Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes August 21st, 2025

Meeting Venue: Zoom

I. Attendance

a. Quorum met, see attached for meeting attendance.

II. Call to Order

a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz called the meeting to order 1:03 pm August 21st, 2025.

III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business

a. Committee Chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from June 26th. Tony Craven motions to approve minutes, Katie Fields seconds. All members vote yea and there are no abstains.

IV. Public Comment

a. Reese Lolley – Appreciate DNR co-chairing the SHB 1539 workgroup, want to emphasize the importance of the work there with Office of Insurance Commission. Concerned about community wildfire resilience program, conservation districts, fire districts at the local level and bringing all those together in a cohesive manner. How recommendations get disseminated to the local and county level is critical.

   i. From our engagement with WRAC Insurance Learning Series we conducted last year, ultimately a shared goal is based on best science is how to reduce (structure) losses from wildfire.

   ii. As with SHB 1539 Mitigation workgroup, in ESB 6120 the importance of how we are engaging at municipal and community level about mitigating risk. Learning from Oregon process: https://www.propublica.org/article/oregon-wildfire-risk-map-rural-homeowners

V. Updates on SHB 1539 Work Group, ESHB 1563 Pilot Program & ESB 6120 Steering Committee

a. Robyn Whitney, Strategic Advisor to the State Forester, DNR – I am the CPLs representative on the SHB 1539 WG. Most of the meetings so far have been presentations by subject matter experts. Focused on making recommendations to the legislature on property mitigation standards, enhancing community mitigation efforts, looking at sharing of information throughout the State, as well as recommendations for a grant program. It's apparent that there are a lot of frustrations with insurance industry from homeowners and forest landowners, doing mitigation work and not seeing any change in their premiums and risk. Leveraging all the mitigation work being done will come into play with the grant program. There is a recognition it needs to be coordinated with other efforts, especially around fuels treatments. We are ready to begin drafting recommendations. The report is due to the legislature December 1st. One issue I brought up was around making recommendations based on DNR's home wildfire risk mitigation

standards. DNR doesn't have home wildfire risk mitigation standards, so recommendations need to come from fire marshals or other more appropriate agencies.

i. Work group page: https://www.insurance.wa.gov/laws-rules/legislation-and-rulemaking/legislative-committees-and-work-groups/wildfire-mitigation-and-resiliency-standards-work-group

ii. Russ Pfieffer-Hoyt – Are you going to include the response side of things in the recommendations to the legislature? A: Yes, it's important this working group understands that we fully fund those functions in DNR including fuels work.

iii. Allen Lebovitz – Is it within the purview of the workgroup to make recommendations beyond home mitigation efforts like fuels reduction work? Who will be adopting these standards? A: It's not explicit but given the community resilience and DNR involvement it is not a hard argument to make that recommendations can be made regarding that. The legislation is vague, the standards and recommendations for the legislature to review and implement for the State.

iv. Tony Craven – The insurance commissioner said we are just going with the IBHS standards, is that correct? A: I heard that too, but as I see it the workgroup will still be giving recommendations, that that may be the intent. Adopting it won't really change anything for Washington, it's already out there and mandating it won't bring anything new.

b. ESHB 1563 Prescribed Fire Claims Fund Workgroup, Katie Fields has been critical to getting the legislation passed and moving this forward. We have started to have tribal engagement and DNR will be doing more, determining their involvement in the program. One of the things we think is important is referencing the Certified Burn Manager program for prescribed fire. We do not have that written into the WAC; we are working on incorporating it into the WAC. This fund is going to be nested in DNR's WAC, we can't launch the claims fund till we have certainty on the rulemaking on the Certified Burn Manager program. If we are reliant on certain definitions that then are not used, it will hinder the implementation of the program.

i. Katie Fields – Does that mean there will be full rule making process on the program before moving forward on the claims fund? A: I don't think it needs to be fully complete, but we do need confidence in certain things to proceed.

ii. Chris Martin – As someone who went through the classes, are those all moot now? A: No, we have the RCW that authorized that program, so they are not moot. For the claims fund we need to have the burn manager program in WAC so it can be referenced in claims fund WAC.

iii. Allen Lebovitz – This process doesn't have as tight of a timeline as the previous workgroup? A: The only dates on the bill are when the pilot expires but this is a priority to still get this established as quickly as possible.

c. ESB 1620 Steering Committee, the hazard and risk mapping legislation. For this bill there is no timeline to implement, Angie Lane and her team are leading this effort and in September we will be having bi-weekly meetings. This legislation did not establish a working group or advisory committee, but DNR has taken the initiative to establish a steering committee for it. Discussions have coalesced around a base level map to use, with valuable assets to the community, such as homes and structures, natural areas and areas of cultural significance, and important infrastructure. This is different from a parcel level map used by the insurance industry. There is more understanding that the risk map will be a base level assessment, changes made to that map will be done at the local level and fed back to DNR.

   i. Tony Craven – As you have been working through the process, part of this would be pulling back from where the WUI codes would be used and instead identifying where you have risk and outcomes or values. A: Section 3 of the legislation specifies that permits will be applied in high and very high hazard sections of the map. The risk map will identify the assets that need to be on the map, the hazard map will determine where the code will be applied. Still a lot of discussions on this.

   ii. Cody Desautel – I caution from experience at the federal level how similar changes can affect funding levels and priorities, the Jewel administrations focus on sage grouse as an example. We want to make sure we are fair and consistent on how we identify priorities, what we have seen historically is that economically depressed areas don't receive resources, values at risk tend to emphasize more economically valuable areas and so we see suppression resources going to Chelan rather than Okanagan for example.

   iii. Jennifer Coe - If it's helpful- hazard and risk are different. Hazard is where fire is likely to occur and how intense. Risk is where hazard is linked to values people care about.

   iv. George Geissler – There are several items in conflict here. The mitigation group is moving toward a standard, the mapping group the availability of maps we supposed to trigger utilization of a separate set of standards. There is some reconciliation that needs to happen as the bills do not talk to each other. The other is the difference between hazard and risk; we can assess hazard at DNR but need to work with fire marshals on values at risk. We will still have to reconcile those two pieces of legislation once we are done.

   v. Allen Lebovitz – We are identifying that structures are core to the process as far as what is being protected. These maps are not to be used for insurance decisions. We want to learn from the Oregon process and not go down that route. Transparency is important and we've made it a point to include local representatives from the start.

vi. Carlene Anders – Regarding local involvement, when we had to do some work on one of out buildings, we had trouble getting permit approval from the fire marshal. Do you have concerns regarding bottlenecking as far as fire marshal requirements with this process? Our NPIP insurance will not cover loss for wildfire and wildfire related damages for the nonprofit as we renewed our policy, they canceled everything in California. A: We are working to reach out to all the county fire marshals and partner with the association to get the information out there but it's a challenge.

VI. State Forester, Wildland Fire Management and Forest Resilience Divs. Updates

a. George Geissler, Deputy Wildland Fire Management and Forest Resilience Divisions, State Forester, DNR – First thing is that Forest Resilience Division has been brought back under the State Forester. First priority to get the liability insurance coverage out the door as soon as possible, we are going to sit down with AG and work out a timeline, hopefully we can work on it concurrently. Talking with our attorney, we can say that since it's been a pilot, that once it goes in WAC it grandfathers anyone who went through the pilot program. There have been a lot of questions around 1168. This year's budget is $40 million dollars, total of $60 million for the biennium. The joint work group will disband; I am working to send that memo out. We just got our funding control numbers. Legislative team is working with a smaller group to share information to work on the strategy to go into the 2026 legislative session. CPL has been meeting with the appropriate legislators and having those funding conversations.

   i. Katie Fields – Curious what the shape of that legislative group looks like? A: I don't know the specifics, Colville and TNC are helping advise what partners are looking for in 1168. I would recommend reaching out to Patt Sulivan to get more information on that.

   ii. Allen Lebovitz – What role can the committee play to assist in this front? Are there any budget recommendations or advice the committee can help with? A: I would recommend members talk to that group individually. Once the Department has plans then they can involve the committee.

   iii. Cody Desautel – In the past this has been done as tasking from the commissioner, so we protected the state employees. It was to inform the commissioner's ask in the governor's budget and this will be the supplemental, so that would be a good way to handle this.

b. Federal update: the USDA restructuring, Tuesday the 26th is the last day to make a comment. The National Association of State Foresters sent a letter to the Secretary on this and is sending out comments, and DNR will be submitting our own that we are working on, the Governor is looking to provide comment as well. What we know is what you know, the idea of removing regional offices and going to hubs. I have concerns, don't want to be chasing down five national forests and to be able to speak at state strategy level is important to me. When you talk to folks in FAM they are reporting straight to USDA, not through the state private tribal shop. They should have something out in the next couple of weeks. We have had a relatively normal fire year so far, we have

been keeping up with resource needs so far. Right now, there is not enough pressure on the system to know if it is having an impact. There has been a movement from Fix our Forest, a coalition of NGOs have been forming to frame that up, it has good support. They are still wanting to pass a Farm Bill, but I have not heard any more details. A lot of agricultural issues were addressed in the one big bill; there does not appear to be agreement between House and Senate on a Farm Bill to cover the remainder.

i. Cody Desautel – Hearing a lot of things from D.C., unknown how these changes are going to affect things. Heard three regions moving to a hub, most likely in Salt Lake for Forest Service, don't know what that means for region staff. Attempts to consolidate have been attempted before and failed, wouldn't be surprised if it succeeds this time. Also, the 9th Forest Congress met about a month ago, only had 8 since 1884. A lot of concern regarding reduced federal workforce and utilizing some of the authorities that congress has authorized. Looking at utilizing partners to fill the gap that the federal government no longer has.

ii. Tony Craven – How are they going to get somebody from another agency to write plans on Forest Service lands? A: We can still help develop them and all the way up to drafting the NEPA decision document but still takes the Forest Service line officer to sign off on it. It forces our hands on a lot of partnerships which is not necessarily a bad thing.

VII. Round Table

a. Russ Lane – Currently we have one complex team deployed in the PNW, we have one team mobilizing to the Rockies. Trend is leading toward 20-year highs in ERCs in three quarters of the State. Fire yesterday in Cle Elum, 14 aircraft to knock it down, another in Cottonwood Spring that took 18 aircraft to knock it down. It is not common we have that many aircraft available, without them these fires would be roaming around. We are helping other geographic areas, one of our large air tankers supporting Montana. We've been able to do more staff work we normally wouldn't be able to do this time of year. Working on our budget ask for the Supplemental. The PNWCG we are working through some feedback on not meeting expectations for teams. Work through why those interactions and why they felt that way. Overall, we are in a good spot so far in the season.

b. Tara Humphreys – Thanks for the opportunity to join the group. I am here as the Okanagan-Wenatchee Forest Service supervisor, replacing Kari Grover-Weir on the committee. Prior I worked for the Rocky Mountain Region in Lakewood Colorado. Early background is in wildfire, with Washington DNR.

c. Bill Slosson – We have had 23 mobilization incidents in this calendar year, 19 in this biennium. Of my $7 ½ million appropriations, already spent $9 million, we will be making supplemental requests for budget as well. The WUI summit is going to be September 30th in Moses Lake.

d. Katie Fields – Point out there is a comment period on the comprehensive climate action plan with Dept. of Commerce and Dept. of Ecology. There is a section related to wildfire resilience. Looking to having an event for Community Wildfire Working group in Washington to tell the story of all who have benefited from 1168 funding. https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/yy5j6eupd8wcw6g37qvhe6vopkc2pqoh https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/73444d314e9c46f4b8461b74ce0c1f81.

VIII. Adjourn

a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:32 pm.

IX. Appendices

a. Attendance

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.