Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes October 16th, 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 1:02 pm October 16th, 2025.

III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business

a. Committee Chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from August 21st. Tony Craven motions to approve minutes, Carlene Anders seconds. All members vote yea and there are no abstains.

IV. Public Comment

a. No comment given.

V. DRAFT-Western Washington Forest Health Strategic Plan

a. Chuck Hersey, Forest Health Planning Section Manager, DNR – We created a Forest Health Strategic Plan for Eastern Washington back in 2017, and we desired to develop one for Western Washington. It is an all-lands plan, high level with broad mission and then goals, strategies, and actions. These aren't plans that sit on the shelf, we've worked through about 2/3rds of the Eastern Washington Strategic Plan and regardless of our budget constraints we intend to implement this as well. We had to spend time determining what we wanted to focus on. We wanted to focus on active management strategies. What investments and changes can DNR, and partners can work on efforts together. Scope: climate change and drought are the biggest threats to Western Washington forests, forest composition and connectivity, rural development, roads, watershed resilience, land conversion, and wildfire. Plan is not focusing on salmon recovery, landscape scale vegetation management for wildfire. First goal on forest resilience, second on land conversion, third rural economic development, fourth wildfire. Focusing on wildfire we want feedback from the committee, especially on how to communicate. Best way for feedback is the survey in the draft document; we want it in writing as much as possible.

    i. Tony Craven – There is the historical data showing some western areas burned more frequently, and how can we make this document accurate long term and not bite us? You want to be careful in communicating the difference between west and east fire regimes. A: We want to make sure the plan stays relevant and can adapt to regime changes in the west. Focus on prescribed fire is on cultural burning practices.

    ii. Chris Martin – Even the west slopes are starting to dry out and face disease issues, I'm a little surprised there is not more of a prescribed fire or fuels reduction component. The west slopes did burn historically, not the same as east,

but if it's getting drier, should we not take a more proactive approach on fuels mitigation around communities? A: It is still part of the plan but it's a nuanced approach, the emphasis is not as much as it's not going to be widely appropriate but want that feedback because we may need to adjust the emphasis more.

iii. Allen Lebovitz – Are PODs and PCLs mapped and identified? A: I don't recall if it is, but it is something that should happen.

VI. Wildland Fire Management and Forest Resilience Division Updates

a. Kari Otto, Assistant Deputy Wildland Fire and Forest Resilience, DNR – Last time we met George talked about how forest resilience has moved back under him, and the conversation with Chuck really emphasizes how you can't separate forest health from wildland fire. Last month we focused on budget, developing our spending plans and expecting to propose it to the commissioner in the next week or so. Have tangible impacts on what happens if 1168 is not funded. Other areas are related to the federal government shutdown, and uncertainty on grants. Looking at the impact on not receiving reimbursement at all or delays in receiving it, lot is still unknown. We are updating our one pagers to the legislature, capturing the 1168 funding effects and what it will mean to our communities and across the state. We are going on field trips to showcase the work 1168 is doing.

i. Tony Craven – It would be great for members of the committee to be informed of these tours if they are close to one to attend.

ii. Allen Lebovitz – Can you clarify on grants if its existing contracted grants that will not be honored or is it just future grants? When would you be able to present budgets to the committee to be able to give feedback? A: We have received mixed messages; some existing contracted projects have been told to pause. As we get an answer we move forward. I don't have a timeline for that right now, the timeline keep shifting.

VII. Updates on SHB 1539 Work Group, E2SHB 1563 Pilot Program & ESB 6120 Steering Committee

a. Robyn Whitney, Strategic Advisor to the State Forester, DNR – Starting with the 1539 Work Group, a survey was sent out in early September with feedback due at the end of the month. That survey results were analyzed for next steps. Green areas are where we had strong agreement, blue some agreement, red where we didn't have agreements. Wildfire property mitigation standards had the least agreement, property mitigation retrofit grant program and enhancing community mitigation had the strongest consensus, data and risk sharing with the government and wildfire risk and insurance transparency to consumers had some consensus but still disagreement to address.

On the prescribed fire claims fund, we are focusing on the burn boss rule making as so much of the definitions in the prescribed fire claims fund will be reliant on them. Goal to make the next publication in the Washington State Register for the CR102, we have the rulemaking being finalized and we have the prospectus. Once the CR102 is out then we'll

have a public hearing for public comment within 20 days. When we get the framework of the draft rulemaking language it would be helpful to get feedback.

i. Tony Craven – Will point out that the 1539 work group only has two wildfire practitioners and when we put it out there was not as much consensus as is reflected here.

ii. Reese Lolley – Have you engaged with insurance on the claims fund rulemakings? A: Not yet but it is one of our next steps, starting with OIC.

iii. Katie Fields – is there a website where information will be made available for the rulemaking once the CR-102 is filed? A: Yes, DES has a website ready to go. Once we have something to put on it, it will be shared.

b. Angie Lane – Hazard risk mapping committee work is ending. Looking at identifying evidence that we want in our mapping for hazard and risk. The bill requirement is that any areas that is high hazard would have code enforcement or implementation for all those things. Working with county planners, state fire marshal to fill this out. We are getting closer to agreement on hazard side. The risk mapping relates to the probability we'll be working with the committee on those factors, the risk side is more of a planning tool. It will be published June 30th, 2026.

i. Katie Fields – What is the timeline for community outreach events? A: Winter through early spring.

VIII. DNR Legislative Update

a. Pat Sullivan, Director of Governmental & External Affairs, DNR – Will have a light agency request legislative agenda. One is having agency firefighters being added as first responders for classification in the retirement system. On budget 1168 is our top priority request. Commissioner has been meeting with legislators on 1168 funding. Tours have been hard to get legislators to participate. We can provide information, submit requests, but we cannot lobby legislators. The commissioner has more leeway. Cody Desautel is helping lead a lobbying effort. Discussions with OFM are encouraging on how the governor may support our budget request.

i. Chris Martin – There is link for letter in support: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Cm09w6Am4ZADijHhmA0SYY-_9rEHsDOW/view

ii. Tony Craven – Have you been able to convey the issue with their interpretation of budget and how it will play out in terms of what they allocated and how it will be spent? A: We made it very clear after both budgets came out that there would be no money in the account at the end of the fiscal year, it did not seem to affect their decision making.

iii. Allen Lebovitz – What are some key talking points that members of the committee can use when talking to legislators? How is DNR communicating its

suppression efforts for the year? A: It depends on the legislator, for fiscally conservative it helps to talk about how it will save cost short term as suppression costs are skyrocketing. For those with a health focus we talk about the impacts of smoke, asthma and other health problems. Also talking about overburdened communities, especially in eastern Washington where their work doesn't allow them to just go inside like farm or construction workers. Unfortunately communicating our suppression successes didn't have an effect last year and so it's not a primary communication effort this year.

IX. Washington Shrubbsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative

a. Janet Gorell, Program Manager WSRRI, WDFW – The strategy was published over a year ago, but funding and staffing issues delayed implementation, now we are ready to start making significant progress. The initiative was born out of a 2021 state proviso in response to 2020 wildfires. Primary goal to restore and conserve shrubsteppe habitat and address the escalating threat of wildfire in eastern Washington. Incorporating human communities and working lands that are effective in conserving shrubsteppe. The area is the Columbia plateau and is nested in our wildlife action plan. We developed a 30-year strategy to address the issues; we have four goals then objectives and actions. Goal 1 is wildlife habitat, goal 2 is wildlife species, goal 3 is human communities, goal 4 is wildland fire risk and resilience. We prioritize filling gaps and supporting DNR's wildland fire 10-year strategy. Mapped our spatial priorities. Adopted a protect the core/grow the core approach, invest money and time in areas that will see the greatest result and growth. Connecting the cores is a priority as well. What we heard was that lack of funding was not the issues, but lack of expertise, plant material, personnel to implement. We've amassed specialized equipment to implement projects; we have a contract with Sustainability in Prisons Program for plant plugs. Much of our funding is tied in the capacity, resources, and materials. On the working lands side, we have our wildlife-friendly fencing program, helping replace burned fences to a wildlife friendly standard, virtual fencing, deferred grazing. We are highly concentrated on private land so don't have access to as much federal dollars. Moving forward we feel we are ready to start moving forward on larger projects, we've done the administrative groundwork in and outside of the agency. Getting a long-term agreement in place between the Conservation Commission and WDFW. Establishing a restoration hub, having an advisory committee for implementation. Integrate DNR and WDFW fire and spatial data to support and complete projects.

    i. Alyssa Carlson – Central Regional Manager at the Conservation Commission, most of my time hear has been working WSRRI, the conservation districts have been primary implementers of the fencing and deferred grazing projects.

    ii. Allen Lebovitz – Highlight there is a major wildland fire component as it's a landscape that was historically fire adapted and isn't currently. We are at the critical stage of translating the strategy into real work. We did get well funded this biennium unlike most programs this last round.

X. Round Table

a. Bill Slosson – Mobilization season wrapping up, 26 incidents $17 million in costs. OFM accepted our legislative requests, one to expand mobilization program and staffing wise break out my section into its original two pieces. Second request is that we be able to do more than just submit data but be able to look at data and inform our fire districts.

XI. Adjourn

a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:48 pm.

XII. 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.