



# Wildland Fire Advisory Committee

Meeting minutes February 17, 2022

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 1:08pm February 17<sup>th</sup> 2022.

## III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Previous Business

- a. Committee chair Allen Lebovitz entertains motion to review and approve meeting minutes from January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Leonard Johnson motions to approve and Cody Rohrbach 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. Continuing to prepare for next fire season, staffer is working with Fire Defense Committee on mobilization plan. No other significant changes from last meeting.
- b. **Federal Update** – Eric Veach, Deputy Forest Supervisor, U.S. Forest Service Gifford Pinchot Ntl. Forest. Working out initial obligations for disaster relief fund, numbers have not been finalized yet. Firefighter pay discussion: infrastructure bill provides guidance for an increase in base salary of Federal Wildland Firefighters. Gearing up to return to work place within 45 days.
- c. **Fire Service Update** – Leonard Johnson, Fire Chief Thurston Co. Fire District 9. WA Association of Fire Chiefs has completed recommendations for filling vacant positions. Leonard Johnson moving on to PNW ops committee group. Bob Schindelar out of Spokane appointed to Geo Board. Getting interagency agreement with DNR completed for WA Fire Service. Incident management team process is ongoing to prepare for fire season. Fire Defense Committee meeting is next week. State Fire working with Dept. Health for how to operate with Covid next fire season.

Cody Rohrbach, Fire Chief Spokane Co. Fire District 3, adds that weekly IMR groups have seen a downturn in incident management teams due to attrition.

- d. **Wildland Fire Management Division** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester. Hiring for 1168 continues, looking for hand crews and dozer crews. Putting together a group to get equipment purchases, as well as deal with recruiting personnel. In process of acquiring new air tanker assets. Continue working on the IAA with Leonard and fire service. The final selections for interagency type 1 and type 2 IMTs are ongoing. Plans



and info shop going into new projects. Complex incident management training in Bremerton Feb 26th – March 4th

- e. **WA State Forester Update** – George Geissler, Deputy Supervisor, Wildland Fire Management Division and State Forester.  
Establishing grant process for funds that was part of infrastructure bill. Look to having a national risk assessment as a basis for approving grants unless a state can prove higher quality risk assessment standard. Timeline that Forest Service has laid out is aggressive, having RFPs by June 1st. Still sorting through funding that will be coming out of the bill, looking at state volunteer fire assistance. Working through allocation process of what goes to each state. Number of earmarks place in budget, state may receive less as grant money may go directly to Roselyn for example, though this discussion is ongoing and may still go to state. Request for earmarks is starting for next budget. We are still under a CR at the federal level. CIMT setting out timeline at FMB meeting, potential to accelerate timeline is possible but currently still operating with the Dec 13<sup>th</sup> memo timeline.
  
- f. **Utility Advisory Committee Update** – Loren Torgerson, Wildland Fire Management Policy Advisor.  
Group is looking to be stood up in April. Advise the Commissioner Public lands. Looking at managing vegetation on utility right-of-ways. Developing protocols for investigating a fire that is suspected to have been caused by utilities. There is specific requirements for doing so in 76.04 that address utility caused wildfires but DNR has yet to develop protocols that implement that portion of the Statute. Waiting on committee to be stood up to finally approve the above protocols. Broader task to look at wildfire prevention directly related to utilities and brining in a broader audience to address those issues. SB 5803 is working through legislature that would modify current statute and add components: gathering current catalog of utility wildfire mitigation plans, look at cost benefit of developing wildfire risk assessment statewide, and getting all state agencies that are related to fire together to improve efficiency. Need to include local building officials in the conversation and consider LEPCs and how the utilities run through the WUI as well for inclusion. Committee recommends as well creating a webpage to compile resources for local agencies and land owners.

## V. **Chairman's Updates**

- a. Membership of Fire Advisory Committee, we have been down 6 positions until now. We have solicited nominees for 5 of those positions, one is Tom Smith from Fire District 16 Whatcom Co. The only position open is the statewide environmental position and needs to be filled per legislative requirements. Reached out to WA Environmental Council and others and should have nominee by end of month. Appointment letters should be received just after the end of the month. We are rolling out WFRN in the spring again (Chelan, Spokane, Okanagan/fall, Kittitas, Yakima, Klickitat), rollout timing for new counties is still to be determined. Have had great participation and interest in the program. The FDAP operations grant should have request for proposals by the end of the week.



## **VI. WDNR Wildland Fire Detection System Implementation**

### **a. Presentation by Angie Lane, Asst. Div. Manager Wildland Fire Planning & Information**

We knew that early detecting was key to prevent fires from growing out of control. We had to determine where the cameras would make sense if we received funding. Identified DNR owned sites that we could access easily enough to install. We knew funding would be limited to start and identified 20 sites as the pilot program. It is a public site that anyone can view the cameras. Wanted it to be state wide, using existing tower locations and infrastructure to reduce costs. Weighed the sites based on fire occurrence, how many acres burned, average probability and where was the WUI in relation. Cameras have 20 mile radius, taking into consideration masking terrain for actual viewable area. Ran the list by local on ground personnel to ensure that the on ground conditions were not significantly different. Goal is to have the camera notify an alert team so that personnel are not viewing the footage 24/7 outside of high risk events like lightning storms.

Pinpointing location of smoke/fire should be included in requirements to vendors. Should a weighting of timber value be included in future calculations for next phase of cameras for locations especially for west side sites? Collaborate with Federal and other agencies to ensure we are not putting multiple cameras on same location.

Looking for Committee members to participate in the WFDSIT. Meeting once every 2 weeks until bid is out it will paired down to once a month. If possible virtual meetings would be appreciated. Tony Craven is willing to volunteer. Chair Allen Lebovitz appoints Tony to WFDSIT committee.

## **VII. Wildland Fire and Forest Resilience Legislation Updates**

### **a. Juli Gilling – DNR Deputy Legislative Director**

Fire Suppression Admin Investment, looking to remove wording in existing budget proviso that prevents use suppression of funds for administrative tasks related to fire suppression. Includes a backfill of funds for agency. Proviso options have been put forward, workforce development 190K to hire personnel to track all committees and boards etc. If SB 5793 passes then this will likely not be necessary. Facility and workforce housing studies. Study worker housing across the state to make recs for how our current facilities adapt to resource management across the state. SB5803 Wildfire mitigation planning bill requires utilities and others to review their wildfire mitigation plans is progressing and looks like it will pass.



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

- a. Wade Pierce – DNR gave presentation on burn boss training this spring. Provide opportunity for training for non-agency personnel to become burn bosses. Hopefully will generate more interest in broadcast burning. Changes to the how IFPL model will be calculated seems to be coming. George Geissler: the decision support tools are going away, we will be transitioning to the new model later in the year.
- b. Loren Torgerson – Unprotected lands discussion update. Committee was tasked to conduct analysis. Roughly 358K acres that are focused mostly in central Washington mostly. With the funding from 1168 we are taking a deeper dive on what it would take for DNR to assume responsibility. Doing analysis on adjacent districts to enter into agreement to provide actual coverage. Looking to have report for the CPL for review by July. Taking into considerations location and ability to provide protection and what the assessment fees will be.

### **IX. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:31pm

### **X. Appendices**

- a. Attendance
- b. Wildland Fire Detection System Implementation Presentation

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.