



Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes April 18th, 2024

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 1:03 pm April 18th, 2024.
- III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business**
 - a. Committee Chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from March 21st, 2024. K.C. Whitehouse motions to approve minutes, Melanie Bacon 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 – We have been taking a deep dive looking at prescribed fire at DNR as well as at the national level. We are in the process of finalizing the update to our internal prescribed fire policies, procedures as well as guidelines. Going through to make sure we can operationalize prescribed fire effectively. Updating our FLRAs and utilizing our contractors effectively are a few examples. At the national level, a lot of focus is on workforce capacity and resource sharing. The Wildland Fire Leadership Council has been trying to negotiate between federal agencies and non-federal partners to improve allowing resources to move between federal lands, state lands, and private lands. Other items looking at are post fire recovery as well as aviation strategy. On post fire its mostly on roles and responsibilities between the agencies, and on reducing duplication of efforts to put funding more effectively on the ground. On aviation, negotiations regarding the interagency aviation strategy have begun. Expectation is it will be completed by December. The old strategy only dealt with federal resources, states have as much as the federal so the new strategy will be incorporating them into it. CWDG grants are working through the process of approvals. Should be announcing everything by the end of this month or early next month. We as a State have fared well again. At the State level, there has been a lot of discussion around WUI and hazard & risk maps. DNR has been charged by the legislature with updating the wildland urban interface map as well as developing a hazard and risk map. We are diving into what the legislation really says, along with the available funding. \$350,000 is allocated but if we follow the letter of the legislation, it will cost \$3 to 4 million dollars.
 - b. Allen Lebovitz – Can you speak to WUI maps at the federal level? A: There are a lot of different maps from federal agencies and states that conflict. Discussion revolves around where the highest risk is in the U.S. Insurance companies don't use these maps, they have their own tools, this alleviates some of the concerns on this being used to deny coverage. Nothing has moved forward effectively yet though.



V. Wildland Fire Management Division

- a. Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager, DNR – Fire activity has been minimal so far with a few initial attacks. We lucked out missing an early green up in March and April. You are hearing things on the drought on the fire season, but drought doesn't affect fires, weather does. Overall outlook for the season is neutral for an above or below average season, we knew by this time in 2021 that it was going to be a rough season for example. This is allowing us to go through our preparations and trainings at a reasonable pace. We've started our first interagency fire academy now at the North Bend Training Center. We have two more ahead of us. Just finished incident management team training for the northwest in Spokane, well attended, successful event. We are still talking through CIMT implementation. We are going to have to change our team recruitment cycle, that roster must be ready to go by January 1st since they will need to be available at the national level. At the division level on prescribed fire, they've started weekly operations call on prescribed fire. Get all fire managers together on Monday and talk about the week's outlook and resources/staffing. We'll use that to transition from burn season into transition season without having to create a new call, have a smooth transition. Met with some of our fire contractors while in Spokane, they are ready to do prescribed fire work. They have a lot of qualified burn bosses and others that will help us fill out workforce needs as we get more internal personnel to meet prescribed fire demand.

VI. DNR Post Fire Recovery Program

- a. Colin Haffey, Post Fire Recovery Program Manager, DNR – We have been around for about a year, created from 1168 funding. We work alongside the prescribed fire closely. Most of our fires on the eastside, but we are seeing more frequency on the westside. West has higher severity traditionally. Biggest concern post fire is flooding and debris flow events. One of the things we've had a long time at DNR is the landslide hazards program and the wildfire associated debris flow program which runs the wildfire associated landslide emergency response team. The three goals we've developed for the program are; help landowners and communities and watersheds recover from wildfire, rely heavily on cross-programmatic cross-boundary coordination; program staff aim to provide expertise and coordination on post-fire recovery efforts from an all-lands perspective. Looking at \$4,770,000 funding for work in this biennium.
- b. Annie Schmidt – DNR has an opportunity to extend its reach beyond state lands, as it is one of the three signatories on community wildfire protection plans. DNR can issue guidance that will have far reaching affects through communities and not doing so is a missed opportunity. The contamination from the built environment is also an important nexus.
- c. Tom Smith – If I lived on alluvial fans, I would want to see work being done in the lands above to reduce the risk of wildfire and it being incorporated into plans. A: We have already seen work being done incorporating the alluvial fan maps, and as we get more completed, they can be incorporated into plans and work more widely.



- d. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – Can you briefly described your role on recovery on our state trust lands? A: Yes, we engage with them similarly to how we engage with any other partner. We are starting those conversations around reforestation, and they are part of the broader fire recovery conversation. State lands got \$7.5 million for post disturbance recovery.
- e. Presentation attached.

VII. Wildland Fire Detection Camera System

- a. Angie Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division, Assistant Division Manager for Plans and Information, DNR – This is the final update on the project, we are fully implemented at this point. We started this project a few years before going to contract with 1168 funding, signing the contract last march. We met our funding goals under 1168. End of June we had 5 cameras installed, going into fire season. By fall we installed another 12 sites. We were able to use the cameras in the fall to detect smoke from small fires, check whether someone had a burn permit, or whether they were wildfires. This spring we have new user training scheduled, contract extension mapped out, spring burning coming on. We worked with each dispatch to determine when to bring cameras online. We have received interest from partners to work with Pano to put up more cameras. We only have funding for 21 sites, the more partners that add cameras can greatly benefit the system. While DNR can't fund more cameras, we can still manage the alerts and be the keeper of that system. The cameras were the first to alert for the Jackson Road fire as an example of success. Lessons learned, the more cameras we have the easier triangulation becomes, though without more funding we won't be adding camera. False positives did come from industrial smoke, this gets added to improve the ai software. User interface was not an issue for dispatch. Need to improve on shoulder season alerting with all the backyard burning.
- b. Presentation attached.

VIII. Tasking – Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan Review

- a. Allen Lebovitz, Committee Chair, DNR – We are collating all the feedback from the last month's meeting in Cle Elum. The feedback on the strategies was very informative and constructive. We'll be continuing our look at the strategies and how to utilize metrics to track them.

IX. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics

- a. Reese Lolley – How is DNR working towards getting feedback from other groups? A: The process is not getting input outside of the committee, members represent constituencies, so other groups can utilize the committee members that best represent them can bring their input to the process. As to DNR internal input, we are working with program leads to assist in the process, in the same way members represent larger groups, the leads represent their teams.
- b. Cody Desautel – Most my work is DC related, fair bit of traction around the wildfire commission report. I would encourage this group where this strategic plan aligns with the commission report.



- c. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – I have been serving on the state carbon and forest management workgroup. Deciding on modeling scenarios with different strategies and how they impact carbon sequestration and revenue. Anyone that can send resources that will help with modeling the different climate change impacts on fire and carbon would be appreciated.
- d. Wade Pierce – I did hear a rumor that DNR was going to share with forest practice board some of the Oregon road fires and alternate plans. Pleased to see what has been salvaged, and DNR working quickly with landowners. The Ponderosa pines that died last year are near the end of their salvageable shelf life. Foresters and landowners need to be on the lookout for beetle activity.
- e. Sami Schinnell – TNC and Prescribed fire council had our annual meeting. A lot of discussion around workforce development, creating a master MOU for the workforce to work around. Starting to figure out how to provide more prescribed fire training for contractors.
- f. Tom Smith – Had conversation with DNR on providing funding for training small districts that can't afford to send personnel to the academies, it was good to hear.
- g. K.C. Whitehouse – Sat through a presentation from aviation staff at DNR, interesting to see the gains made making it a world class program post 1168 funding.
- h. Carlene Anders – Fire Strong Workshops Mon. May 13th at Omak East Elem. School 8 am -6 pm and Th May 30th in Pateros, same time frame. Contact Jessica Farmer at (509)846-5101, carltoncomplexrebuild@gmail.com to participate.
- i. Bill Slosson – We were able to fill our vacant primary Mobilization position. We're working on decision packages, one of which is getting more support for mobilization. Our workload has increased over 200% but our personnel and funding have not increased to match.

X. Adjourn

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:21pm

XI. Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. Post Fire Recovery Program Presentation
- c. Wildland Fire Camera Detection System Presentation

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.