

Washington State Department of Natural Resources

FOREST HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE - Tuesday, September 10, 2024 (9:00AM-1:00PM)

## **MEETING SUMMARY**

AS APPROVED ON DECEMBER 10, 2024

### **Attendees**

Committee members present: Josh Anderson, Kevin Arneson, Darcy Batura (Committee Member Chair), Josh Berkowitz, David Cass, Matt Comisky, Amy Singh sitting in for Chad Davis, Travis Dutton, Jennifer Coe sitting in for Shana Joy, Tiana Luke, Janene Ritchie, Ryan Sanchez, Brian Vrablick, Jay McLaughlin, Oak Rankin, Lynn Miner, Brandon Austin sitting in for Cynthia Wilkerson.

DNR staff present: Kate Williams (Staff Member Chair) Jen Watkins (Committee Staff Support) Mike Norris, Derek Churchill, Trevor McConchie, Lori Reynaud (Committee Secretary), Katie Allen

Seven members of the public attended as well.

### **Meeting Summary**

Kate Williams opened the meeting with a welcome, call to order and introduction of Chair Darcy Batura. Jen Watkins (DNR) facilitated roll call.

Recognition of Lynn and Becky Miner for receiving 2024 Washington State Tree Farmers of the Year Award.

Darcy Batura (Committee Chair) began the meeting by acknowledging the tribes of the Yakima Nation and the traditional territories of the Confederated tribes, to this day they maintain a vibrant and strong connection.

Kate Williams (Staff Member Chair) gave overview of Public Comments and encouraged members to share with the folks they represent or other stakeholders to submit their concerns, or values to Lori Reynaud (Committee Secretary).

Darcy Batura: The committee reviewed the June 10, 2024 Forest Health Advisory Committee meeting minutes and a motion was made to approve. No corrections for the record, and minutes were approved.

**DNR Executive Forest Resilience Update:** Katie Rose Allen (DNR) shared an update on agency preparations for the upcoming Commissioner of Public Lands transition in 2025,

including putting together a briefing book agency programs, deliverables, and initiatives. The Forest Health Advisory Committee plays a key role in helping our division and agency when it comes to forest health and the innovative approaches we want to advance. Katie gave a shout out to DNR staff and partners who worked diligently on an exemption process of the burn ban to allow prescribed fire to continue happening on our landscape this summer. The Northwest Forest Plan revision process is underway, and the US Forest Service is issuing a National Old Growth Policy for Federal Forests, the old growth policies EIS is out for review and DNR staff are working to review and develop draft comments this month. The draft EIS is anticipated to come out this fall. DNR is preparing decision packages for the legislative session. The most relevant to this group is the post wildfire reforestation grant program the legislature directed we establish and administer, where we are seeking a reappropriation of about \$1.6 million in capital Climate Commitment Act funding that was awarded for Fiscal Year 2025 to fund post-fire reforestation as additional time will be critical for grantees to successfully fully implement their projects. Then we are asking for an addition \$2.5 million to continue this newly established post wildfire reforestation grant program in the next biennium. More information after the November election will inform funding priorities, and at that time we will talk with this group to have a coordinated voice when talking with legislature next cycle about importance of forest health work.

### **Committee Member Information Sharing:**

Tiana Luke: Sharing a film that DNR produced “Now or Never September 19<sup>th</sup> in Wenatchee along with a science speaker panel all are welcome and invited.

Jay McLaughlin: 3 successful community wildfire defense grants

Josh Anderson: Shared issues of litigation in NE Washington, primarily as they relate to forest health and fuels reduction projects and the concerns and impacts of limitations in resources.

Kevin Arneson: Keeping an eye on markets, 4 to 5 mills have shut down, or stalled operations due to market conditions since our last meeting.

Matt Comisky: Need to grow infrastructure in the west, big challenge for supplies on the westside including residuals. Noted upcoming meeting where the Department of Commerce is hosting a WA Forest Products roundtable on economic development.

Oak Rankin: Used some money for youth work crew in Darrington. Reforestation for the Forest Service hired all local Darrington and Concrete youths and it was successful.

Forest Health and Community health are really tied together. Forest Service has been a really great help for our community.

Darcy Batura: Introduction of Mark Charlton Fire specialist who helped negotiate process with burn ban and prescribed fires and will be leading TREX in Spokane and the Gorge. They are in the process of putting together legislative agenda and considering a prescribed fire claims fund, recently passed in Oregon and California.

Jenny Coe: Introduced herself as the Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resilience Coordinator; the plan is for her to transition and replace Shana Joy as a member of this committee. Update from the Commission, they submitted a budget request to OFM for Forest Health and Community Wildfire, funded by Climate Commitment Act.

### **Committee Business:**

Motion made to develop a letter to the incoming Commissioner once they are elected to meet with this group, including the committee's concerns and priorities. Motion was seconded, approved, no opposed. Member Chair would work with DNR staff on letter development.

Next item was a follow up on the Department of Commerce's economic roundtable - this was addressed earlier and a motion to move on to the next topic was made and it was seconded.

DNR staff, Trevor McConchie and Jen Watkins shared an update on NW Forest Plan amendment from the state subgroup of the Federal Advisory Committee and briefings to DNR. This will be an amendment not a revision. Amendment has specific themes to include forest stewardship and how we're going to define forest groups, economics, community engagement in underserved communities, engaging with youth and people living within the NW, & Tribal inclusion. We'll all learn more as the DEIS is released.

Western WA Subcommittee: The Subcommittee provided a recommendations report to the whole committee that was in the meeting packet, and request to the committee to take an action on the recommendations. Discussion on the recommendations occurred, including suggestion for more time to provide feedback.

Matt Comisky made a motion that DNR staff shares the most recent comments from the new Forest Health Advisory committee member to the Western WA subcommittee, that subcommittee revises the memo if needed by October 4, 2024. The updated memo is submitted to the Forest Health Advisory Committee with the request for a vote and that vote should occur no later than November 1, 2024. Motion passed.

Brandy Reed, a Western Washington Subcommittee member participated shared that she is currently serving on the Whatcom County Forest Resilience Task Force and has elevated several resources for the task force to be considering in its work to make recommendations to the Whatcom County Council about a Forest Resilience Plan for Whatcom County and the Western WA subgroup. Some of us are out in the Community doing this work in other spaces and the memo is important to substantiate similar work on the part of other entities. The leadership taken on this item in advancing to DNR leadership and recommendation is going to be important for DNR's collaboration with other partners in this same forest resilience space.

**Guest Speaker/Presentation: Indigenous Engagement: Learning from efforts in other western States presentation by Steve Kloetzel, TNC's Western Montana Land Steward**

**Official hybrid meeting concluded.**

Optional field tour of the Cle Elum Ridge followed and concluded at 4:30 P.M.