



# Wildland Fire Advisory Committee & Forest Health Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Meeting Venue: Zoom

- I. Attendance**
  - a. Quorum met for both committees, see attached for meeting attendance.
- II. Call to Order**
  - a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz called meeting to order 1:01 pm March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- III. Joint Meeting Instructions**
  - a. Terra Rentz, Strategic Advisor for Forest Resilience, Regulations, and Aquatic Resources, DNR – Established ground rules for discussion and voting for approval of WRFRCR Account Joint Work Group (JWG) recommendations; a joint motion will be called for to approve and each committee will follow with separate motions and voting to approve, both committees must approve for the joint motion to carry. If both committees cannot agree on same vote, they will discuss until both committees can agree or the decision will be tabled.
- IV. Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience (WRFRCR) Account JWG Recommendations, with FHAC and WFAC**
  - a. Public comment on WRFRCR account recommendations – None given.
  - b. Cody Rohrbach (WFAC) & Janene Ritchie (FHAC) – Discussed the recommendation memo and the history of the group’s deliberations during the joint meetings. Took into account not just dollar amounts, but programmatic improvements that could be made, while maintaining percentage thresholds. Had two potential funding scenarios that were analyzed, high of \$25 million and low of \$20 million.
  - c. Chair entertains motion to accept the JWG recommendations and move them forward for presentation to the Commissioner of Public Lands. For the WFAC; Cody Rohrbach motions to approve, Carlene Anders seconds, all members vote yea, there are no abstains. For the FHAC; Janene Ritchie motions to approve, Mike Kuttel, Jr. seconds, all members vote yea, there are no abstains. Both committees approve, the joint motion carries.
    - i. Final recommendations presented to the committees and discussed by members. No changes to the recommendations made.
  - d. WRFRCR Account JWG Recommendations attached.



**V. Developing “Relative Importance” Weighting of Highly Valued Resources or Assets (HVRAs) for Integration to Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment (QWRA), with FHAC and WFAC**

- a. Chuck Hersey, Environmental Planner, Forest Health & Resiliency Division, DNR – QWRA is a joint effort with Forest Service, BLM, ODM, DNR, and Oregon State University. First assessment in 2018. QWRA 2023 update will take advantage of new methods and account for changes to fuels that have occurred on the landscape. HVRAs in 2018; people and property rated highest at 33%, infrastructure at 18%, watersheds at 18%, timber 12%, wildlife 10%, vegetation 9%.
- b. Timeline; fire modeling began in 2022, from fall to February update HVRAs and new mapping, March convene SMEs, late spring conference to finalize.
- c. Committees reviewed and discussed the tasking memo presented to both committees to establish a joint work group to advise the State Forester on the relative importance ranking of the proposed HVRA’s
- d. Questions:
  - i. Cody Desautel – is the intent to develop HVRAs? A: No, the ask is to help with assigning a relative value to the HVRAs, a ranking compared to each other. It’s a quantitative process, but there is a qualitative value that needs to be taken into account for ranking them.
- e. Public Comment on QWRA Joint Workgroup Tasking – None given.
- f. Chair requests motions from each committee to approve and accept the tasking memo. For the WFAC; K.C. Whitehouse motions to approve, Cody Desautel seconds, all members vote yea, there are no abstains. For the FHAC; Mike Kuttel, Jr. motions to approve, Dave Cass seconds, all members vote yea, there are no abstains. Both committees approve, the joint motion carries.
- g. Presentation & tasking memo attached.
- h. End of joint WFAC/FHAC committee meeting.

**VI. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business**

- a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Cody Desautel motions to approve minutes, Wade Pierce seconds. All members vote yeah and there are no abstains.
- b. No outstanding business discussed.

**VII. 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. Wildfire response, working with PNWCG on complex incident management. Continue to hire positions, lots of personnel moving back and forth, still have vacancies after our permanent fire hires. In central WA looking to hire fuels crews in each ranger district. Prescribed burning, we're monitoring opportunities to start burning. We are getting new ignition capable drones to help with the prescribed fire mission, looking to use it more broadly on federal lands especially in hard to reach places. On our wildfire crisis strategy, National Priority Landscapes added the Colville National Forest to the list. Scaling up our capacity and working on agreements. QWRA was brought up and we are looking at ways of scaling that down, from a regional approach to WA.
- c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. Fire mobilization plan revision will be complete on the 28<sup>th</sup>, sent up to the fire marshal. Final interagency rate schedule for WA hoping to be completed in April. Tracking legislation as moves through, 1498 is one we're watching in particular. Pre-season meetings are beginning in the regions, working on developing some conference call lists to coordinate their conversations rather than having independent ones.

Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3. IMT training coming up the week of April 17<sup>th</sup>. Some local discussion in Spokane Co. on how to get some alignment with county burn restrictions and DNR, reduce confusion around burning rules and regulations while encouraging proper burning.

- d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager. In operations, have 16 dozers ready to operate for the summer, most operators hired, and almost all the transports in. David Way is leading, coming up in April organizing a pilot heavy equipment academy, bring in SME from within and out of the state. Still having some issues hiring leadership roles. Logistics; heavy into the grant cycle with VFA phase 2 and 1168, operational grants \$2.3 million awarded to 33 fire districts, \$207K in PPE sent to 16 districts, 69 districts awarded \$1.1 million dollars in equipment, for VFA phase 2, 91 districts were awarded \$1 million. IMT support we built 5 command trailers, purchased 3 Starlink dishes to support type 2 and 3 teams. Took delivery of 8 rapid deployable cell sites. About to recruit for the 6 fire district assistance coordinators. Aviation; got word we are going to fill all of our helicopter manager positions, single resource boss helicopter managers. Taking delivery of our 2 Kodiaks, they are getting all their modifications right now around the country, both expected to be in service in May. Portable air tanker base ready to go, will be based out of Pasco. UAS program is almost an operational program, have taken delivery non-NDAA compliant drones for training primarily as they cannot be used on federal land, will take delivery of NDAA compliant drones in near future along with 2 Ignis drones. Air attack bringing on new personnel to improve our effectiveness. 30 aircraft on the line to go into the season. 3 Hueys being outfitted with night vision. Plans and info, we got contract sign for the fire detection camera pilot program, will deploy to sites throughout the summer. Purchasing 6 simulation tables. Training academy with capacity for about 200 National Guard personnel at a time. Community Resilience provided 94 Fire Wise USA ® for



\$280K, Wildfire Ready Neighbors grants for \$1.7 million, 2 grants to state conservation commission for \$313K. We are behind the curve competitively with hires compared to Federal based on the salary differences, but we are looking at other ways to compensate, such as housing and increasing duration of employment (e.g. 6 month to 9 month).

- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester. David Way, Assistant Division Manager Wildfire Ops & Aviation DNR presented; Complex incident management team transition meeting is planned for April 6<sup>th</sup> in Ellensburg, second meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Ready to get it kicked off, have had good discussions so far and can operate on a common framework.

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

- a. Wade Pierce - Memo of understanding between USFS and the timber industry for cooperating to provide fire suppression resources on adjacent lands developed. Stimson was given permission to use frequency used by DNR, it's a big deal to have that ability.
- b. Cody Desautel - Making good progress in the wildfire commission. Aviation report is out. Final report is due in September to congress. BIA side trying to come up with more comprehensive burn plans. Working on next farm bill, what some of those provisions will be, defining co-stewardship, sharing staffing and funding across boundaries.
- c. Melanie Bacon - I'll be going to WUI FAC training in Leavenworth at the end of March, looking forward to connecting with new people on it.
- d. Tom Smith - Looking forward to hearing about some of the language to clear up the confusing language on burn permits.
- e. Tony Craven – Open invitation to Melanie to tour projects in Suncadia when you are in the area. Suncadia is considering putting a few fire detection cameras up. The Small Forest Landowner group would be interested in trying to see how the fire risk rating system is being put together. Working on a group on carbon storage for small forest landowners.
- f. K.C Whitehouse – In process implementing Wildfire Ready Neighbors in Mason County, excited to see it go from plan to implementation.
- g. Kari Grover-Wier – Any updates on the CWDG awards? A: There should be some updates released in the next week.
- h. Russ Lane – Trying to pivot from using risks to hazards as terminology, as risk has specific meaning outside the agency. CISM we made some changes in the course offerings, bringing that course to WA in October right before the implementation of CIMT.

### **IX. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:41pm



## **X. Appendices**

- a. Attendance
- b. WRFRCR Account JWG Recommendations
- c. QWRA Presentation
- d. QWRA Tasking Memo

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.