



# Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Meeting Venue: Zoom

- I. Attendance**
  - a. Quorum not met see attached for meeting attendance.
- II. Call to Order**
  - a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz called meeting to order 1:01 pm January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business**
  - a. Committee Chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Carlene Anders motions to approve minutes, Cody Desautel seconds. All members vote yeah and there are no abstains.
- IV. WA State Forester Update**
  - a. George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester – Lot of discussion on Washington’s transition to CIMT. The workgroup has completed its recommendations, we have talked with Federal partners, state partners, emergency management. Letter of Commitment will be sent by end of week. Teams will be under a Geographic Oversight Board that will be dispatched through the coordination centers, looking to maintain at least one team on rotation available for out of state deployments while maintaining our response in Washington. Looking to turn Type 3 teams to CIMTs, we are working through the NIMs qualifications and bringing them closer together recognizing prior experience. Intention as these documents go out, receive feedback, and assist with answering questions, going to continually develop a FAQ. Regarding prescribed fire, there is a tasking gong int to NWCG, developing qualifications for prescribed burning that does not require a suppression track. Going to be discussing joint use of resources for prescribed fire. Next week is the Chief Manager Supervisors meeting, Russ Lane and all of his counterparts. 48 to 50 States are showing up. We have topics related to development of a recognition of prior learning template. Also, some discussion of State fire assistance and volunteer fire assistance funding and those allocation formulas at the national level are up for review. State to State and Forest Compact agreements are being finalized, going through what is working what is not. How can we be more inclusive and move more resources at the state and local level. Will be doing a national AAR on last year’s fires. There is a significant discussion related to eh Federal Wildfire Mitigation and Management Commission Report. States have been looking at the 148 recommendations and what best apply to us. Will have a meeting with Western Fire Chiefs and International Association of Fire Chiefs, will report out the results.
- V. Wildland Fire Management Division**
  - a. George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester – Doing prep work for new fire year, lots of contract agreements, specifically related to aviation. Scheduling division and region preparedness meeting in the next few



weeks. Attempt to update the forestland response agreement, looks to be moving ahead well. Looking to update the language as required and language for prescribed fire.

b.

## **VI. Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI) Long-Term Strategy**

- a. Allen Lebovitz, Committee Chair, DNR – The initiative was started because of the 2020 fires that impacted 600,000 acres of important shrubsteppe. 2021 Proviso of ongoing operating budget \$2.35 million to WDFW per biennium, additional single use funds allocated as well, e.g., replacing burned fencing. The shrubsteppe is a unique landscape, located in SE and central WA. Has patchy vegetation and unique biotic crust that locks in moisture. Believed to have been 10.4 million acres, less than 2 million left. Important species of concern such as the sage grouse. Steering committee established to guide the allocation and implementation of funds and projects, member from WDFW, WSCC, and DNR. 4 primary focuses, first to protect human communities, second to manage wildland fire to reduce impacts, conserve and restore habitat, preserve species. The initiative has engaged with Tribal Nations, and full extent of involved organizations. Two-part approach: near-term actions implementing no-regret immediate actions identified in the wake of the 2020 fires; long-term strategy developing 30-year plan for shrubsteppe conservation. Strategy modeled after the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Sagebrush Conservation Design. Focus on intact core sagebrush then working outward to degraded areas and establishing connectivity between areas. Draft goals: Human Communities in the shrubsteppe are better protected, prepared, and resilient to wildland fire, engaged in shrubsteppe conservation, and are economically viable; Wildland Fire Management, the extent, frequency, and severity of wildland fires in the shrubsteppe are similar to fire return intervals that were occurring prior to the 1800's when widespread fire suppression policies and practices were instituted, while taking into consideration changes in land use, climate, and other modern factors. Wildlife habitat, landscape integrity and the mosaic of successional stages of native shrubsteppe habitats are conserved, perpetuated, and restored to support healthy wildlife populations and communities. Wildlife Species, populations, and communities of species of greatest conservation need and other species are representative, resilient, and redundant. Final draft review period in process now, final product due to the legislature March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.
- b. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – What extent has the committee discussed the trust revenue production part of this? A: It's a topic that has been discussed under other threats; energy development is a known threat. Trust sales is recognized and being considered as part of the analysis. Process under way by WSU to analyze energy development and we are using their information.
- c. Presentation attached.

## **VII. Draft Utility Mitigation Plan Template, Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee (UWFPAC)**

- a. Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisor, Committee Chair, DNR – Committee was established 2020 with specific tasks to complete. The committee was then established on a permanent basis by the legislature. The legislature tasked the committee to develop a



mitigation plan template. Legislatures intent to identify risks and sources of wildland fires & identify and develop best practices. Timeline: By April 1, 2024, department will publish recommended format, by October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and every three years thereafter, each utility must review and adopt its wildfire mitigation plan. By December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, the department must submit a summary of existing mitigation plans. The WFAC was tasked by the legislature to review and provide comments, which are due by March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

- b. Wade Pierce – I sent emails to the **Pontery(Pend Orielle?)** PUD, regarding their vegetation management. Their practices were creating prime beetle habitat. PUD rights of way management can have huge unintended consequences if they have adopted certain practices. Glad to see vegetation management as part of this.
- c. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – What liability protection is provided by having a mitigation plan?  
A: In general, it does create transparency between utilities and the public, and creates some accountability for utilities to provide that work but can't give any hard answer on affecting liability.
- d. Presentation attached.

#### **VIII. Tasking Work Session – Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan Review**

- a. Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisor, DNR – We have developed a matrix to help with analyzing the strategy, going to go through this to prepare for the all-day February meeting. We'll start with the goals and outcomes, these go together, before reviewing the strategies. Goal 1: Washington's preparedness, response, and recovery systems are fully capable, integrated, and sustainable. Goal 2: Landscapes are resilient, in the face of fire, they resist damage and recover quickly. Goal 3: Communities are prepared and adapted for current and future fire regimes. Goal 4: Response is safe and effective. Outcome 1: Safety of the public and firefighters is provided for, wildland fire is suppressed when necessary and used where allowable. Outcome 2: Unwanted human-related wildland fires are virtually eliminated. Outcome 3: Costs to suppress wildland fires are reduced, risks and losses to communities and the economy are minimized. Outcome 4: Communities and ecosystems are resilient and healthy, both can recover from wildland fire. We will have the February meeting dedicated to this. The meeting will be an all-day meeting held in Olympia. Any specific metrics you can think of that would assist in this analysis, please let us know ahead of time if possible.
- b. Samantha Schinnell – Are you looking at just using the metrics in the plan, or using other metrics? A: Both, we'll use those metrics in the plan and see what other metrics can be used. Some metrics may be absent, and some metrics may need to be changed.
- c. Tom Smith – Outcome number 2 jumped out to me, it's very difficult to eliminate human caused fires. That outcome may need to be changed to reflect what is possible, and the language in the strategy talks about minimizing and reduced. A: Understand where you are coming from, it is like how difficult it is to have zero casualties with firefighters but that is still the goal of having zero.



- d. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – We can demonstrate the cause and effect of investments in this plan. A bit more focused discussion on western Washington should be included in the plan in more depth. Public safety is another area to look at.
- e. Tony Craven – The mentality behind the virtually no fire was that we did not want to accept a certain amount of human caused fires as acceptable.
- f. Presentation attached.

#### **IX. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics**

- a. Reese Lolley – Monumental lift, equal to development of the 20 Year Forest Health Strategic plan, and perhaps even a greater challenge! Quite an interagency effort, great work Allen. Some overlap with past work of WFAC report on substitute house bill 2561. The WA resources council host the fire adapted community network. There has been some discussion around resilience on the 10-year plan. Want to have a discussion how the public outreach and feedback can be productive on the plan.
- b. Cody Desautel – We have new region forester for region 6 FYSA, Jacqueline Buchanan.
- c. Wade Pierce – Think it would be good to revisit the status of the new IFPL. Have been tracking the strength of the El Nino system in the Pacific, except for the last 10 days, is above average temps and has similarity to the 2014/2015 season.
- d. Chris Martin – Prescribed fire council has completed their strategic plan and will be posted on the website. Always looking for input and feedback.
- e. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – Was recently appointed to the forest resiliency committee, trying to steer it in the direction of response and resiliency.
- f. Samantha Schinnell – We had a discussion on wildfire response regarding WSRRI. How does response work when it happens out in the preserves? How does billing work as well?
- g. K.C. Whitehouse – Just wanted to say thanks for getting the agreements out so early.
- h. Tony Craven – The WFAA got senator Vanderway about using kilns and incinerators about getting rid of slash. [SB 6121](#). If successful will allow the door for generating biochar.

#### **X. Agency Updates**

- a. **State Mobilization Update** – Melissa Gannie, Assistant State Fire Marshall. N/A
- b. **Federal Update** – Kari Grover-Wier, District Ranger, Acting Chief of Staff, USFS, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. N/A
- c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. N/A



Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3. CIMT applications just closed, teams are building out their roster. There is heightened awareness out in eastern WA because of the recent fires. County is looking at evacuation planning, doing some preliminary work on evacuation zones. What we have seen is there is some common metrics we can use. Hoping to have a pilot project ready for 2024 season. We have also talked about the evacuation levels, whether 3 levels make sense or going to a two-tiered system.

**XI. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:36pm

**XII. Appendices**

- a. Attendance
- b. WSRRI Presentation
- c. UWFPAC Mitigation Plan Template Draft
- d. UWFPAC Mitigation Plan Presentation
- e. Review Matrix of the 10-Year Wildland Fire Protection Strategic Plan
- f. 10-Year Wildland Fire Protection Strategic Plan

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.