



Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes August 15th, 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 1:06 pm August 15th, 2024.
- III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business**
 - a. Committee Chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from July 18th. Cody Desautel motions to approve minutes, Carlene Anders seconds. All members vote yeah and there are no abstains.
- IV. Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan Update**
 - a. Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisor, DNR – Reviewed previous meeting’s discussions. Plan is to consolidate the addendum and have George review it before September’s meeting. Will use the September meeting to create a final draft and hopefully have the committee approve it. Have final review and approval from George in October and then on to CPL.
- V. Utility Mitigation Plan Template, Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee (UWFPAAC)**
 - a. Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisor, DNR – We are in the phase of assisting utilities in completing their plans for the submission deadline. The contractor hired to develop the template is also contracted to provide technical assistance in completing the plans. The Dept. of Commerce workgroup is also aiding utilities in completing their plans. DNR is not approval authority, the utilities governing structure are responsible for approving their plans. DNR will receive the plans and make them publicly available. The cycle repeats every 2 years. An issue that some utilities have put forward is that they have already developed plans but do not match the template. Per the statute when they revise their plans, they must convert to the new template.
 - i. Melissa Gannie – Does the plan include solar farms or stored energy? A: if the infrastructure is part of a utility, then it should be included in their plan.
 - ii. Tony Craven – Are there significant differences between existing plans and the template? A: Dept of Commerce is cross analyzing plans to determine the extent to which the plans diverge significantly. It seems most are close enough to translate over to the new plan.
 - iii. Chris Martin – Roslyn has been identified by PSE as an area for PSPS and been pleasantly surprised at PSEs communication so far.



- iv. Allen Lebovitz – How many utilities are affected by this? How is compliance enforced? A: 56 utilities are in WA. They’ll have to submit to DNR, whether they submit or not will be publicly available.
 - v. Cody Desautel – Since the plans are public, if they don’t submit or submit one not in compliance with the template, does that increase their litigation risk? A: We have a standard of negligence for wildfire investigations, and it could certainly add to their risk if they do not have an appropriate plan in place or are not following it.
- b. Our next project we are looking to transition too is a legacy project, that being a communication strategy between utilities and agencies. We’ve already identified some areas and made progress which has been embraced by utilities.

VI. WDNR Wildland Fire Management Division Update

- a. Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager – All the efforts of the division are on response right now. Swawilla and bridge creek, rotated teams through and we have stabilized. Numerous ones in the basin. Cougar creek in Asotin County, concerned it would be season long, but thankfully teams 13 and 12 managed to stop it and being managed down. Pioneer creek started in June and has been a complicated fire. NW team 3 is transitioning in now, second time on and hoping to close the fire. Working hard to reopen Hwy 20. Retreat fire in Yakima, we were concerned it would also be a summer long, but we are on way to being a Type 3 managed fire. Most incidents are on right trajectory. 2620 road fire is an emerging incident, is in steep terrain and dry timber. Is expanding rapidly. Team is mobilizing to respond. This is a transitional time of year, season generally winds down while we also have to deal with the challenges of seasonal timing out.
 - i. We do have a template that has been sent out as a stopgap. We are putting finishing touches on the final version and needs to be sent out to fire chiefs board to review and comment. The updated final version will be ready by end of year.
 - ii. We met with NW MAC counterparts. Suppression repair is an area we are looking at. Recognize that there is resource damage after the fire that can be worse than the fire itself. Working on how we can carve out resources and ensure teams are aware to take that into account while on the fire.
 - 1. Cody Desautel – is that something we need to look at for making recommendations on for code and funding changes, dedicating things for it directly?

VII. WA State Forester Update

- a. George Geissler, Deputy Wildland Fire Management Division, State Forester – CWDG grants, we’ve gone through two rounds here. In round 2 there were two projects that were not announced as award winners due to a clerical error, but they will still get their funding. We were really successful in WA, \$32 million dollars with all additions included. For round 3 there will be \$150 million nationally, there is question whether



there will be a round 4. For smoke, PM 2.5 standard was changed, we are working with EPA at the national and state level for determining exceptional events to have the smoke not count for prescribed fires. EPA is evaluating methodology coming out of CA and GA. We are working with Ecology and others on a methodology for WA state and to ensure we don't have a restrictive cap. For the CPL's burn ban, it only adds an additional step of division concurrence to the permit process but does not stop prescribed fire from occurring. The earlier we can get the information and request in the better as it is a busy time of year. The PNW has been the #1 GAC for the last month. We have been receiving resources from outside the state. I credit the cooperation of all the federal and state agencies for the response this year along with 1498 allowing aircraft response at local fire service request. The master agreement template for the forest land response agreement between DNR and Federal agencies is up for renewal, and we have started discussions on that. The CIMT change is ongoing, and we are evaluating the criteria on how high-level teams are assigned and what delineates them being required vs lower-level teams. There will be a lot of discussion in the fall regarding needed changes. Funding for state volunteer assistance formula is being worked, very minor changes being made, and it will likely be better for WA. At national level recommendations on appropriations have come out, overall looks good, urban forestry did take a hit though. Number of pieces of legislation for implementation of the recommendations from the fire commission.

VIII. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics

- a. Allen Lebovitz – We have two committee vacancies, Lee Hemmer and Sammi Schinnell have both left. Any input appreciated in filling these vacant positions. Please think about future items for the committee to work on along with a potential briefing document for the new commissioner.
- b. Cody Desautel – We should work on a transition document for the new commissioner and 2024-2025 items to address. Can also look at reconnecting with the forest health committee. Will require larger discussion but should look at cultural burning and what tribal authority looks like outside of tribal lands.
- c. Melissa Gannie – We have had our 24th mobilization, still engaged in the Pioneer fire and just had one out in Brinnon. It's been an active fire season, and we have a lot of new staff members to train up.
- d. Chris Martin – One agenda idea I can think of is insurance for communities. How does fuels work affect insurance assessment? It does not seem to be integrated and affect premiums or coverage. When are new assessments done and affect insurance?
- e. Carlene Anders – Appreciate all the digital pieces that come to communities that let people to be able to track fires and smoke. Helped people feel more empowered and not panic. We are continuing to do emergency preparedness work. For agenda items, could we have 20 minutes to have related agencies and organizations in our agenda, such as insurance.



- f. Wade Pierce – The current lumber market is as challenging as it’s ever been. This constricted market is going to make people hard to get their timber work done. Timber sale bid prices are going to have to adjust downward. Property owners who have not been able to salvage already from the Oregon road and Gray fires are at a loss. No one wants green timber to let alone burned. Logging slash has no monetary incentive to be treated in Washington vs in Idaho and Montana. It costs money to permit slash burn. We can look implement policies in Idaho and Montana for slash treatment.
- g. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – Starting to serve on Whatcom County wildfire response task force. Which counties in the state have the best wildfire emergency response plans? A: State emergency management division is going to be the best option for that.
- h. Tom Smith – I head the new forest land response agreement is complete, is that coming soon? Some of the language on burn bans is not clear. A: Russ can answer that later in the meeting.
- i. Tony Craven – Insurance companies have worse maps than what we are using. The WFA is working on biochar and carbon storage, putting together a grant to use a kiln to get rid of the fuels and turn that into carbon credits.
- j. K.C. Whitehouse – We are seeing people on the westside on waterfront getting their insurance canceled, so will add to needing to review insurance. Will encourage this group to engage locally on the Utility mitigation template and make sure it’s not being box checked.

IX. Adjourn

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:38 pm.

X. Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. Utility Mitigation Plan Template
- c. Utility Mitigation Plan Template FAQ
- d.

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.