

WILDLAND FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

May 28, 2020
Zoom Meeting

Committee Members Present:

Gary Berndt – Wildland Fire Liaison, Chair
Dave Johnson – Fire District Commissioner (Eastside)
Reese Lolley – Statewide Environmental Representative
Lee Hemmer – Industry Landowner (Range)
Tony Craven – Small Forest Landowner
Cody Desautel – Tribal Nations Representative
Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – State Land Trust Beneficiary
J.D. Marshall – Industry Landowner (Timber)
Melissa Gannie – Assistant Fire Marshal
Jim DeTro – County Commissioner (Eastside)
KC Whitehouse - Washington State Council of Fire Fighters
Joe Gardner – Cowlitz County Commissioner
Dave LaFave – Fire Chief (Westside)
Randy Johnson – Fire Chief (Eastside)

Committee Members Absent:

Erick Walker – USFS Deputy Forest Supervisor

Guests/Other Attendees:

Loren Torgerson – Wildfire Policy Advisor
Chuck Turley – Wildfire Division Manager
Julie Sackett, Forest Health and Resiliency Division Manager
Shelly Goodwin – WFAC Coordinator
Jim Cahill – Public
Mary Catherine McAleer – Weyerhaeuser
Jen Watkins – FHRD Planning, Science, and Monitoring Assistant Division Manager
Angie Lane – Wildfire Plans/Information Assistant Division Manager

I. Opening, Roll Call

The meeting of the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee was called to order at 10:06 a.m. on May 28, by Zoom. Roll was taken, 13 members were present by Zoom and 2 members were excused, constituting a quorum.
Agenda was amended to finalize memo to George Geissler, also final check on the matrix. Jim Detro moved to approve agenda as amended and Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt seconded.
Motion carried unanimously.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the April 23, 2019 council meeting were presented in draft and reviewed. Motion to approve amended draft minutes made by Committee member Dave Johnson, seconded by Committee member Cody Desautel. Motion carried unanimously.

III. Chairman Report

Chairman Berndt, provided a verbal chair report. Gary discussed his feelings about retiring. Tomorrow is his last official work day. He will still be available through June. He believes in the abilities in this committee to make a difference across the state. Loren talked about Gary's perfect fit for his role with this group. Great work and leadership. Russ said he learned how to be a better leader from Gary.

IV. DNR/WSP Update

- a. Andy Tate Fire Prevention and Fuel Reduction Program Manager – Written update for FHRD
- b. Melissa Gannie from the State Fire Marshal's Office reported that MOB is working closely with fire defense committee. COVID-19 MOB ended but still have the letter. Preseason meeting this morning. PPE – need to have a conversation on this. Budget exercise, now trying to fill 2 vacancies, licensing & inspector. State wide ban on fireworks – no moratorium – needs to go to jurisdiction of each county. No change to RCW 77250, requirement still applies.
- c. Chuck Turley Wildfire Division Manager – Preparedness for fire season. Aviation is on track. Fire bosses will come on throughout June. Put 2 type 1 helos on exclusive use contract. Forest Service has 6 coming to PNW – 1 in Washington. Wenatchee training done remotely, 2 sessions of National Guard training. DNR Seasonals on and being trained. Engines staffed and ready to roll. Chair PNWCG – for region 6 (WA & OR) looking at predictions for the fire season. National – Stood up 3 area command teams to address COVID-19 and fire response. Each given 3 or 4 areas to work with and come up with response plans. Response Plan came out a month ago. PNWCG – Type 1 team stood up to try and write best management for PNW. Got document a week ago. PNWCG approved it. PNWCG meeting 4 half days a month instead of 1 full day a month. Incident Management teams estimate it will take 25% longer than normal to handle incident. Feds not recommending testing at this point. No highly reliable tests yet. Too many false positives.
DNR Budget – a lot of nervousness, lots of rumors and concerns. Not filling vacancies unless urgent.
- d. Erick Walker – email update
- e. Dave LaFave Fire Chief (Westside) – Effort to develop clarifying guidance on how resources are going to manage during the pandemic. State Mobilization will operate the same, no benefit seen for operating differently. Following CDC guidance.
- f. Randy Johnson Fire Chief (Eastside) – discussed his PNWCG assignment having completed 30 days COVID response in Spokane. A lot of lessons learned. Looking forward to how we respond in fire camps this season. Feedback – no guidance and direction. Deliberate in how integrated response is handled. Robust prioritization response is needed. A lot of moving parts, a lot of things unknown.
- g. Jen Watkins FHRD Planning, Science, and Monitoring Assistant Division Manager – Manages science folks. Divided into 4 shops, Andy Tate, Trevor McConchie, Mike Norris and Jen. Scientist's, studying bugs & forest diseases.

Planners write plans based on the science and lead the way to implement them. Synergy between FH & WD, alignment – monitoring (tracking on the ground). FH tracker online, public portal, priority landscapes – project details and treatments. Report to legislature every 2 years. Three monitoring scales (HB 1784) – Forest health assessment pilot areas – Methow/Twisp, Leavenworth, and Cle Elum - 4 phase approach. Map, develop, identify, and build. Forest Action Plan will be released this summer.

V. Old Business

- a. Discussion on Matrix – Motion to mark memo as complete and move on. Dave moved and tony seconded, unanimously carried.
- b. Capture issues at last meeting in the memo to George. Nothing significant missing the mark? Loren said everything seemed captured.
- c. Reese – Other organizations like EMD or FEMA could play a role in implementation of the 10-Year Wildfire Strategy. – Additional members would be beneficial. There is some crossover and information sharing. Overlap between Forest Health and Wildland Fire committees with the strategy.
- d. (Loren – 2020 work plan task – review the task sheet. DNR Wildfire budget review (end of the year due date). How WFAC would play that role. Task 5 – First element to engage with the committee. Budget process discussion.)
- e. Gary – Two things – 3rd party billings and safety. Loren will take these on.

VI. Final Q&A – Committee roundtable

- a. Reese asked about the 2561 report – Loren said there has been some interest, specifically LEP.
- b. Jim DeTro asked about an easily accessible report on resources for state and private landowners? Loren will talk to Chuck and George to find an answer.
- c. Washington Prescribed Fire Council Annual meeting was held in Spokane, February 27.

VII. Adjournment and Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm. By consensus, the committee decided to schedule the next general meeting at 10 am, on July 23, 2020 by Zoom meeting.

Draft minutes submitted by Shelly Goodwin, approved by Chairman Gary Berndt. Formal action to be taken to approve the minutes at the July 23, 2020 meeting.