

WILDLAND FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 26, 2017
Suncadia Resort
Cle Elum, WA

Committee Members Present:

Gary Berndt – Wildland Fire Liaison, Chair
Dave Johnson – Fire Commissioner
J.D Marshall – Industry Landowner (Timber)
Jim DeTro – County Commissioner (Eastside)
Joe Gardner – County Commissioner (Westside) – *via conference call*
Lee Hemmer – Industry Landowner (Range)
Rodney Smoldon – Federal Fire Agency
Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – State Land Trust Beneficiary
Tony Craven – Small Forest Landowner – arrived at 1030

Committee Members Absent:

Cody Desautel – Tribal Nations Representative
Chuck Duffy – State Fire Marshal
Dave LaFave – Fire Chief (Westside)
Tom Bugert – Statewide Environmental Representative

Guests/Other Attendees:

Bob Johnson, Wildfire Division Manager
Gerry Day, Deputy Supervisor for Wildfire
Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisory
Tami Kellogg, Executive Assistant to Deputy Supervisor Wildfire

I. Opening, Roll Call

Chair Berndt called the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee to order at 10:00 a.m. on April 26, 2017 in Cle Elum, WA. After roll call, eight members were present and with four members excused. Due to travel constraints, one member participated in the meeting by phone, constituting a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chair Berndt called for approval of the minutes of the March 29, 2017 council meeting. Motion to approve draft minutes made by Committee member Pfeiffer-Hoyt, seconded by Committee member Johnson. Motion carried unanimously.

III. Old Business

- a. Forest Health Resiliency – Mr. Torgerson updated the committee on legislative actions; SB5546 has been signed by the Governor, and HB 1711 is scheduled for signature. He stated the money attached to both bills is under negotiations. He provided an overview of what the legislation is set to accomplish. Discussion followed which included additional legislation that affects DNR/Wildfire.
- b. 2016 Recommendations – Chair Berndt presented the final recommendations of the WFAC, he noted there is no funding associated with implementation of the recommendations. Mr. Day stated there is hope we may get some funding from

the legislature to implement the recommendations, noting there is substantial support for implementation of the recommendations.

- c. WFAC Project Questions 1&2 – Mr. Torgerson reminded the committee of the deliverables discussed at the last meeting. Committee member D. Johnson commented on phase I and II, stating it was fairly comprehensive but it was lacking implementation. Mr. Torgerson added that the next step was to develop an implementation plan which was postponed due to the new administration following the adoption of the Plan. Discussion followed on target, scope, strengths & weaknesses of the plan and entities who could provide expertise. The committee also discussed policy concerns with a wildland protection program and whether or not they are still valid. Committee member R. Johnson suggested moving to implement if they are validated instead of creating new/additional tasks to implement. Committee member D. Johnson recommends better definition of the factors, noting some are very vague;

The first Deliverable for our committee is: “Review the 2006 Strategic Plan and develop a recommendation related to the scope of a strategic plan for wildland fire management in Washington State” (e.g. limited to DNR wildland program, a statewide wildland fire program (state or local level) or something in between.

Mr. Torgerson facilitated the discussion on Question 1 with the statement “In 2006, policy concerns about wildfire protection were thought to have been created by the intersection of the following inter-related factors”:

- Public safety;
- Overlapping protection jurisdictions and interagency relationships;
- Population of the state that is increasing both in numbers and age;
- Proliferation of homes in the forests and in the wildland urban interface;
- Changes in climate;
- Drought;
- Increased fuel loading;
- Changes in forest ownership patterns and landowners’ management objectives;
- Costs of firefighting;
- Firefighter safety;
- Training, recruitment and retention of specialized skills;
- Smoke management and air quality implications to public health;
- Forest health shifts resulting in forests that are generally less resistant to uncharacteristic, economically or environmentally undesirable wildfire, windstorm, pests, disease and other damaging agents; and
- Forests less able to recover following biological or environmental disturbances.

The committee considered the factors by responding to the following questions:

- Are these concerns still valid?
- Are there new concerns?
- What are we missing?

FLIP CHART NOTES INSERTED FOR THE RECORD:

Note... there are 14 listed bullets

STILL VALID?

- Bullet 1- valid, what is **missing** currently? Need to address unprotected lands
- Bullet 2- overlapping jurisdiction- valid- **missing**, needs to add communication complexity and conflicting missions
- Bullet 3 – state population – valid- **missing** question about “age”? Needs to add population and demographics to ensure currency
- Bullet 4 –valid- home proliferation, **missing**, needs adding access and second home impacts on protection
- Bullet 5 – Climate is valid but needs clarification and for current information and reflects on forest health
- Bullet 6 - drought- valid combine with bullet 5?
- Bullet 7 – fuel loading (originally listed by me as bullet 6) valid, developing issues are Conservation Reserve Lands, include both forested lands and grasslands, changes in fuel characteristics e.g. riparian fuels and ladder fuels
- Bullet 8 – Valid, needs updating due to loss of industrial lands converting to homes that impede management, no ability to plan long term management, and lands that are purchased for specific purposes like habitat
- Bullet 9 – Costs - Valid
- Bullet 10 – F.F. Safety. Valid , but has changed volunteers turnover quicker (used to be 2 volunteers for 20 years, now more towards 20 volunteers for 2 years), fewer folks , less available, lacks any incentive
- Bullet 11- Training/Recruitment – valid emerging skills needed e.g. aviation, EMT, leadership
- Bullet 12 – smoke Mgmt. – valid, needs to develop increased opportunity perhaps legislative
- Bullet 13 – valid –
- Bullet 14 – valid- needs clarification – resilience

ARE THERE NEW CONCERNS?

- Increases in human caused fires, human caused fires continue. Are fires increasing? needs re-examination
- The linkage between social and cultural activities as it pertains to wildland fire
- Consider moving from firefighting costs to resource protection ... investing in resilience
- Infrastructure...the infrastructure for forest health should move to a forest health overall cost. Review fire response not only from initial attack but also on to the maximum response infrastructure necessary
- Identify “forest health fire causal” factors and pass those on to forest health

- Declining budgets and the “on call” firefighting resource

POLICY

POLICY QUESTIONS: from 2006

1. How can forest health principles be used to reduce the costs and Impacts of wildfire?
2. What are the appropriate roles of prevention, community assistance and education in the overall program?
3. How can we provide appropriate public safety for an increased? Population while continuing to suppress wildfires?
4. What are the appropriate roles for the various firefighting partners?
5. How can we improve training and recruitment to provide the necessary human resources?
6. What is the best role for contractors?
7. How should the State of Washington participate in “all-risk” incidents, inside and outside of the state?
8. In the process, are there legislative changes that would increase efficiency and effectiveness of fire protection in Washington?

Ten years on...

Based on the current review of concerns with wildfire protection in Washington, are these concerns still valid policy questions?

Are there additions modifications or subtractions?

Flip Chart notes:

- Questions #1 and 8 are valid
- Question #2 - needs work question about “roles” versus collaboration
- Question #3 – re-word “suppressing wildfire”
- Question #4 – same as #2 above. “roles” needs changed
- Question #5 – add “availability”
- Question #6 – how to “integrate” and consider nontraditional agency not just “role”
- Question #7 – appropriate when viewed with “how” WA. State becomes better integrated to benefit the fire program

New Questions:

- ✓ How to provide required revenues for wildland prevention and suppression and who pays for those?
- ✓ How to better ensure firefighter and responder safety? (Could possibly be added to question #3)

Next Steps – consider current trends and drivers; what are likely characteristics of the futures.

END

IV. Chairman Report

Chairman Berndt, provided an update for the committee on his activities over the past month and provided hard copies of his report. Check report on 3 commissioner's Kittitas meeting

V. DNR Update

Bob Johnson, Division Manager of Wildfire Division acknowledged the need to go statewide instead of DNR and gave an update on training academies, contracts and aviation.

Chair Berndt requested Quarterly updates on DNR recommendations

VI. Adjournment and Next Meeting

By consensus, the committee decided to schedule the next general meeting at 10 am, on May 24, 2017, in Cle Elum at Suncadia Resort. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 1:20 p.m.

Draft minutes submitted by Tami Kellogg, approved by Chairman Gary Berndt. Formal action to be taken to approve the minutes at the 05/24/17 meeting.