

## ***Lincoln County Firesafe Council Meeting Notes***

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

Date: February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Time: 9:00 AM – 10:35 AM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Jacob Jeresek, Steve Lauer, Doug Turman, Logan Sandman, Mark Peck, Jeremy Rank, Gary Kedish, Jennifer Nelson, Nikia Hernandez, Matt Chumbley, Brent Teske, Tom Lane, Seth Carbonari, and Brian Ressel

\*Red font indicates action items.

### **New/Old Business:**

- Online Burn Permit System (Jennifer and Jake)
  - Burn permits for the remainder of Lincoln will go online beginning May 1, 2023. There are several tasks that need to be completed prior to burn permits being offered. In the near future, the core team needs to meet to discuss remaining tasks and timelines. One of the biggest tasks will be obtaining addressing information for the remainder of Lincoln County. **Tom will work with the County to get this information. Jennifer will send out a Doodle Poll to set a core team meeting.**
- CWPP Update (Subcommittee)
  - The draft Lincoln County CWPP is almost complete and is within a week of being available to the public on the Lincoln County and Fire Adapted Kootenai websites. Remaining tasks to complete are some revised maps with the help of Nick Youngstrom, additional language on the Home Ignition Zone per Steve Kimball, and additional language on home assessments.
  - Tentative remaining timeline is public meetings will occur during the Lincoln County Commissioner meetings on March 22, 2023 in Eureka and March 29, 2023 in Libby. At the April 5, 2023 Lincoln County Commissioner meeting, the CWPP will be adopted.
- Lincoln County Hazard Mitigation Plan
  - Thanks for everyone's help updating the 2023 Lincoln County Hazard Mitigation Plan. **In the future, if agencies receive new grants, get those to Tom to include in future Hazard Mitigation Plans.**
- New Agency Projects (Forest Service, DNRC, NRCS, Lincoln County, Timber Companies)
  - The Forest Service is considering a new land management project area within the priority landscape and is soliciting input from the Firesafe Council to identify where this may occur. At the next meeting, the council will identify priority areas for treatment to consider.
- Grant Updates and Planned Grant Applications (Jennifer and Brian)
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) continues work on their four Targeted Implementation Plan areas of Edna, Fortine, Glen Lake, and Libby Surround Joint Chief's. This work includes completing cost share agreements and environmental assessments. NRCS currently obligates around \$1 million per year and accomplishes 1,000 acres. Due to an unprecedented level of interest in the programs, NRCS is requesting \$2 million for 2024. NRCS received Inflation Reduction Act funding and is looking for ways to obligate the money. They are also looking at different ways to hire. NRCS has had a few rounds of hiring that have gone unsuccessful so far. They are also

- having issues finding contractors to complete the work. Currently, landowners are requesting to cancel their contracts as they have exhausted the available contractor lists.
- Kootenai Forests to Rivers Initiative is winding down. There are a couple of contractors worried about not accomplishing the work in time and are looking for ways to offset their costs.
  - Western States has a couple of participating landowners in the Swede and Farm to Market areas. The American Forest Foundation was supposed to complete outreach efforts but backed out of Lincoln County. As a result, Jennifer hired an intern to help with developing outreach materials for the Swede, McMillan, and Farm to Market areas.
  - Rabbit Tracts Montana Forest Action Plan (MFAP) grant is progressing. The project received an extension until the end of September to complete roadside mastication on the 331 road.
  - Montana DNRC is considering a couple of grants. One idea is funding developers to complete fuels reduction on subdivisions prior to developing. Lincoln County feels this is the responsibility of the developer and the grant would subsidize the developer. The current dilemma is whether the developer is legally bound to complete the work or not. Lawyers are looking into the responsibilities of subdivision developers.
  - Island Lake MFAP grant is completing outreach to landowners to sign applications and scope of work documents.
  - Montana DNRC is still waiting to hear results of their Community Wildfire Defense Grant application which would fund a fuels crew to complete work on private land.
- Joint Chief's Update (Brian and Gary)
    - Libby Ranger District is working on obligating Fiscal Year 2023 funds for Hoodoo Unit 49. All work associated with the Ripley project is still on hold due to litigation.

### **Round Robin:**

- There is Forest Service regional direction on how partnerships will be operated in the future. Gary is working on partnership program development which identifies a list of partners and potential partners that can complete work on Forest Service land. The Partnership program needs to expand to meet the expectations of the Confronting the Wildfire Crisis Strategy.
- The DNRC Libby Unit is hiring a 3<sup>rd</sup> GNA forester. The Plains Unit is also looking at adding another forester to handle the East Lolo and Cabinet Ranger District.
- Jodi Turk accepted the GNA supervisor position.
- The Lincoln County Landfill is using the new air curtain burner to dispose of the slash pile.
- The Kootenai Interagency Dispatch Center recently experienced a complete turnover. Currently, there is only one position filled in the center. Fire managers are looking at ways to bring people in to help throughout the season. They are confident that there will be people to answer radios but some of the services previously offered, may fall off due to capacity limits. Dispatch shortages is an issue nationwide with no solution identified.

Adjourned