



# Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes January 20, 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 1:06pm January 20<sup>th</sup> 2022, Lee Hemmer motions and Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt seconds, all members vote yeah and there are no abstains.

## III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business

- a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve meeting minutes from December 16, 2021. Cody Desautel motions to approve and Leonard Johnson seconds, all members vote yeah and there are no abstains.
- b. No outstanding business discussed.

## IV. Agency Updates

- a. **State Mobilization Update** – Bill Slosson, Acting State Fire Marshall Alternate. In December did proposition for flooding, we received funding from last legislative session for pilot project. Sent Tech Rescue boats to Whatcom, repositioned to Frasier County in response to atmospheric river.
- b. **Federal Update** – Eric Veach, Deputy Forest Supervisor, U.S. Forest Service Gifford Pinchot Ntl. Forest. State forester unveiled strategy to confront state wildfire crisis. Plan is in early stages of identifying funding and next decade's goals to address forest resiliency on a broader scale. Cody Desautel recommends including the 7 fire sheds as part of the planning document to be a factor for the forest resiliency group and others to consider.
- c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. Recommendations for the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee are being finalized which will bring a new eastern Washington fire chief representative out of Spokane. We are finishing up yearly interagency agreements with DNR. Starting preparations for upcoming fire season.
- d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Don Melton, Acting Assistant Wildland Fire Management Division Manager, Operations and Aviation. Main focus has been implementing the provisions of HB 1168 in the division. Preparing to advertise for permanent hand crew positions, as well as 15 span of control positions to be distributed throughout the state. In few months will be heavy equipment operators, included is procurement of 14 dozers and 4 excavators that will go online over the next two years. Community resiliency program buildout is ongoing with the Wildfire Ready Neighbors preparing to relaunch again this year in 6 counties.



- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division, Forest Service.  
The Federal infrastructure bill is main focus, we are currently still analyzing the bill and how it will be implemented. Secretary of Agriculture announced of 10-year wildfire plan, WA State is included in one of the priority areas, full definition of the priorities are still being worked on. Planning on completion of agreements by end of February and going to the commissioner for signature in March. Allocation of funds for forest health treatments is expected to significantly increase. About 1.5 billion for State and Private Forestry appropriations. Still waiting for this funding to be appropriated by the federal services.

Follow- up meeting on IAA planned with Leonard Johnson for ranges on liability, once agreed upon it will move forward rapidly. Complex incident management training is getting significant national attention. Nothing has been defined or specified and it is still in development. Deconflicting necessary training and personnel is in process.

#### V. **Chairman’s Updates**

- a. Related to the fire sheds and community resiliency work, 20 communities across 8 counties are identified in Wildland Fire Strategic plan. We identified these communities as having the greatest risk and are prioritized for assistance, though this list will be continually updated with changing conditions and community feedback. This is an ongoing project and will have more updates in the future for the committee. For the community resiliency buildout, Guy Gifford is the assistant division manager for standing up this program with Ashley Blazina assisting on the west side, permanent division manager will be hired as well. Wildfire Ready Neighbors is a priority focus with its relaunch in Chelan, Spokane, and Okanagan Counties, and with the positive community feedback we received, it will be piloted in Yakima, Klickitat, and Kittitas in the spring. Okanagan County has recommend the program to wait to the fall for their community. Implementation on the west side of the State has been requested, and language for a budget proviso for 2023 is being created to support this.
- b. Committee supports including west side in the Wildfire Ready Neighbors program, creating buy in from voting base will help build further long terms support for the program. Communities recommended include Whatcom County, West Thurston Regional Fire District, Central Mason County Fire District, and Lake Cushman Fire District. Recommended utilizing Wildfire Adapted Communities Network. There are exceptions to CWPP’s being older than 10 years if certain other criteria is met, can be expanded upon.

#### VI. **Equity and Environmental Justice Criteria Development**

- a. **Presentation by Ashley Blazina, Community Wildfire Resiliency Coordinator**  
As part of the Community Resiliency program buildout, the criteria presented is being implemented as part of the selection and approval process for appropriating grant funding. Goal was to identify underserved and at risk communities to give them access to funding and materials that traditionally they have not had access to. The criteria



developed is specific to this program and will likely need revision to be properly applied to other programs (e.g. Wildfire Ready Neighbors).

Previous program version had weak understanding of on the ground capacity, as well as blind spots. New program to address these areas and to be bottom up focused rather than top down (rely on community need and feedback). Utilized federal documents on environmental justice, HEAL act, health disparities map, and advisory councils. Identified key factors; language barriers and lack of vehicle significantly impact evacuation efforts. Forest action plan, recent large fires data utilized to match communities that met the criteria for selection to areas that are in high risk fire areas and part of the 20 year strategic plan. Further development will begin integrating partners into the program and refining the tool kit. Program is still in draft phase.

- b. Feedback; west side communities that were included were part of identified key areas and the health disparities map. Issue that these communities face is primarily evacuation. Build out of service forestry and fire district assistance possible programs to incorporate these criteria into.
- c. Presentation document attached.

## VII. HB 1168 Implementation

- a. **Fire District Assistance Program expansion report review and approval.**

Committee Chair Allen Lebovitz provided committee members a copy of the proposed report prior to meeting and reviewed each section of the report. The intent of this task was to engage the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (WFAC) to provide recommendations to the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) concerning the proposed plan for implementing the FDAP directed by SSHB 1168 (Bill), to be established in the 2021 – 2023 biennium. The WFAC was asked to provide a review of the program plan and granting criteria and recommendations, in the context of five topics. Approved report is attached. The following is the review and recommendations of the WFAC.
- b. Task 1 Review and validate a list of communities at high risk and low resiliency, incorporating environmental justice into the process. Task is ongoing and will continue to be updated. Committee approves task 1 with no changes, there are no abstains, all vote yea.
- c. Task 2 Assess and provide recommendations on whether the proposed FDAP plan effectively identifies and addresses current and anticipated fire district needs. Proposed list is approved with no changes from committee, there are no abstains, all vote yea.
- d. Task 3 Assess whether the FDAP plan identifies and addresses the current and anticipated fire district needs across the state. Revisions made to make the scaling of grants to allow smaller communities with smaller budgets better access to the grants. Task 3 is approved with revisions by all members, there are no abstains, all vote yea.



- e. Task 4 Assess and provide recommendations on whether the proposed organizational structure is effectively and efficiently designed to build and support the operations of the FDAP. Revisions made to include building resiliency into the program if any loss of funding or support occurs. Revisions approved by all members, there are no abstains, all vote yea.
- f. Task 5 Identify key partners and stakeholders that should be engaged when implementing the FDAP. Revision to remove Fire Service Leadership Forum, as they are already represented by other groups on the list. Revisions approved by all members, there are no abstains, all vote yea.
- g. Task 6 Additional feedback. Revision to remove number 1 as Washington State Patrol does not have grant criteria that is applicable to this program. Revision to number 5 to remove verbiage on unprotected lands, this verbiage has a specific definition in statute and there are concerns over taking on responsibility unintentionally by the fire districts. Revisions approved by all members, there are no abstains, all vote yea.
- h. Committee Chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to approve, Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt motions, and Lee Hemmer seconds. There are no abstains, all vote yea.

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

- a. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt, Chair, School Trust Lands Advisory Task Force, WSSDA – Working on the State trust land transfer group, the program continues to evolve and is likely in the future to go into fire prone areas. Topic of managing lands that go out of trust should be brought forward at a later date
- b. Tony Craven, Forestry & Firewise Coordinator Suncadia Resort – Emphasize support for Wildfire Ready Neighbors on the west side, helps create buy in for the program state wide and property owners with multiple properties will be more likely to take the proper measures with their properties on the eastside.

#### **IX. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:31pm.

#### **X. Appendices**

- a. Attendance
- b. EEJCD Presentation
- c. FDAP Draft Report
- d. FDAP Approved Report

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.