

Lincoln County Firesafe Council Meeting Notes

Location – Teams Conference Call

Date- February 17th, 2022

Time-9:00 AM-10:45 AM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Jacob Jeresek, Mo Bookwalter, Steve Kimball, Harmony Burow, Jennifer Nelson, Ashley Juran, RJ McDole, Brian Ressel, Logan Sandman, Doug Turman, Tom Lane, and Dean Whitney.

*Red font indicates action items.

New/Old Business:

- Infrastructure Bill and Impacts to Agencies and Partners within Lincoln County (Mo and Steve)
 - The 10-year Implementation Plan is a subset of the Infrastructure Bill. The main goal is to reduce wildfire risk recognizing we have a problem out west. The goal of the plan is to treat 20 million acres on National Forest System lands and work cross boundary to treat an additional 30 million acres on other Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands. This is an all lands, all hands approach following the Cohesive Strategy. With the potential influx of funding, the goal is to treat more acres but also focused in the right areas. Lincoln County has 3 priority firesheds located around the communities of Eureka, Libby, and Troy.
 - No federal agency has seen a dollar yet from the Infrastructure Bill. When we do receive funding, we'll have the opportunity to do work. Right now, we need to be planning on what capacity internally and externally we need to do more work.
 - Firesheds consist of 250,000-acre areas where there is risk to communities. There are multiple versions of firesheds available. However, the Region 1 Forest Service is using the all lands version of firesheds. Firesheds at a national Forest Service level will be used to determine where funding goes but it's not the only metric used regionally. Region 1 is also considering priority landscapes identified in the Montana Forest Action Plan (MFAP), Montana Wildfire Risk Assessment, landscapes where NEPA is approved, and areas with fire risk focus area indicator or vegetation hazard focus area indicator attributes in the Northern Region Cross Boundary Interagency Story Map.
 - Each Forest Service region will be hosting regional round table discussions in the future. The core group is getting input from groups like the Firesafe Council to focus the approach at the national level. The discussions will be two-day events with one day for the Forest Service and one day for partners. Only 60 partners statewide will be able to attend the national round table discussion. Wyatt Frampton is looking at hosting a Montana specific event prior to the official round table to include more partners.
 - The DNRC received a briefing yesterday from Danielle Okst. The Infrastructure Bill is intended to be a 5-year boost for the 10-year Implementation Plan. Community wildfire defense grants will be based on CWPP priorities. The Fireshed maps are an additional source of information to inform a collective action. Sonya Germann is looking at the MFAP priorities as well as local priorities. Sonya is also looking at the role of the

DNRC delivering MFAP implementation and what could potentially be a more formal structure for cross boundary coordination. This more formal coordination will not replace what is happening with local efforts but look more at a standardized process statewide.

- There are three grant opportunities coming out soon. Tim Love sent out the MFCN request for proposal which has \$100,000 available. There is a local government grant which Steve will send out the request for proposal in a couple of weeks. The MFAP has another implementation grant with up to \$3.5 million available to award statewide which the MFAP team will send out the request for proposal soon.
- There is a lot of misinformation on landscape treatment goals versus home ignition zone treatments. We need to do a better job educating the public on how the two work together to meet the cohesive strategy.
- PODs – Potential Operational Delineations discussion (Jacob)
 - Part of the Infrastructure Bill has language about Potential Operational Delineations (PODs). In a recent Forest Service fire management meeting, it was asked who is completed with PODs or working on PODs on their forests. As it stands, the Kootenai is one of the few remaining forests in the region yet to develop PODs. There are also some standards for consistency that people need to follow when developing PODs. Jacob reached out to the PODs research team to find out more information but has yet to hear back. Last year, the council talked about PODs and opted to defer POD development until the CWPP was completed. This agenda topic was brought up more to get on the council's radar to start working on when the CWPP is completed. More information on PODs can be found at the following website.
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/rmrs/potential-operational-delineations-pods>
- Burn Permit website and general info (Jennifer et. Al.)
 - There was a burn permit subcommittee meeting on February 14th which went through the burn permit website and developed a list of questions and things we would like to see changed or modified. Marcel, Jennifer, and Dustin met with NIC yesterday to discuss these items. As it currently stands, the burn permit website will be up and running in the beginning of March for the Libby Outdoor Burning Control Area (formerly known as the Libby Air Pollution Control District). This will take a large workload off the health department in 2022 and beyond. After this burn permit season, the subcommittee will look at correcting issues that arose and adding the rest of Lincoln County to the website.
- Era of Mega Fires Presentation (Logan)
 - Ali and Marcel are leading this effort. Currently, they're in the planning phase on notifications to the public. Ali is also working with Russ on information packets to distribute at the event. There is a desire to have representation from all organizations at the event to answer questions.
- Earth Day/Arbor Day (Jennifer)
 - Jennifer was approached by the mayor to see if there is anything planned for Arbor Day/Earth Day as she would like to do something. Some ideas proposed include little league baseball opening weekend, Thursday farmer's market, and fire prevention week. We could look at pulling the Fire Adapted Kootenai trailer to these events. **If anyone has any ideas of how to participate, let Jennifer know.**
- Home Assessment Training (Logan)
 - The DNRC is trying to get back to doing home assessments. They are also looking at requiring anyone that completes home assessments to attend a home assessment training to remain consistent in analysis as this is an issue statewide. The DNRC is currently writing a curriculum for a field training which provides a consistent message.

Julia Berkey is the lead for this effort and hopes to have the training sometime in May.

- Grant Updates (Jennifer and Brian)
 - NRCS is in the Joint Chief's project area identifying treatment opportunities with lots of help from the DNRC. They are hoping to accomplish 600 acres in year one. They recently had a kickoff meeting to look at outreach for years two and three. To boost interest, they are looking at a landowner outreach event this fall. NRCS would like to coordinate with Lincoln County and the Forest Service on this event.
 - The Forest Service Edna Fortine Roadside Fuels project has about 3000 acres proposed adjacent to private lands which is within the NRCS tip areas. Recently, a couple of public meetings were hosted with lots of participation. There is a lot of public support for the project which brought out additional treatment areas to potentially propose. Due to the 3,000 acre limitation within a Categorical Exclusion, the Forest Service may now opt to complete a focused Environmental Assessment to include more treatment opportunities.
 - We need to do a better job telling the story to document the successes. This is a capacity issue amongst agencies, cooperators, and partners. The DNRC is working towards this with a local example of the Rabbit Tracts project video close to public release. There are avenues such as the MFAP grants to collect funding to contract out the public outreach to help tell story. Steve and Mark Peck were on a call with American Forest Resource Council and they have communications people that could help with this effort if we desire. Everyone agreed help would be appreciated.
 - Kootenai Forests to Rivers Initiative is continuing. Lincoln County has a signed agreement with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks for 50 acres of treatment in the Chain of Lakes area. The DNRC is assisting with project layout.
 - The Rabbit Tracts project will be resuming work soon. Logan will be working on the shaded fuel break portion for a minimum of 4 weeks this spring. He hopes to get one side of the road completed this spring and is still on track to complete their portion by the spring of 2023. Jerry Aiken will be working on his shaded fuel break portion this year. The Forest Service mastication contract is submitted to contracting and awaiting award. Stimson continues to work on their ground but priorities have changed to salvage within the South Yaak fire.
 - Amy Gannon is giving money to perform bark beetle treatments on 60 acres within J Niels Park. The DNRC will start their assigned work in March.

Round Robbin:

The DNRC Libby Unit is moving forward with GNA and recently got approval to fill a second GNA forester. This additional position will be advertised shortly with the hope of having someone in place by late April or early May. The DNRC Kalispell Unit may also be adding another GNA position. Jodi Turk currently has 17 million board feet under GNA contracts.

Adjourned