

Lincoln County Firesafe Council Meeting Notes

Location: Libby Fire Department (in person) and Microsoft Teams Conference Call (virtual)

Date: January 19th, 2023

Time: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Jacob Jeresek, Steve Lauer, Beau Macy, Jeremy Rank, Doug Turman, Tom Lane, Gary Kedish, Brent Teske, Cory Farmer, Matt Chumbley, RJ McDole, Dean Whitney, Jennifer Nelson, Seth Carbonari, Nick Youngstrom, Mark Peck, Alli Talbot, Jim Hammons, Nate Gassmann, and Ali Ulwelling

**Red font indicates action items.*

New/Old Business:

- Quarterly Lincoln County Project Presentation to Agency Representatives (All)
 - The Lincoln County Cross Boundary Coordination and Implementation Map was shared and each agency (Forest Service, Montana DNRC, Lincoln County, and NRCS) presented their active and planned projects by geographic area to agency representatives, line officers, and administrators.
 - *One request made by Forest Service line officers is during project public meetings, have a member of the Lincoln County Firesafe Council that is not a Forest Service employee show support and describe to the public how the proposed project ties in with the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and other priorities.*
 - *Jennifer suggested to track the status of all projects, develop a table similar to what was completed with the Lincoln County WUI Roadmap efforts.*
 - *Suggestions for improvement with future quarterly meetings is to have an all-encompassing descriptive overview of all projects at the first quarter meeting. After this, during the second through fourth quarter meetings, have a brief overview of any projects with any significant changes.*
- Proposed Subdivision on the ACM Road at Middle Thompson Lake (Jennifer)
 - The Lincoln County Planning Board received a proposal for a 269-acre subdivision on the ACM Road above Middle Thompson Lake. The Subdivision developers requested a variance for the road length exceeding 1,000 feet and for a cul-de-sac for properties not on the ACM Road. The Planning Staff has the Forest Service listed as the fire protection agency, which is incorrect. The actual fire protection agency is the MT DNRC. The Forest Service and MT DNRC were not contacted about the variance request. Additionally, Glenn Gibson completed the fire risk assessment and was unaware of the variance request. Glenn stated in his assessment report that the subdivision needed to meet all Lincoln County road regulations.
 - Due to the above circumstances, the Firesafe Council feels there is a disconnect with the Planning Staff and who they are contacting for subdivision requests. Jennifer and Logan attended the Planning Board meeting and expressed their concerns. The planning board was not aware that they were there to approve a variance on top of the initial subdivision request. Additionally, the Planning Board was not provided the written public comments at this meeting about the subdivision request. A couple of road mitigations were suggested including requiring a pull out and increasing the size of the cul-de-sac. The Planning Board ultimately approved the subdivision and variance request with the above

conditions. It is unknown if the roadside vegetation clearing requirement made it to the final resolution.

- Solutions to the above issue are to ensure that the Planning Staff contacts the correct fire protection agency for subdivision requests. Ensure subdivision developers contact Glenn Gibson when variances to the fire risk assessment are requested. Ensure that areas identified as high risk have mitigations commensurate with high fire risk. Request the Lincoln County Firesafe Council be on the Planning Staff email distribution list. Develop a set of trigger points for when the Firesafe Council should become involved including when the person responsible for commenting to the subdivision plan requests assistance and when there is a variance request pertaining to fire protection and/or risk.
- Lincoln County CWPP Update (Jennifer)
 - Jennifer requested assistance from Nick Youngstrom for mapping efforts within the CWPP. Currently, Nick is working on WUI maps for the individual geographic areas. Once the maps are completed, the document can be finalized. The current timeline is to hold public meetings in Libby and Eureka in March along with a 14-day public comment period. After this, the document could be signed in April or May.
 - Steve Lauer suggested to combine the Lincoln County Emergency Operations Plan with the CWPP public hearings to accomplish two things at once
 - Another suggestion is to make a checklist with the remaining tasks along with the timeline to complete these.
- 2023 Island Lake Montana Forest Action Plan Grant Award (Jeremy)
 - The Libby Unit of Montana DNRC was recently awarded a Montana Forest Action Plan grant during the second round of proposals. The Libby Unit will receive \$483,000 to accomplish fuels reduction and shaded fuel breaks around Island Lake. Targeted properties with fuels reduction and/or shaded fuel breaks include private landowners, Green Diamond Resource Company, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and Montana State Trust Lands managed by Montana DNRC.
- EPA Proposed National Ambient Air Quality Standards (Cory)
 - The EPA has proposed revisions to national ambient air quality standards for particulate matter. These include revising the annual standard for fine particles (PM2.5) from 12 micrograms per cubic meter to within a range of 9-10 micrograms per cubic meter. The EPA is also soliciting comment on revising the level as low as 8 micrograms per cubic meter up to 11 micrograms per cubic meter. The EPA is also soliciting comment on revising the 24-hour PM2.5 standard from 35 micrograms per cubic meter to as low as 25 micrograms per cubic meter. The EPA is also proposing revisions to the air quality index and lowering the breakpoints associated with good, moderate, unhealthy to specific groups, etc. Additionally, the EPA is also proposing to make changes to the monitoring network to enhance protection of air quality in communities overburdened by air pollution.
 - Based off data from 2019-2021, Lincoln County would not meet the proposed annual fine particle standard of 10 micrograms per cubic meter. Additionally, the EPA projects that Lincoln County would not meet the annual standard by 2032.
 - There was a lot of discussion around these proposed changes and the impacts to forest management practices in Lincoln County, especially prescribed fire. There is a public comment period open for 60 days that began on January 6. Mark Peck will reach out to a contract writer with Lincoln County to submit comments for Lincoln County.
- County Hazard Mitigation Plans Status (Tom)
 - Lincoln County EMA was approached by the State to review and update a list of FEMA or Regional grants projects in the County. Tom will forward the project list to Jacob Jeresek to forward to agency leads to review and update the list by the next Firesafe meeting.

Adjourned