

WILDLAND FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 23, 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
Randy Johnson – Fire Chief (Eastside)
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

Committee Members Absent:

Erick Walker – USFS Deputy Forest Supervisor
Dave LaFave – Fire Chief (Westside)

Guests/Other Attendees:

Loren Torgerson - Wildfire Policy Advisor
George Geissler – State Forester and Deputy Supervisor for WD and FH
Chuck Turley – Wildfire Division Manager
Julie Sackett, Forest Health and Resiliency Division Manager
Shelly Goodwin - WFAC Coordinator
Jim Passage - Public

I. Opening, Roll Call

The meeting of the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee was called to order at 10:05 a.m. on April 23, by Zoom. Roll was taken, 11 members were present by Zoom and 3 members were excused, constituting a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 26, 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 Randy Johnson. Motion carried with Aye's.

III. Chairman Report

Chairman Berndt, provided a verbal chair report. Participated in virtual Olympic Region Fire Summit with 8 or 9 District Fire Chiefs and Olympic Region staff. Conversation on upcoming year, training and red carding dozens of potential FF that would come on board. Training is a challenge this year. Discussed the need to “rollover” operational red cards. Questions on DNR burn ban – could anticipate more of that this year. No statewide ban – been left up to the regions. Conversation with George – set to separate the end of May, the job announcement has gone out, open for 14 days.

IV. DNR/WSP Update

- a. Julie Sackett, Forest Health and Resiliency Division Manager deferred to Jen Watkins – Forest Action Plan due out in June, large umbrella plan. Outreach all lands across Washington and set some shared goals together. All the plans fit together (how)? Setting some strong goals for the next 5 years. Prioritizing landscapes – 33 priority areas in Eastern Washington. What do we use to prioritize in Western Washington? We are very well set up to operate remotely. The New Fire Scientist, Anna Barros, will assist in bridging between the plans. HBI784 – Really working on this. Build of Forest Health and work of Wildfire. Three pilot projects Okanogan, Leavenworth, and Lake Wenatchee – Kittitas County. How can we set up a network to protect these lands? Growing and Moving! Forest Health has an online mapping tool.
- b. Melissa Gannie from the State Fire Marshal’s Office reported they are active in support of Covid 19 event, non-traditional response for mobilization. There have been 11 responses local and 2 state, Emergency Operations Center is actively staffing during the week and remotely on weekends. All resource requests have been filled. The Fire Defense Committee is meeting every Wednesday and they are also monitoring fire activity.
- c. George Geissler State Forester – Attending Wildfire Leadership Council Meetings = focus on smoke and the impacts of smoke. Prescribed fire was laid down for a while because of smoke and spread. Smoke Management. Friday – Fire executive committee laying out tasking, working through Covid 19 and impact on Wildland fire response. Challenge getting answers on everything related to aviation and the supply cache. There is no overarching guidance – a lot of recommending the use of best management practices. Bringing on 3 national area command teams. How we could operate here in the NW. Remember response is typically local. DNR – items related to burn bans – what DNR response could and will look like. Internal response management team meets daily reviewing protocols. A lot of work ongoing there – a lot of discussions. Gearing up aviation ground resources.
- d. Chuck Turley Wildfire Division Manager – Area command and the National MAC Group working to develop, wildfire response plan, from mobilization through de-mobilization, but nothing on preparedness. Doesn’t include guidance on how to do those things. What kind of additional guidance is needed? A lot of fire activity – 200 responses. Largest was 90 acres this time last week. Helicopters flew 50% already compared to this time last year. Working on how

to deliver training with academy cancelled. The planned completion of an additional Type 2 helicopter is built on time, complete and operational by 6/1. A “light” helicopter has been put together – tested and operational now. There was a delay in hiring seasonal staff but starting to move forward on that.

- e. Dave Johnson Fire District Commissioner (Eastside) – Olympic region is not doing field day. Rolled red cards. Going to pack test every person and will have a field day, online training.
- 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. Erik Walker USFS Deputy Forest Supervisor – Working to eliminate smoke into the community, having paused all spring prescribed fire in Washington and Oregon. BLM took it case by case, evaluate come fall. Put a lot of money towards prep work. Figuring out FF support and transport. Target approach – bullseye employee safety then work our way out. Burn ban talks. Evaluate incidents in light of the pandemic.
- h. Loren Torgerson Legislative Liaison – Nothing from Legislation.

V. Old Business

- a. Discussion on work plan – Loren Torgerson –

Still valid? Yes

Reese asked if the strategies play a part in this.

Loren – Wildland Fire 10 year strategy (cross pollination between the two committees)

Leg go through Commish to assign work

Informed can participate? Yes

Not sure how to balance that

JD enjoys the discussion part of our meetings

Dave doesn’t think he does because of the size of constitutes

Randy – yes annual/semi reach out routine update

Loren – DNR drives the committee – should members get to bring issues to the table

Melissa – Committees meet and information is shared, List Serv is another avenue

Reese – Request a list of constitutes – who are we reaching out to? Share what our work plan is

Russ – update the WFAC webpage to add work plan

Who do we share the work plan with or just rely on the committee to share it

Lee sends out emails and newsletters

Jim forwards everything Shelly sends to the clerks in the county

Membership? Parking lot

Reese is concerned on size and term limits. With no term limits, think would be

prudent to expand. And if WFAC is charged Advisory role of 10 yr. Plan implementation, some additional entities that bring additional knowledge and resources to Washington could be helpful. E.g. BLM, State EMD, FEMA, LCF or WASCLA, NOAA (post fire response) . Thinks concerns of larger committee and efficiency could be an issue; however, could be managed effectively by DNR/Liaison facilitation.

Gary – could bring on someone temporarily for specific expertise

Loren – Members craft a statement to expand the committee

Jim – in person yes with Zoom no

Staff Support – Fantastic

DNR provides help quickly when needed – Nicki, Annie, Shelly and Loren fantastic support.

Formalize relationship- membership crossover helps

George wants them to work together

DNR staff – Russ, George, Julie, Chuck, and Andrew

Internally get ac together

Look at how the committees came together

VI. Final Q&A – Committee roundtable

- a. Discussion on how MOB is requested.
- b. April 27th – May 8th Prescribed Fire training exchange in NE Washington was postponed until Spring of 2021 due to COVID-19
- c. Washington Prescribed Fire Council Annual meeting was held in Spokane, February 27

VII. Adjournment and Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm. By consensus, the committee decided to schedule the next general meeting at 10 am, on May 28 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 May 28, 2020 meeting.