



Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes November 16th, 2023

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 1:33 pm November 16th, 2023.
- III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business**
 - a. Minutes not approved due to lack of quorum, will be presented for approval at next official meeting.
 - b. Lee Hemmer will be resigning his position on the committee. He has been on the committee since the beginning and instrumental in key decisions for the committee.
- IV. Agency Updates**
 - a. **State Mobilization Update** – Melissa Gannie, Assistant State Fire Marshall. N/A
 - 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. N/A
Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3. N/A
 - d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager. I am out as our agency representative in the southeast with our fire crews, along with Todd Welker. We started getting requests from SE states 3 weeks ago for support. The states we're supporting have helped us out with support. Most are in Appalachia, dry leaf litter from fall being a factor. Federal resources are tied up. First request was for hand crew modules, which matched the resources we have on hand with our 20 man crews that retain 10 personnel year round. DNR is completing region AARs, wrapping up in December. We hosted a CIM course in Vancouver at the beginning of the month which advanced 50 new trainees up to the CIM level. Started the process for the facilitated learning analysis on the Gray and Oregon Road fires, expect a report from this in the spring.
 - e. Angie Lane – We are prepared to provide the committee with the information needed to complete the tasking for a 5 year review of the Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan. HB 1578, Cascading Impacts of Wildfire, came with funding for an assistant meteorologist that will be assigned to smoke forecasting. We'll have a new fuels position as well and we are trying to provide more support for issuing burn permits. Will have the annual Wildfire legislative report finished for submission December 1st. We'll



do a supplemental report to account for the end of the year not covered in the report due to the nature of how we are able to pull the data in time for December.

- f. David Way – From Ops section, CIMT Workgroup delivered final report to George Geissler. The Workgroup will be transitioning into more of a WA incident management oversight committee. Will be charting out the CIMT application process and timeline with the NWCG. Getting questions from partners on the forest land agreements that will be expiring in the next year, we’ll be working on what an update on that agreement looks like.
- g. Tony Craven – On the FLA is there going to be a section on community resilience? A: We definitely narrowed in on areas that had forest land treatment vs areas that didn’t, it will be a part of the analysis.
- h. Carlene Anders – The state is coming in to provide support, since this was not meeting the federal levels for support, state assistance is a huge part of the recovery from these fires.
- i. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester. CWDG round 2 closed, we had 534 applications nationally, up from the last round. WA had 48 applications, national ask is \$940 million, WA is asking for \$111 million. Significant number of grants for developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans and updates. At the national level, the budget did pass funding four agencies until February. It’s likely that a consensus budget will not be passed, if it is not, there will be an across the board 1% cut. Impact to WA State will likely be minimal. Meeting occurred with region 10 EPA, FS region 6, Oregon and WA departments of forestry. The purpose was to form an interagency task force to promote prescribed fire and how to implement existing smoke management plans to get more prescribed fire on the ground as well as syncing our language to be the same. Regarding the EPA proposed change to the PM 2.5 standard on amount of particulate matter we can put into the atmosphere, participated in a meeting to give feedback on how this would restrict prescribed fire. This is essentially an unfunded mandate given the reporting requirement, and by using this language it will require them to review it. Met with the CIMT workgroup, they provided a recommendation to me, from here I will write up how the recommendation moves forward. Intent is to get something that can be shared by the end of December. For the upcoming fire year, we will work with the new standard national process and the transition to CIMTs. We are implementing a Smokey Bear wildland fire prevention license plate for sale to help fund wildfire prevention.
 - i. K.C. Whitehouse – Any specifics on the federal wildfire prevention commission? A: The commission’s report went to congress in September. Report had 148 recommendations, though not all can be accomplished by congress, many are administration changes. The commission remains around for another 4 months.
 - ii. Chris Martin – You mentioned an MOU between EPA and others, can you send that out? A: Yes it was between EPA, CDC, DOI, and USDA at the federal level. I’ll send that to Allen to distribute.



- j. [Biden Administration Press Release on Interagency Wildfire Risk Agreement](#)
- k. [MOU Wildland Fire and Air Quality Coordination](#)
- l. [Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission Report](#)

V. Tasking – Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan Review

- a. George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester – The strategy is 5 years old now and there’s been a lot of things that have occurred at the legislative level along with changes to our smoke management plan since the creation of the plan. Goal is to have this group dive into the strategy and assess what has been implemented and what are the gaps in implementation. Are we still on the right path going forward or do we need new strategies? Are there things that are no longer relevant?
- b. Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisor, DNR - Looking at a 3 phase approach, at each phase we will have DNR staff providing necessary support. We are not looking to change the goals but are looking for enhancements. First phase start in January and finish in February. In March, begin phase 2 looking at the strategies themselves, have 3 months for that phase. Final phase work on the addendum. Goal to complete by September of 2024.
 - i. Annie Schmidt - Is there any intent to look at 2561 Report? There were some components that aligned with the plan. A: No it’s not on the table, though we may bring it in as far as implementation. It could be brought in as one of the addendums.
 - ii. Chris Martin – Is this going to be an appropriate place to incorporate the prescribed fires gap assessment and other similar things? A: We see this as being part of the gap analysis, as most of these have been done after the strategy was created.
 - iii. Carlene Anders – Will these align with our regular meetings or will we have additional meetings to focus just on this topic? A: The plan is to keep to regular meeting schedule and should not require any additional meetings beyond the regular WFAC ones.
 - iv. Tom Smith – It makes it look like the DNR staff will provide information and data on the strategies, can we expect that to happen at the next meeting or meetings? A: Short answer is yes, as best we can document the implementation of those strategies and present that to you as soon as we can.
 - v. Annie Schmidt – The way the plan is laid out, there are goals that are big buckets, then there are the sub levels e.g. 7.1 or 7.2, what level are we going to go down to? A: We envision going to that sub strategy level, whether they are being effective or are something we should continue.



- vi. Tony Craven – As we go through this document keep in mind that some things are easier to quantify than others. When it gets to the prevention side, it was difficult coming up with good metrics when we originally went through this.
- c. Tasking Attached
- d. [Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan](#)

VI. Okanogan-Wenatchee Fire Needs & Smoke Management

- a. Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisor, DNR – Meeting held November 8th - 9th with the USFS Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, EPA and partners to discuss prescribed fire. Objectives of the meeting were to educate all parties on the Wildfire Crisis Strategy and identify new opportunities to increase prescribed burning. We learned that the Okanogan- Wenatchee Forest has not achieved fuel treatments at the scale needed to date. Most burns seem to be limited by field conditions. It’s not clear if the intrusion threshold in the smoke management plan is a limiting factor. Field crew availability is the main constraint identified. Solutions; participants recommended creating an interagency team to surge the pace and scale of burning. Before the surge, develop a community smoke response plan. The interagency surge teams should be organized similar to CIMT used on wildfire incidents. Teams would remain in a geographic area through the period when fuels are in prescription. Improve shelf stock of areas ready to implement prescribed burns amongst all landowners by coordinating on NEPA/SEPA efforts. Develop a Master Agreement for Prescribed Fire amongst federal, state, local, NGOs, and private entities.

VII. Roundtable, Public Comment, Future Topics

- a. Annie Schmidt – Several of the Wildfire Commission’s conversations explored the relationship between property insurance and wildfire. This topic has become increasingly urgent as insurers have increased premiums or stopped issuing new policies all together in some states. Such actions are due in large part to increasing wildfire risk and loss costs for insurers and reinsurers, in addition to regulatory constraints that limit ability to manage exposure (such as limitations on rate increases) amongst other challenges. Two particularly important points emerged from the Commission’s conversations. The first is related to the potential for wildfire risk reduction actions to impact the cost or availability of insurance coverage.

Currently, insurance companies determine costs and coverage based on historical claims data that is used to estimate future probable losses. It was made clear during Commission discussions that because much of community wildfire risk – and the potential for future losses due to wildfire – is related to the potential for embers and radiant heat to spread between structures, structural and landscape modifications must be taken at the scale of entire neighborhoods or communities, not only individual parcels. For this reason, the Commission recommends community-scale actions such as hazard disclosures and support for local land use planning and building codes, in addition to the provision of resources that support individual wildfire risk reduction actions to reduce future losses. These actions have the potential to positively impact insurance affordability and



availability. A second takeaway that emerged from the Commission’s conversations addressed the development of publicly available wildfire hazard maps. States and insurers have stated that these maps do not influence insurance rates and coverage determinations (Oregon Division of Financial Regulation, 2022). Instead, insurance companies calculate insurance rates and policies using internal, proprietary maps and methodologies, which consider many factors that can change more frequently than hazard maps used for state and local planning (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection [Cal Fire], 2022). Recognizing the important distinctions between insurers’ risk insurance maps and public-facing state and local wildfire hazard maps, the Commission recommends federal support for the latter as valuable tools to better inform policymaking around land use policies, building codes, hazard disclosures and other allocation of resources.

- b. K.C. Whitehouse – During last meeting there was discussion of the Gray and Oregon Road Fires about insurance impacts. There was national reporting on insurance and natural disasters, would like to see the committee bring that topic back to the table and try and understand the scope of the problem.
- c. Samantha Schinnell – Updates on some of the agreements from the nature conservancy. We have two new national agreements with a large pot of money. One is \$40 million and one is \$10 million. TNC has North America fire program that has surge capacity resources.
- d. Reese Lolley – with the Washington Resource Conservation Council Strategy and Partnership Structure. It’s great to see the 10-year plan review going forward. For the goals that have not been accomplished, do you see new prioritizations to meet those goals? Is there opportunities to use GNA to help with capacity? A: Yes, it’s meant to find the ways to achieve the goals and identify ways to accomplish that, if new prioritizations need to happen we hope that can be identified in this process.

VIII. Adjourn

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:14pm

IX. Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan Review Tasking
- c. Press Release on Wildfire Risk Agreement
- d. MOU Wildland Fire and Air Quality Coordination
- e. Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission Report
- f. Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan
- g. Emergency Order Providing Relief for 2023 Wildfires for Insurance

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.