

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

APPROVAL PENDING

Attendees

Kevin Arneson (Boise Cascade)	Chad Davis (USFS)	Janene Ritchie (Pinchot Partners)
Shana Joy (SCC)	Cynthia Wilkerson (WDFW)	Darcy Batura (TNC)
Tiana Luke (TWS)	Jerry Bonagofski (WCLA)	Jay McLaughlin (MARS)
Trevor McConchie (DNR Chair)	Matt Comisky (AFRC)	Elaine O'Neil (WFFA)
David Cass (State Parks)	Cody Desautel (CCT)	

Guests and Other Attendees Present: Jen Watkins (Committee support staff - Division), Alex Smith, Nick Kunz, Andy Tate, Garrett Meigs, Aleksandar Dozic, Michael Norris, Kate Williams, Derek Churchill, Deidre Hayward, Katie Allen (Committee support staff - Executive), Jessica Walston, George Geissler, Tony Cravens, Nicholas Jeffries, Ashley Blazina, Sydney Debien, and Lori Reynaud (Committee Secretary).

FHAC Motions and Action

Motion 1 MOTION by Kevin Arneson (second by Tiana Luke) TO APPROVE the September 19, 2023 Forest Health Advisory Committee Meeting Summary. MOTION PASSED.

Meeting Summary

Committee meeting chair, Trevor McConchie, opened the meeting by welcoming attendees.

Forest Resilience Division Update

Jen Watkins, Forest Resilience Division Manager, updated the group on the request into the Legislature to fully fund the Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience account established by HB 1168. The Governor's budget that was released did allocate funding to the account, but not to the full amount. This is a top agency priority to request full funding this legislative session. We cannot obligate any funding that we would want to spend this biennium until the funding is appropriated.

Much of the funding made available from this account is pass-through funding to external partners and communities, so any reduction in funds from the original commitment of \$125M per biennium reduces these pass-through fund opportunities across all land ownerships and programs.

DNR Deputy Supervisor Wildfire & State Forester Update

Washington State Forester George Geissler provided the committee with an update of things he is tracking and actively involved in with a particular focus on the federal level. Two attachments summarizing what he covered accompany these meeting minutes.

Keeping Forests as Forests Presentations

Csenka Favorina-Csorba, DNR Policy Director presented on the Conversion Risk Assessment. In 2022, DNR received funding for one biennium of contracted work to allow DNR to identify and map forest areas of high conversion risk and prioritize them for conservation based on ecological, social, and cultural factors. This work is a necessary first step in developing a comprehensive strategy to conserve one million acres of forest by 2040, a goal that the agency committed to in 2021. A project contract will build off existing forest conversion risk data from UW and conversion risk modeling from WRIA 7. Working with existing DNR staff, the contractor will help with layering and analysis of other environmental, social, cultural, and health benefits that will inform the mapping and prioritization of risk and opportunity areas for forest conservation.

Mark Reed, DNR Forest Legacy Program Coordinator presented on historic opportunity for this program with recent federal funding and two proposals submitted already from Washington including Green Mountain West and Cle Elum Ridge. Darcy Batura with TNC shared more detail on the Cle Elum Ridge proposal of which they worked on following working with the community to develop a collaborative approach.

Deputy Supervisor Update:

Alex Smith, Deputy Supervisor for Forest Regulation, Forest Resilience, and Aquatics shared that DNR is working internally on strategic planning across programs on prescribed fire including discussing potential requests looking at the 2025 legislative session. She shared this committee and the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee will be key to working closely with our agency as we work through this effort through 2024. She noted that Mike Norris (ADM for Cross Boundary Restoration) will be the staff-Chair for the next two committee meetings, one of which we hope to talk about prescribed fire.

There was no public comment made at the meeting.

Roundtable: Committee member updates and information sharing on items related to forest health and resilience in Washington

- USFS Update: Chad Davis shared that a New Regional Forester is coming in. He also reviewed historic levels of funding flowing through the Region to partners (not just national forests) including Urban and Community Forestry, Wood Innovation Grants, and traditional Cooperative Forestry State, Private, and Tribal program dollars going to DNR as well as directly to Tribes and communities. Forest Service is hiring 10-2-year term positions (two-year funding guarantee) to hire Community navigators with the intent to reach out to partners we've never worked with. Chad will be the point of contact for this. These positions will be working for the Washington office but based in Oregon or Washington. He also shared late breaking news the President executive order on old growth and mature forests on federal lands has led to the Forest Service initiating a forest plan amendment for all 128 forest plans through one environmental impact statement with a timeline of completion in January 2025.
- WDFW Updates: Cynthia Wilkerson is sitting in the place of the Directors Office Shared Stewardship Coordinator position, which the agency has held off on recruiting while recruiting for a new conservation director. Margaret Carlson in the new Conservation Director. No timeline on recruitment for the Shared Stewardship Coordinator, but it will be forthcoming. Cynthia also shared WDFW budget updates including good news in the Governor's budget for the Forest Health program for funding, although for the first time the funds have been moved into the operating budget and they exempted it from indirect. WDFW has passed the 25,000-acre mark in overall forest health treatments. She also shared an update on prescribed burn team, now fully staffed in planners, 2 for planning fires, one for planning operations, while they are actively recruiting ground staff and crew. We continue to work with partners across the

state looking at impacts from recreation. Big push is to upgrade ecological assessment tools used for on the ground for baseline conditions of our lands.

- **State Conservation Commission:** Shana Joy provide an update that in the last session they received \$5 million out of the 1168 account funding from the Climate Commitment Act funding. They also got a \$10 million one-time appropriation so altogether they came into July 1st with \$15 million of funds not had before. 27 districts are now working hard with locals and our partners to implement projects. There is a lot of outreach, participation in wildfire ready neighbors, community projects and a little bit of cost share. Getting ready to open a recruitment in January for a program manager as a dedicated staff to work with our conservation districts.
- **State Parks:** David Cass shared they are continuing to make their forests healthier and are about ¼ of the way through our funding cycle with two large commercial projects that we are planning to complete this biennium. The two large commercial projects Riverside State Park in Spokane and a western WA project in a state park which is notable because the west side forest health strategy is still in development. Also have a couple of grant applications out including a request for work at Riverside for \$650,000. Participating in the Forest Practice online discussions underway through participating on the landowner advisory committee. Suggestion made to hear from that group as well as forest regulation in general at a future meeting. Another topic for future meetings would be to hear from project leaders and project examples of west side personal projects specifically, the San Juan islands.
- **TNC Updates:** Darcy Batura, looking forward to opportunities about how together we can partner to leverage all the shared priorities we are talking about together. Forest Legacy updates Want to take a moment to acknowledge DNR and all of the support received through 1116 funding on Sale Ridge. We've been working to build up fire team and partnering with Mike Norris, his team and Alex Smith and with their support we developed our logical fire strategy. Mark Charlton will be joining our team January 2nd, 2025.
- **AFRC Updates:** Matt Comisky, Chelan County Wood Campus summary: in the end the recommendation for a business model was a post and pole kiln dried firewood and chips facility. Most likely to succeed. Common denominator with other counties with the same efforts are sustainable and consistent supply. Challenges around biomass chips and getting rid of sawdust. Did not feel Chelan did a good job in defining what is small diameter, low value, or no value biomass. We as far as the purchaser milling infrastructure side will be gearing up to look at the legislature in order to keep operating lands on the lands base. Need to bring in the discussion of the true fire ecology of western Washington into the prescribed fire.

Action Item: Motion to approve committee operations including committee nominations, appointments, and Chair election outside Charter timeline for the first quarter of 2024.

Jen Watkins introduced the charter discussion seeking committee approval on two proposals:

- Proposal #1: The DNR online application page is open all year for people to let us know they are interested, our new charter said we would do nominations in the spring because we just adopted the charter. We would like a committee to operate that charter and be officially nominated under it before we start meeting in 2024. Seeking committee approval to step outside the charter and finish nominations. Application period open through December 27th. We would like the Commissioner to review and appoint in January. Letters go out so people can be prepared and be invited where the official committee sits new appointments are there because of February 20th meeting and there may be vacancies so we would use the spring process of building agencies for anything not filled. Would like anyone to make a motion to move outside the charter.

- Proposal #2: Member chair in place for as much as 2024 as possible so were not just having DNR run the meetings and set the agendas. If we could make appointment in January and at the February meeting vote and have a member chair the rest of the year.

A motion to approve stepping outside the existing charter to get everything on track. All committee members approved, no one opposed. Motion passed.

Staff and Subcommittee Reports

- Kate Williams, DNR Assistant Division Manager for Planning, Science and Monitoring provided an update on the agency's latest [20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan Treatment Tracking Memo following an October 31, 2023 data pull](#). As of October 31st we have received reports of 605,862 acres of treatments impacting a total of 350,714 footprint acres. Notable changes in this latest treatment tracking memo include integration of additional acres we are picking up in each priority landscape of change through remote sensing, and a new table in response to the requests we've had from the Forest Health Advisory Committee Monitoring Subcommittee to display acres treated by more detailed treatment activity types. Committee feedback on this memo is always welcome, as it helps us to ensure we are conveying the information that you need to understand progress toward Goal 1 of the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan in complement to our other monitoring efforts.
- Ashley Blazina, DNR Environmental Planner provided a preview from the 2023 Forest Action Plan annual highlights report scheduled to come out later this winter. Ashley was joined by partners who presented on projects that were highlights.
- Jessica Walston, Monitoring Subcommittee Chair shared an update that she distributed a questionnaire asking monitoring subcommittee how frequently they want to meet to set their 2024 schedule, including doing an in-person event being planned for spring or fall. The priority on these in person opportunities is to ensure people can track and be on the same page when it comes to our monitoring effort and capitalize on our collaborative efforts with the group.
- Jen Watkins led an update from the Western Washington Forest Health Subcommittee, which she facilitates. The subcommittee has been meeting since June in response to DNR's Tasking Memo to the Forest Health Advisory Committee to provide recommendations on developing a shared vision and approach to all-lands forest health and resilience planning in western WA. The subcommittee has drafted a recommendations memo to share with the full Forest Health Advisory Committee in early 2024. Subcommittee member Tim Walls (in attendance at the Forest Health Advisory Committee meeting) shared some of the challenges/opportunities that the subcommittee has identified in western WA include no single threat to Western Washington forest health and resilience and fragmented ownership overlapping jurisdictions. The subgroup will meet in the new year to provide the full committee an update at the first meeting in 2024.

2024 Forest Health Advisory Committee Work plan: Review of meeting 2024 meeting schedule, and committee input on priority topics and issues for committee workplan. Wrap up discussion reviewed issues that were raised throughout the day as potential items we should flag for future meetings, and the need to develop a workplan for 2024. It was recognized that we will have a newly appointed committee at our next meeting, so we'll want to be mindful to shape our 2024 meeting priorities and topics with the new members feedback. We can utilize a survey to solicit information, and committee staff support will track the issues to work with the committee chairs to shape agendas.

Meeting adjourned. Next committee meeting is February 20, 2024.