

WILDLAND FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

May 24, 2017
Suncadia Resort
Cle Elum, WA

Committee Members Present:

Gary Berndt – Wildland Fire Liaison, Chair
Cody Desautel – Tribal Nations Representative
Dave LaFave – Fire Chief (Westside) – *via conference call*
J.D Marshall – Industry Landowner (Timber)
Joe Gardner – County Commissioner (Westside) – *via conference call*
Lee Hemmer – Industry Landowner (Range)
Tom Bugert – Statewide Environmental Representative – *via conference call*
Tony Craven – Small Forest Landowner

Committee Members Absent:

Chuck LeBlanc – State Fire Marshal
Dave Johnson – Fire Commissioner
Randy Johnson – Fire Chief (Eastside)
Rodney Smoldon – Federal Fire Agency
Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt – State Land Trust Beneficiary
Jim DeTro – County Commissioner (Eastside)

Guests/Other Attendees:

Bob Johnson, Wildfire Division Manager
Tami Kellogg, Executive Assistant to Deputy Supervisor Wildfire
Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisor
Bill Slosson – Deputy State Fire Marshal

I. Opening, Roll Call

Chair Berndt called the May 24, 2017 meeting of the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee to order at 10:06 a.m. in Cle Elum, WA. After roll call, five members were present, and five members excused. Due to travel constraints, three members participated in the meeting by phone, constituting a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chair Berndt called for review and a motion to approve the minutes of the April 26, 2017 council meeting. Committee member Craven, motioned to approve the minutes and Committee member Hemmer seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous Aye's.

III. DNR Update – Bob Johnson

Mr. Johnson provided an update on the fire in Chelan County, which started near an old saw mill log deck. The fire has encompassed 50 acres to date and the log decks are igniting spot fires. Mr. Slosson shared concerns with the winds enflaming the fire. FMAG and mobilization are approved and initial evacuations are going on. Canadian retardant was requested since there was nothing available locally.

Mr. Johnson moved on to update on the training academies, most recently the central training academy, which overall has had a very positive outcome, and provided an update

the preparedness for fire season. Mr. Johnson, spoke to HB 2010, which addresses homelessness in wildfire areas. The bill also allows DNR to place resources, such as fire engines, in high-risk areas as no cost to the fire districts. Mr. Slosson asked if they were DNR resources or surplus, Mr. Torgerson responded that they are surplus. DNR is working placement now, while it is early in the fire season. Mr. Hemmer asked if it is something that could be placed in “no man’s land” under no coverage. Mr. Slosson stated that statutes would need to be changed to allow placement in that type of location. Mr. Torgerson added that \$140,000 is earmarked to fund local FDs, mostly eastside, to acquire equipment such as radios, however, the FDs must be below the median income of the state. Chair Berndt suggested the committee review the bill for information. Mr. Craven asked if DNR is able to carry Federal Employees on DNR helicopters. Mr. Torgerson they responded that DNR cannot carry federal employee due to federal government restrictions.

IV. DNR Legislative Update – Loren Torgerson

Mr. Torgerson stated the Department is waiting on appropriations, he did mention HB1924, which requires the department to look at the rate structure for SFLOs securing a burn permit and the criteria to be met. He provided an update on the GNA Agreements, and that there is an agreement with Gifford Pinchot NF; SE region side, the GNA agreement is to work with federal government on forest health and that there is a range of projects that could be involved. Mr. Bugert asked if there is any work coming along to help communicate what the GNA is. Mr. Marshall asked if DNR receives compensation for work completed. Mr. Torgerson responded that though he is not informed fully, he believes there is some sort of compensation. Mr. Johnson said there are a couple of mechanisms in place. Mr. Bugert said the governor would like to see separate agreements between other state agencies and the federal governments. Mr. Desautel stated the tribes have similar agreements (Tribal Forest Protection Act) and believes the GNA is a good mechanism to get things done. Mr. Marshall asked if there is a nexus and that it has to be state owned lands. Discussion followed on the caveats of the agreement. Chair Berndt asked if there is any additional funding for DNR fire operations, Mr. Torgerson replied that the recommendations that came from this committee were part of the general fund request, at this time nothing is coming forward.

V. Forest Health Resiliency Update – Tom Bugert

Mr. Bugert shared he has witnessed more engagement on Forest Health and the GNA, FH related bills signed by the governor HB1711 and SB5046, both are related to forest health and economic drivers as well as other community assets. This work is built off of the 20 year Forest Health Strategic Plan (FHSP) and is moving forward. He encouraged members to get involved on this process and the FHSP committee would appreciate input. Mr. Bugert mentioned the funding: 15m senate, 18m house towards forest health; bills related to carbon and climate change, and includes substantial investments in forest health and fire prevention efforts; Mr. Bugert asked what are things to be worked on, Mr. Craven suggested more focus on prevention work in the forests, explore issues with SFLO’s going through the system, adding there is too much to go through to get an FPA. Discussion followed on ways to boost the economy such as working to bring a mill back to the eastside, east of the crest to run small logs, he noted he is also aware of mills not

running at full capacity and is exploring ways to support mills so no more go under and would like to get more information from the committee.

Chair Berndt asked about an advisory committee for forest health, Mr. Torgerson replied that per bill 5046 a committee needs to be in place by July 2017, and that there should be some cross communication between this committee and that new committee.

VI. Chairman Report

Chairman Berndt, provided an update for the committee on his activities over the past month and provided hard copies of his report.

Mr. Slosson shared the information gathered through NFRS is only data reported by joint jurisdictional entities and is not fully accurate, privately-owned properties/entities are typically not included in the data. Local fire districts typically do not report, unless it is part of a fire with federal or state jurisdiction. He stated they need a trigger that implements reporting and to show it as beneficial, perhaps implement a grant program and add an incentive. Discussion followed on ways to encourage reporting and other ways to explore and gain the information. Dave LaFave mentioned an effort to move it back to state fire marshal's office, as the issue is no management.

Chair Berndt shared that burn bans will go back to regions and not be Commissioner directed, adding past issues with local jurisdictions on the last minute order with no coordination by DNR. Chair Berndt shared that Ken McNamee is the new NW region manager and that fire simulations are on June 5 in Yakima and 6 in Chelan.

VII. Old Business

- a. **Review of 4/26 Work Product** – Mr. Torgerson reviewed the discussion from the last meeting, Chair Berndt stated that they believe the Commissioner will be looking for a report on the 2006 strategic plan. Mr. Torgerson shared the project deliverables and the input received at the April 26, 2017 meeting.

*Mr. Hemmer suggests a place holder on jurisdictions to fight fire be included as they are aware of the terrain; *Mr. Desautel suggests holding cooperator meetings; (bullet 2); JD suggests additional clarification on bullet 3 in reference to “second homes”, discussion followed resulting in the removal of the term “second homes”;

Added new bullets to new concerns section:

- Identify the level of service asked for and articulate the costs associated with that level of service
- Use data driven deployment decisions
- Prevention needs to be a priority and need justification for prevention programs, *highlight the positives when added prevention is in place*

Include rehab costs to bullet 3

Add contract resources to bullet 6

- Policy Questions section:

#2 -

#4 – consider geographic roles

#5 – incentives to move up, add qualifications, retention
Reviewed new questions included
Endangered species
Cultural resources
Wildland fire fighter safety
Transition planning, qualifications, and legislation

- b. Future Trends Discussion – Loren Torgerson; report to comeback to Gerry,
 - i. What do you see as the potential futures we are going to be facing in this state re wildfire policy issues, etc., what are trends we should be thinking about:
 - 1. Enforce WUI, concerns continue
 - 2. Technology
 - 3. Budget – interagency approach will be needed to be successful,
 - 4. Smaller FD unable to keep up with expenditures as they do not have the tax income, possible consolidation of fire districts
 - 5. Forest Health worsens
 - 6. Forest fire increases
 - 7. Less available agency resources
 - 8. More contracted resources
 - 9. Community developing a higher risk acceptance of living in a fire prone area
 - 10. Less available home insurance coverage for living in fire prone area
 - 11. Public expectations for support and service of fire fighters will continue/increase
 - 12. Climate change increases fires; 2-3 degree temperature increase results in 3-4 times larger burned areas
 - 13. Society and contractors are more litigious
 - 14. Agriculture resource producers are consolidating which will mean fewer rural ranchers and volunteers
 - 15. Adjacent states, partners will face the same issues, resources will become more scarce
 - 16. Longer fire season will impact resource availability
 - 17. Fire fighter safety will more of a concern, aging volunteer responders
 - 18. Cumulative value of resources at risk will increase
 - 19. Public will be less tolerant of smoke
 - 20. Fewer volunteer fire fighters available

c. Who Should be Included

VIII. New Business

- a. Draft Project Report for June meeting

IX. Final Q&A

X. Adjournment and Next Meeting

By consensus, the committee decided to schedule the next general meeting at 10 am, on June 28, 2017, at Suncadia Resort in Roslyn. The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 1:15 p.m.

Draft minutes submitted by Tami Kellogg, approved by Chairman Gary Berndt. Formal action to be taken to approve the minutes at the June 28, 2017 meeting.