



# Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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 1:04 pm August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business

- a. Committee Chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve minutes from April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Carlene Anders motions to approve both minutes, Wade Pierce seconds. All members vote yeah and there are no abstains
- b. No outstanding business discussed.

## IV. Agency Updates

- a. **State Mobilization Update** – Melissa Gannie, Assistant State Fire Marshall. We've had 22 mobilizations to date, already spent our appropriation for this biennium. Costs from Newell Road Fire wiped out most of it, estimated \$7-8 million. Will be requesting additional funding. On pace to exceed previous maximum mobilizations in a year.
- b. **Federal Update** – Kari Grover-Wier, District Ranger, Acting Chief of Staff, USFS, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. N/A
- c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. For Washington Fire Service all of our resources are currently available. We are in process of filling a pre-position request for the lower Columbia. We do not have any mobilizations active at this time.

Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3. There is heightened awareness in eastern WA, mid-august is looking to be busy through the end of the month.

- d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager. At preparedness level 4 in WA, same in Northwest GAC. North ops knocked us off for top priority for the GAC. The Northwest MAC is stood up, prioritizing 5 large incidents across the region with only one in Washington, being the Sourdough Fire which has NW team 10 assigned, team 8 will transition in shortly. There is a group of fires on the Willamette National Forest, at about 26,000 acres with NW team 12 on that fire currently and transitioning to NW team 2. NW team 6 is on the Lookout fire near Blue River. Our aviation assistance team is making the rounds providing technical assistance in the regions. Hurricane Hillary is pushing tropical moisture into our area, could help with fires. DNR is sitting well for resources, have 50 boost resources from other states. The Kodiaks that we have put into service have been working in both states and have been a game changer. HB 1578 (Cascading Impacts of



Wildfire) implementation has begun. HB 1498 (Aviation Assurance), we are in the mid-season implementation on that. We've got an implementation plan and dispatch plan with NE and Olympic regions that we can implement statewide for operationalizing HB 1498.

- i. Melissa Gannie Q: Will DNR be pre-positioning air resources? A: Not specifically, but we are already essentially pre-positioned and ready to go if needed.
- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, State Forester and Deputy Wildland Fire Management Division. The national Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission is continuing to do its work, on track to have its report available by the 16<sup>th</sup> of September. There is an EPA comment period that is open on air emissions reporting requirements. Requires State and local agencies to report prescribed fire data. Still evaluating. Comments have to be received by October 18<sup>th</sup>. There is an August 30<sup>th</sup> virtual hearing on it. The LNI smoke standard has changed to have an exemption for emergency situations, prescribed fire is not included, but there is no mask for wildland firefighters to wear that meets NFPA standards. Will be getting interpretation from LNI on mask requirements.

#### V. **Prescribed Fire Barriers Report**

- a. Mike Norris, Assistant DM for Cross Boundary Restoration, Forest Resilience Division, DNR – The Barriers Assessment Workshop was completed in January. From that workshop there were 5 topics covered; regulatory, training, planning, operations and implementation, public engagement. Through that workshop the facilitators identified 57 barriers for getting more prescribed fire on the ground. This informs our work planning and one of the early steps in the strategic planning process. We want to make sure our people feel like the agency is behind them. Externally we want to develop a flow chart to give clear understanding of the regulatory process and authorizing agencies. We would like to see a combination of the burn permit and burn plan template to simplify the process. We found that few permit reviewers have broadcast burning experience, want to get more on broadcast burns to build that understanding. We want to facilitate agreements to have FLRA incorporate prescribed fire. Work with other states and regions to improve partnerships. Get more people on burns and qualified. Next steps we will be working with staff and partners to develop plans for the next biennium, what we can take on right now as we cannot solve all barriers in the short term. Engage other agencies to be supportive of reducing the barriers.
  - i. Chris Martin – Experience with previous burns made it clear that the permit process is not well setup for broadcast burn. A small group is going to look at developing a draft broadcast burn permit to go along the current pile permit. Also, would a letter to the Commissioner from the committee be appropriate showing support for this plan? A: Any support is welcome, the committee would typically do a deep dive on this and then provide some specific recommendations to the Commissioner. Chair will review request and report back.



- ii. Wade Peirce – Do you know how soon the permit process may change, given the limited time left this year to get fire on the ground? A: It’s going to take some time to get that changed, don’t have a timeline though it is one of the top barriers to be removed.
- iii. Russ Lane – 57 barriers can make it seem overwhelming, it would be great to produce a list of top 5 or 10 to make it less overwhelming.

## **VI. Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program**

- a. Guy Gifford, Assistant DM Community Resilience, DNR – Through the BIL \$1 billion over 5 years for implementing CWPPs or Wildfire section of Hazard Mitigation Plans. Grants for community preparedness are 5-year grants. Priorities; low income communities, communities impacted by disaster. Round 1 ended Oct 5<sup>th</sup> 2022. WA State had 44 applicants for a total for \$54 million, 13 funded projects, \$23 million value. Recipient contracts expected December 2023. CWDG round 2 is now open, \$250 million available, CWPP are given priority, deadline October 31, 2023.
  - i. Melanie Bacon – Have you been in contact with the Washington Association of Counties? Eric Johnson would be a good contact. A: No but we are looking to make contact with them.
  - ii. Tony Craven – Applicants had issues not putting down who they were collaborating with, because they did not state it in the section. Was a consistent issue not filling out the sections correctly.
  - iii. Chris Martin – Its critical Counties have a CWPP as they can’t get funding for projects through the CWDG and other sources without an established CWPP.

## **VII. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics**

- a. Annie Schmidt – I have been working for the national Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission over last year plus. I am one of the two coordinators pushing this through. Report will be published in September. The commission has felt at the national level that there is a need for increased collaboration at all levels. The need for additional data driven decision making. The need to rebalance our priorities especially on mitigation. The commission has recognized and validated the role that states play in fire. Broadly speaking it will be aligned with the 10 year strategic plan for WA. The WA plan broke ground on post fire, you’ll see an emphasis from the commission on post fire.
- b. Melanie Bacon – Citizens on islands are extremely concerned right now, especially given what happened in Hawaii. It’s comforting to know the aviation response is doing well.
  - i. Russ Lane – The CWPP is a way to allow the islands to get specific with their plans. There are some islands in the South Sound that are zoned out of DNR response.



- c. Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – The importance of advising the legislature from this group cannot be understated and grateful for all the participation from committee members.
- d. Wade Pierce – From an industry perspective, this has been a good season. This year we are operating under the traditional industrial fire models. Stimson has had two fires this year in the NE, DNR response has been robust and we appreciate it.
- e. Carlene Anders – On Labor Day weekend will be the last of our rebuilds home dedications, for those interested in community recovery, between 11 and 6 pm, all from the 2020 wildfires. Contact me if interested in attended.
- f. K.C. Whitehouse – To echo what Commissioner Bacon said, we had a lot of challenges on the evacuation side. The County emergency management division was not prepared for this and this is going to be a focus in the off season. We found Portland’s evacuation plans good for small communities. Book recommendation; Running Out Of Time, talks about what needs to be done to deal with fire response in the US.
- g. Tom Smith – Volunteerism is on the decline, for small districts are making hard decisions on equipment. Opportunities for more localized training.
- h. Chris Martin – There is an opportunity for local small districts to come together to do prescribed fires.
- i. Sami Schinnel – To tag onto Wade and Russ's comments earlier, I got to work with CFPA on the Flat Fire, and although there were some initial growing pains, it turned out to be extremely valuable and increased our efficiencies to have them involved in the decision making as well as the boots on the ground. Most of those folks had put in the existing dozer lines on previous fires, and that local knowledge was priceless. We were able to conduct a 40 acre prescribed burn on TNC managed lands in July as a result of the DNR/TNC MOU and through coordination with the UKC Fuels Crew and local fire districts. A lot of lessons learned in the process, a successful burn with good fire effects.
- j. Cody Desautel – Pretty quiet in Indian country as far as fire is concerned. Will be some work at the State and Federal Level, with the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team report that is done once a decade. May be some outreach that needs to be done in the near future.

## **VIII. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:29pm

## **IX. Appendices**

- a. Attendance
- b. Community Wildfire Defense Program Factsheet

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.