub step proviso progress – first round of implementations have been selected. Putting resources towards them, putting together criteria, solicitations for new projects going out in February. Grazing can apply for assistance. Near term actions – building strategies for resiliency and large group of stakeholders involved in this. Hope to be ready 6/23. Need to coordinate with this committee, will be consulted as a group. Interim process.

IV. **Agency Updates**

a. George Geissler – Deputy Supervisor for Wildland Fire Mgt. and State Forester – Dept. Level – Agency is in 1168 implementation world, as we try to get a lot of the elements rolled out and any purchasing that needs to be done accomplished. FHR- Putting finishing touches on grants that are going out to collaboratives and getting a lot of the private lands work that was in the que lined up with agreements and working pretty hard to get themselves staffed out. State Forester perspective– I spent most of last week in DC, did meet with Secretary Vilsack as well as Chief Moore. All of the discussions were around infrastructure and infrastructure spending, how that is going to be rolled out. A lot of what they are looking at now is we have these two major buckets of Wildfire Risk Reduction and Eco System Restoration, the money is either going through the National Forest System or through State and Private Forestry. State and Private Forestry a lot of those through State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance. There is also in the bill a new Community Resiliency grants that are being put into place. The Forest Service currently has to have a spending plan by mid-February to submit back to Congress. Right now a lot of it is just trying to discover more about what is in that bill. State Fire Assistance is looking at significant amounts of funding that has been added above our allocation. Also have funds for things like Good Neighbor Authority, fuels treatments, and some of the other eco system services. From the Washington perspective you are going to hear a figure of 39 million dollars that has been tossed around. It was calculated by OMB back in August and it doesn't really reflect the end point of the Infrastructure package, that is what CNN broke and it spread in the news. But we don't really know that. The expectation is the funding will be coming and will probably know greater detail end of February with the spending plans. Getting the money out to the states is anybody's guess is good on how long it will take for the funds to be allocated to the states, tribes, and local entities as it goes through both DOI and USDA. My time lately feels like it is interpreting infrastructure packages and putting the finishing touches on how this money is going to be split out. The other piece to know is with the infrastructure funding there is two key items that were given Congressional direction but not put in to infrastructure language.

There is 300 million dollars that was put in for forest health treatments on National Forest lands, and the agreement that was made is that there is at least three areas of the country that a hundred million dollars is expected to be spent. One of those areas is Central Washington, so a lot of the work that we have been talking about for a long while, there is funding there. We have been having some fairly extensive conversations with Glenn Casamasa, Regional Forester, about defining that area and making certain that it gets both needs so that it can be held up as an early project. A lot of the work that has been done over the last four years about getting greater focus and Federal funding for that area looks like it will come to pass with the Infrastructure Bill. The other thing in the bill is about 400 million dollars is in adding milling capacity in the forest product utilization fund. Also if the Reconciliation Package passes there is an additional 300 million in that and is not earmarked in any way, shape, or form for specific projects.

- b. Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager - We are about 90 work days out from my initial readiness date of April 15, and about 144 working days from July 1 when we need to be at peak readiness. We will meet those goals. Planning & Operations, Angie Lane's shop - Has two key projects this biennium, one is Fire Business Cost tracking System, that implementation is done and ready to go in to action here really soon, and then they are working on building the implementation plan for the detection camera system that we designed and got funded through 1168. We are going to try and hit 20-30 mountain tops in the first phase rollout and that is going to start in the next fiscal year. Karen's shop in Logistics has a ton of stuff going on. Fire District Assistance effort, a lot of work and thought going on there. Support for incident and State mobilization efforts, they have a bunch of Fire Cache equipment, trailers, command vehicles on order for that. Post Release Hand Crew, we got the implementation plan approved, have settled on that crew going to Spokane County and expect that crew to be functional for this fire season. Operations & Aviation side - We have 20 pieces of heavy equipment on order, that ended up being 16 dozers plus 4 firefighting excavators, and the associated transports. Working on hiring right now for those operators, 15 span of control overhead, those will be in the hiring process early in the year. At the same time we are looking to hire 10 permanent hand crew modules across the state. That totals about 60 individuals in just the hand crew modules. When you roll that all up it's close to 100 hires. On the aviation side there are several projects in motion there. We are looking at a night vision capability on a couple of the Hueys. For fixed wing aircraft we have settled in on 2 Kodak aircraft. We believe if we get a down payment by the end of December we can take delivery by the end of August and then the second one in September. Community Resiliency, Guy Gifford is the acting ADM. We have stood that up as a section in Wildfire division. Key effort is Wildfire Ready Neighbors and standing back up the 3 counties that were started last year and getting them recharged, then hopefully rolling out to 3 more counties this spring. Will close with a couple of personnel changes, Erika Stone left for Tumwater Fire Department, she was my assistant and leader of our administrative staff, and Jodi Barnes after a long career with us left our Budget and Fire Fiscal manager

position. Today is the first day on the job for our Wildland Fire Meteorologist, Matthew Dehr. One more topic, working on an effort to update our interagency agreement with fire service, we had about 6 issues of concern that were raised by various fire districts. Chuck, George, and I have been working those issues. We met with Katie Taylor and Lenny Young yesterday to advance that a little more, we made great progress there. I think we are going to end up at a satisfactory outcome, there is a couple of topics we need to circle back with some Fire Chiefs and gain a little more understanding of issues and solutions. Confident we can bring that to the finish line in late January or early February and get an interagency agreement template out there that works a lot better for all the partners.

- c. Melissa Gannie, Assistant Fire Marshal – Bill – Fire Defense meeting earlier this week. The things we are currently focusing on is reviewing regional plans, there is a 5 year cycle to have your plan reviewed. The biggest things on our plate right now is getting the attestation forms. Right now it's about 87 agencies out of roughly 430 statewide so that is not enough to get to fire season. Volunteer Firefighters should become our casual hires are submitting their vaccination cards to our HR division and the Employee Health and Safety team who track that and provide us a list, the last number we got was about 19 fire fighters. Next part of my report is we have legislative authority to do a pilot project for prepositioning, we are working through the rate schedule, don't have a boat rate in the schedule and are working to establish that.
Melissa – Generate a report to legislature on non-wildfire MOB and included prepo mob. We are actively recruiting for a Deputy Fire Marshal. Next week is the Community Risk Reduction Coalition meeting.
- d. Eric Vaech – A lot of opportunity with the Infrastructure bill. No competitive wages, the infrastructure will give us opportunity to change that. At this time 85% of our employees are vaccinated. Service First agreement is still in process.
- e. Randy Johnson, Fire Chief (Eastside) – Incident Management Team recruitment. Fire service folks on incident management team, were approved to roster.. Staffing continues to be a challenge. Language in IAA moving forward. This will be my last meeting but will still be available for historical information.

V. New Business

- a. **1168 Implementation – Fire District Assistance Program expansion – Committee Tasking** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor Wildland Fire Mgt. and State Forester- Discussion attached.

VI. Questions, Comments and Chat

- a. Chat log attached
- b. Cody – We are trying to push the Feds to maintain the existing funds mechanism. I asked if this is going to be a reinvent the wheel process or an

existing mechanism, they told us both. So we will continue to lean on them to get the money out the door quick. Also recognizing there is a five year timeline to get this money spent and recognize it is associated with planning and implementation on Forest Service projects we need to make sure we get there fast. They are looking at standing up some additional capacity at central and regional offices to make sure they get this money out the door once we find an allocation system.

- c. George – They are also speaking of even providing capacity grants to State agencies and Tribes for the very same thing as a portion of that funding.
- d. Russ – Couple questions about adding milling capacity in Central Washington. Would the Forest Service as part of that have a sustainable harvest guarantee annual cut to go along with that?
- e. George– Actually that is the conversations that we are having with Glenn right now. We are looking at establishing an area that will go over a ten year period with a base line amount of acreage being cut. The Forest Heal team is working with the Region folks right now and putting it together. The expectation will be a signed agreement between DNR and the US Forest Service and the area clearly defined and hopefully getting that in place by the spring.
- f. Russ – Second question is mostly DNR related. How would this impact our ability to carry out our forest health treatments in that region in the next ten years?
- g. George - .This has been identified as absolutely critical for that. The lack of milling infrastructure has been identified as the primary barrier that along with the idea that with this agreement we will probably burn through NEPA shelf stock pretty quickly, and standing up additional NEPA teams to be able to get ahead of it is really the two items that is needed to advance that forest resiliency work.
- h. Darcy – Any chance the supply agreement could be a 15-20 year term?
- i. George - – Actually the way that it is worded in the Infrastructure Bill is that it's a Stewardship Contract and its 10 years but it's renewable. Right now they are looking at a 10 year agreement with the idea that it could be extended. That is the easy and quick button to get it done.
- j. Cody – Shrub step virtual fencing. Committee for fencing and fencing criteria, piolet virtual fencing – robust plan for getting in place.
- k. Tony – WFRN big failure, on the eastside 50% of homes owned by people in the west side. What can we do to have people engage in that? PR firm helping to figure out ways to contact them, will report back on that.

VII. Committee roundtable – Public Comment

- a. Cody – Lots of work going on with the Infrastructure bill.
- b. Russ – Finding fire communities for west side, still looking for one, reach out to Fire District Association.
- c. Lee – Funding available for our programs, community resiliency grants.
- d. Tony – FHC pretty solid evidence worth sending to committee. Community home owner survey, the #1 concern was fire. Semi good news because it is on the minds of home owners. Compiling data on risk assessment, will be sent to local

level. Looking at fire assessments across the US. Building on not actual data but framework.

VIII. Adjournment and Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm. The next general meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2022 from 1 – 4 pm, by Zoom.

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