



Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes December 19th, 2024

Meeting Venue: Zoom

- I. Attendance**
 - a. Quorum not met, see attached for meeting attendance.
- II. Call to Order**
 - a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz called meeting to order 1:02 pm December 19th, 2024.
- III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business**
 - a. Quorum not met; minutes will be voted on at next meeting.
- IV. 1168 Joint Workgroup**
 - a. George Geissler, Deputy Wildland Fire Management Division, State Forester, DNR – Katie Allen is here and oversees the Forest Practices, Aquatics, and Forest Health Divisions and can answer any questions I cannot. I'm asking to bring back the joint workgroup that worked on 1168 previously and look at it again given our new budget constrained environment. I'll be sending a memo detailing it fully to Allen. The workgroup will convene from January thru May, possibly longer. Will be all volunteer. Three tasks will be asked to work on; look at current investments and what's been done, work with the Forest Health Advisory Committee to develop priority objectives based on the strategies we have, and develop recommendations that prioritize investments looking at 2025-27 budget. We will use the Governor's budget as a starting point. First meeting will be in mid-January.
 - b. Katie Allen – Intention of reforming this work group is to make sure DNR is informed and can make the best decisions with the current budget environment. We want to utilize the expertise you represent and make sure we are not making decisions in a vacuum.
- V. Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan Addendum Review – Response from the Deputy Wildland Fire Management Div., State Forester**
 - a. George Geissler, Deputy Wildland Fire Management Division, State Forester, DNR – I appreciate all the work put into the document and the analysis that went into it. The discussion and emphasis placed on items was enlightening. The vision when we started this was for the divisions to use the information provided in the addendum to inform our future work. Leadership was a clear area that was emphasized. You made clear that DNR has room for improvement, there are areas where partners were not involved. DNR can take a step back and not be the sole implementer and lead. Metrics was another, we have a feeling on areas that we are doing well or not but no clear way to measure it, spending money is not a good metric to solely rely on. Another area was where DNRs responsibility lied and where other agencies and organizations need to take a role. We don't want to collect data for data's sake. We want to make sure we understand all your reasonings and will continue to discuss at the next meeting to make sure I understand what you are trying to say.



- i. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – A question I have is what do other states use to track success and are there any models that are useful? A: We have a unique situation that we don't always appreciate, we have a legislature that is supportive and a commissioner of public lands that is supportive. Compared to other states, we are basically the only state that is looking at it as outcome based instead of output based. Arizona University has a model that has potential for future use with further development.
- ii. Wade Peirce – It helps to have numbers to measure success, given the nature of turnover with a volunteer committee. Good metrics help current members better analyze these strategies along with outcomes.
- iii. Allen Lebovitz - Cody Desautel isn't here. I'm going to channel him on one issue that really has resonated frequently is that acres burned isn't necessarily the right measure. It's more about the impact of that burning across those acres.
- iv. Carlene Anders – The impact of the funding and interactions with agencies has a large impact in our communities that is hard to measure quantitatively. Community groups are meeting sometimes weekly, there is more coordination and planning and providing community support. We are still getting people signing up for fire property signs. There are a lot of measures of progress.
- v. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – Do we have methods of making meaningful analysis of smoke change? A: Currently no we do not, we have added meteorologists and smoke advisors that are giving us better capabilities in this area.
- vi. Tony Craven – We don't have the historical data to create accurate models. It's going to take 5 to 10 years to see progress on smoke as fuels are addressed and build the data for accurate models.
- vii. Loren Torgerson – The smoke management is an area that we would like to decide what metrics we need to track and for what purpose. We have a lot of people collecting data, but we need to have some leadership to determine standards and what we want to accomplish in collecting data.
- viii. Tom Smith – When looking at valuing metrics we should look at regions and should not rely just on statewide metrics. Keeping fires to the DNR goal is easy in the Olympic region but far more difficult in Southeast because of the reality on the ground.
- ix. Allen Lebovitz – One of the big items the committee prioritized in the addendum that we haven't mentioned was around increased emphasis on landscape restoration and about restoration or fire management on all lands beyond forest lands, and then better, you know, considering ecosystem benefits. Another is around prevention of human caused wildfire. Lastly was on workforce development, how do we get the firefighters we need to where they are needed and retain them.



1. A: On that last point, we need voices from the outside to help. People are not going to do this if they can't see a career in it, can't afford a house, raise a family etc. We have a seasonal firefighter model and that is not going to work going forward. There is lip service, but we have not seen it move forward. Helping to identify the ways we can turn this into a career and push that to the State.
- x. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt - In trust management. The sustainable harvest level over the last few decades has dropped from about 700 million board feet per year to now it's headed to bumping down towards 400 million board feet, so as the revenue and workload drops, you have fewer opportunities for long term employment.
- xi. George Geissler - I would like the next conversation that we have to really start diving into setting the priorities, that where this advisory committee can start engaging with the programs itself as well as helping to work through some of these topics that we've discussed today.

VI. WA State Forester Update

- a. George Geissler, Deputy Wildland Fire Management Division, State Forester, DNR – Asking for members of the committee to volunteer to form a joint workgroup regarding 1168 funding, as this committee did previously. Will run January thru May. Three tasks; Look at current investments, look at outcomes that have been produced, develop recommendations for 2025-2027 biennium. At the federal level had the opportunity to meet with DOI and USDA, those organizations are in transition mode. Senator Lee introduced bill making chief of Forest Service a presidential appointment, does not have much traction. Other item is the continuing resolution which was agreed upon does not appear to be moving forward right now. There are bills looking to pull the grants out of BIL and IRA, they can't cancel these programs, but they can unappropriate them.

VII. 2024 DNR Wildfire Season Report

- a. Angie Lane, Assistant Division Manager Plans and Information Wildland Fire Management Division, DNR – Fire season was a mixed bag this year. We had a short lived El Nino, snowpack lagged. Fire danger reduced west side with several May-June rain events, but east side received 33% of normal spring rain amounts in last 130 years. On average 93.6% of all DNR fires at 10 acres or less. Stayed around the 10-year average for fires, with most regions being below the 10-year and last year. Acres burned drove Olympic and Pacific Cascade above the average.
 - i. Tony Craven – How did the cameras do? A: Cameras worked well, and we are seeing power companies getting involved which as well is also a help.
- b. Presentation attached.



VIII. 2025 Meetings

- a. Allen Lebovitz – Propose we continue to meet third Thursdays 1-4pm. Suggest we schedule some hybrid meetings in early part of the year. First meeting we will discuss 1168 and the dashboard along with it as well as the 10-year strategy addendum.

IX. Round Table

- a. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – My state representative, Senator Sharon Shoemak will be chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, I will be meeting with her to discuss DNR related issues.
- b. K.C. Whitehouse – Reviewed the FLRA on the Gray and Oregon road fires, think there would be a benefit going through and presenting that to the committee. Can't think of a better example to make our case why what we do has an affect and needs to continue to be supported.
- c. Wade Perce – Will be meeting with Tim Love with NE region to discuss burn permit language.
- d. Tom Smith – The FRA contract extensions are out and have been signed. Will forest practice rules change to include climate change resiliency practices?
- e. Bill Slosson – We made legislature request that had support but did not make into the Governors budget. In process of review of annual mobilization plan, some fire districts want to be able to order local helicopter and we'll be including some language to address this. As a cabinet agency we are required to be fully compliant with the Governor's budget restrictions.
- f. Carlene Anders – Okanagan County setting up community organizations active in disaster, COAD, meetings starting in January. Appreciate Will Knowlton in helping to set up coordination meetings regarding grant funding. Reemphasize getting the insurance conversation on the schedule.
- g. George Geissler – The States master agreement with federal agencies expires December 31st. We have signed the new agreement which will put us on the schedule for the next 5 years.

X. Public Comment

- a. N/A

XI. Adjourn

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:40 pm.

XII. Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. 10-Year Wildfire Strategy Addendum



c. 2024 Wildfire Season Report

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.