



Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes June 16, 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 June 16th, 2022.

III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business

- a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from April 21st, 2022. Tony Craven moves to approve, Wade Pierce seconds. All members vote yeah and there are no abstains.
- b. No outstanding business discussed.

IV. Committee Introductions

- a. **Allen Lebovitz** – Serving Wildland Fire and Resiliency Liaison and Committee Chair. Appointed in 2016. Been with DNR for 10 years, private sector before that as a restoration ecologist, and also a forester, farmer, veterinary owner. Was a heavy equipment boss at DNR.
- b. **Tom Smith** - Serving as fire commissioner for fire district 16, representing Fire Commissioners. Role rep fire districts, 31 year resident of Whatcom County. Retired from DNR 2020 after 33 years. Been involved in the fire academy training since 2015 and involved with fire wise training. I saw the advantages of working with districts and coordinating with DNR and promoting fire wise. Like to see some of the ways DNR can support small districts, e.g. grant money.
- c. **Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt** – Serving as Chair of School Trust lands, representing State Land Trust Beneficiary, joined the committee at onset. Served on Whatcom county school district for 22 years. Chair of trust lands advisory committee for over 10 years. I was appointed because the legislation required that one representative serve for trust lands and I volunteered to fill the position. Key issue to address is to prepare for increased risk over time for western Washington.
- d. **Wade Pierce** – Representing Stimson Lumber Company, Industry Landowner Timber. I have managed lands in Montana, Oregon and Washington. I have been a forest manager for 20+ years and have a passion for silviculture. Having seen forest lands that have burned, have a personal interest in making a difference in mitigating fires. Like to see private landowners integrated better into mitigation strategies and funding.
- e. **Melanie Bacon** – Representing Western Counties on the committee. Island County is Whidbey Island and Camano Island, we care a lot about our trees. As commissioner I worry a lot about emergency management, given the unique challenges of getting off



island in emergency, being on the island represents unique challenges. Public safety is my concern.

- f. **KC Whitehouse** – Battalion Chief with Central Mason in Shelton, Representing Washington State Council of Firefighters, serving since 2019. Primary interest in relation between fire districts and DNR, specifically from the fire fighter safety standpoint. Want to keep improving the relationship between DNR and fire chiefs.
- g. **Tino Villaluz** – Representing Westside Tribal Nations, Swinomish Indian Tribe. Interests in all aspects of natural resources management, want to be part of committees that produce action. Key issues for us, wildlife management and representing western Washington.
- h. **Cody Rohrbach** – Fire Chief Spokane County, representing Fire Chiefs Eastside. Initially interested in interagency collaboration and agreements. Facilitate cooperation during wildfire, proscribed fire, advanced analytics.
- i. **Tony Craven** – Director of lands and natural resources Suncadia, representing Small Forest Landowner. Worked with the forest service since 1988. Interested in community education and protecting community lands. Main issue is fire fighter safety and dealing with issues that are interconnected.
- j. **Eric Veach** – Representing Federal Fire Agency, Kari Grover-Wier will be replacing me. I am Fish biologist by training, 20 years in the Alaska region, been and agency administrator since 2009. Forest service is the largest land manager in Washington and any ways to improve the relationship between State and Federal is important. Issues talking about increased risks to western Washington forests from climate change
- k. **Olgy Diaz** – Government Affairs director for Fortuna NW, Statewide Environmental Organization Representative. I worked closely with DNR on policy issues and it sparked my interest as well as economic development. Interested in dealing with equity issues, dealing with communities disproportionately affected by wildfires.
- l. **Cody Desautel** – Representing tribal Nations eastside, Natural Resources Director Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation. Degrees in environmental science and Indian law. Natural resources division director last 8 years. I serve on every advisory committee the state has and serve on intertribal timber council. Sounded like a great opportunity to share ideas and perspectives on. Biggest priority is changing mentality to working with fire adapted ecosystems and restore historic landscapes and fire and not just suppression.
- m. **Melissa Gannie** – Assistant State Fire Marshal representing State Fire marshals, been with state fire marshal’s office for 25 years. We regulate fire safe cigarette and fireworks programs. Oversee fire service certification program, do state inspections of facilities. Interest in mobilization and community risk reduction model in the WUI.



- n. **Annie Schmidt** – Fire adapted communities network, representing the Fire Adapted Communities Program. Worked in and around wildland fire for last 20years with Forest service and DNR. Worked on strategic fire plan, and HB 2561 report. Interested in supporting communities as they adapt and recover from wildfire.
 - o. **Leonard Johnson** – Representing Fire Chief’s West Side. I sit on the WA State fire defense committee and western chief’s policy group. Joined fire service since 1992, Chief Officer since 2012, served on east and west. . I think it is important to drive wildfire policy with DNR. Key issues is to keep WA fire service interconnect with the system and develop connections.
 - p. **Lee Hemmer** – Representing Private Range Landowner. I am a wheat and cattle rancher in Douglas County. Interested as a cattlemen and landowner, the cattlemen’s association appointed me. Interested in seeing grassfires risk reduction.
- V. Review and discuss WFAC charter and role of the Committee**
- a. **See attached Presentation**
 - b. **Suggestions** - Biennial reports to take back to constituents, graphs that demonstrate trends of wildfire over time. Utilize El Protector Program with Washington State Patrol to better integrate with the Spanish speaking community. Coordinate priorities between the State Strategic Forest Health plan and Wildland Fire Protection Strategic plan. Suggest keeping zoom as primary meeting, but having once or twice a year in person. Are there set goals for the year?
- VI. Agency Updates**
- a. **State Mobilization Update** – Melissa Gannie, Assistant State Fire Marshall. Most pressing issue with state mobilization is the vaccine mandate. Most current proclamation does not require contractors to have vaccine verification. Volunteer personnel when employed by State of WA are required to provide vaccine cards at time of mobilization.
 - b. **Federal Update** – Eric Veach, Deputy Forest Supervisor, U.S. Forest Service Gifford Pinchot Ntl. Forest. Nationwide the forest service is taking a pause for lessons learned regarding proscribed fire, due to a proscribed fire that escaped to a larger fire. Southwest region hit prep level 4 the earliest it ever has. Halt to proscribed fires, as multiple proscribed fire escaped to larger fire, in order to get lessons learned. Fire Fighter occupational series and increased payments that is funded in bipartisan infrastructure law.
 - c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. N/A

Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3, Wrapped up annual fire chiefs conference a few weeks ago, several sessions on firefighter mental health and wellbeing. Also on community risk reduction. Moisture has kept fire at bay, but increased herbaceous fuel load. New information on how we manage complex incidents.



- d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager. We got a fill for an Assistant Division Manager, David Way from NW Region. Shelly Goodwin selected for Administrative Assistant 4 promotion. Still looking for deputy div manager and safety managers. Angie lane has selected new cartographer, getting close to fire intelligence officer. Weather and fuels is giving us a break and more time to prepare. Good to get a late start, but concerned about the increased herbaceous growth. Sent 165 people to New Mexico at peak to help with initial attack. Personnel got a lot of IA experience. 13 personnel in Alaska, expecting more resource orders especially fire bosses. Standing up the logistics side from 1168 funds and staffing vacant positions. In a good position compared to last year, heavier on crew strength and overhead. Aviation, 2 large air tankers starting this week, Q400 out of Moses Lake, 3 air attacks that we have. Fire boss 241 had an inflight emergency and is likely a total loss.
- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester. N/A

VII. **Chairman’s Updates**

- a. Task regarding allocating firefighter assistance funding. We reviewed plan on how we were going to score applications. Report that the large operations grant, awards over \$1 million to 12 districts across the state in diverse regions. Money for conversions and repairs, pumps, etc. There is far more demand than we have funding for. Looking to respond to that for future grant rounds. Grants given for PPE, 6 grants awarded \$85K.
- b. Wildfire Ready Neighbors has wrapped up its spring surge. Have worked with Café Wenatchee to implement WFRN with Latinx communities. Focus is on making this an ongoing and sustainable program.

VIII. **Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics**

- a. The importance of mental health regarding firefighters, especially during the offseason. Impacts are not limited to firefighters but also to the mitigation community. Community members, e.g. Colville Tribe, describe having PTSD symptoms from experiencing more common catastrophic fires near/in these communities.
- b. Create a consolidated list of resources for communities/homeowners, including but not limited to grant money, NGOs, and programs.
- c. How can our committee best make the case for proscribed burns and keep momentum in the right direction? Cody has the recommendations.
- d. Have discussion when to have daily meeting, 0500-0900 is best time to fight grass fires. Taking personnel out of the field and replacing with sensor is something that should be discussed.
- e. Grant money not available to industrial landowners to treat large amount of acres, should be discussed how to get more grant money to help with mitigation.

IX. **Adjourn**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:59pm



Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. WFAC Charter Presentation
- c. RCW 76.04.179 Wildland fire advisory committee
- d. HB 2093-S PL

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.