

Lincoln County Firesafe Council Notes

Location – Zoom Conference Call

Date- February 18th, 2021

Time-9:00 AM – 11:20 AM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Jacob Jeresek, Gary Kedish, Josh Letcher, Marcel Getz, Jeremy Rank, Jake Mertes, Steve Lauer, Brian Ressel, Doug Turman, Ali Ulwelling, Derek Luchik, Jennifer Nelson, Brent Teske, Amy Katz

Action items are in red font.

New/Old Business:

- Fire Adapted Kootenai Website Update (Marcel)
 - There has been steady progress on the website and Fire Adapted Kootenai logo. GuRoots has moved all material from lcfiresafe.org over to the new website fireadaptedkootenai.org. Marcel and Jennifer picked a logo from the contest for the website.
 - Marcel, Jennifer, and Ali have been trying to determine what materials to put on the website. Currently they agreed on having tabs for the following: Fire Safe Council, Resources, Mission Statement, and Education. They are also thinking that home assessments will have its' own tab. Within the Education tab, so far they have the following topics: home ignition zone, burning education, smoke education, wildfire education.
 - With the update, the council agrees that the mission statement should be updated. **Look at ideas of how to update this mission statement and get suggestions to Marcel.**
 - What other education material do we want on the website? **If you have ideas, get those to Marcel.** Education material needs to be typed in a Microsoft Word document. Julia Berkey has offered to help with writing educational materials. Additionally, Julia mentioned that KFRI has money to update their website to be more in line with the Fire Adapted Kootenai website.
 - When the website goes live, GuRoots will set up a meeting with Marcel, Jennifer, Ali, and Jacob to train us how to edit/update/maintain the website.
- Burn Permit Website (Marcel)
 - Yesterday the burn permit subcommittee had a burn permit presentation with Megan Gretch on the mt.gov website. The subcommittee needs to decide how we want to move forward. We have three options: keep the permit process the same, move to mt.gov website, or build our own. Since organizations haven't had a chance to present this in house, no decision can be made at this time.
 - There was a discussion on the test within the mt.gov website using Missoula County as an example. The county has a strong desire to include this with the complexities of burning within the Air Pollution Control District. It was brought up that when discussing this option last year that people may not desire taking a test and avoid the system altogether. There are ways to edit the website to make it less of a test but the county would still like to pursue this option to ensure individuals are reading the required material for burning regulations.

- There is concern over the cost the County will incur to utilize the system. Currently there is a \$1200 annual fee divided between the participating counties, a \$3 per permit transaction fee, and a \$0.15 per minute cost for individuals that use the automated phone system to activate or renew permits. **All individuals that issue permits need to get Jennifer a historic estimate of how many burn permits are issued annually so she can present this cost to the County Commissioners.**
- There is concern over who the point of contact will be that is listed on the mt.gov system. It was discussed that each district/zone would be responsible for their fire protection areas.
- There is also concern over not being able to inspect burns prior to a permit being issued especially within the Air Pollution Control District. **The subcommittee will look into ways that inspections could still be performed.**
- **Marcel will schedule a burn permit subcommittee meeting next week or the first week of March to make a decision on how we would like to move forward.**
- Burn Education Campaign (Marcel)
 - Marcel will be on through March 12th. Although he will not be in the same role, he will still participate in Lincoln County Firesafe Council meetings.
 - With the information that will be posted on the new Fire Adapted Kootenai website, the burn education campaign is progressing through providing educational materials.
- Shared Stewardship (Gary)
 - First, a little background on Shared Stewardship and the Kootenai National Forest (KNF). The KNF historically doesn't have the workforce capacity to take this on. As such, Gary was lateraled into a Shared Stewardship coordinator position which looks for funding mechanisms to complete this work on the ground.
 - Joint Chief's proposal: We were not awarded a Joint Chief's project in Fiscal Year 21. Washington Office feedback is we had a great proposal. However, comments against the proposal was NEPA wasn't complete and we could have done a better job describing wildlife habitat and watershed improvement. The Region believes comments were from individual reviewers and not the selection panel and it really came down to the NEPA not being complete. Solicitation for Fiscal Year 22 projects should be out in the next couple of weeks with a proposal deadline of sometime in June.
 - Shared Stewardship: This isn't a new concept but an all lands approach to reducing fuels across all boundaries. What are the next steps? Brian, Jennifer, and Gary got together and looked at how the Idaho Panhandle NF is completing this. They are looking at Forest Service out year program of work and where NEPA is cleared. Gary is looking for the Firesafe Council to prioritize areas that should be treated first. The goal is to identify areas within the WUI for Forest Service projects. The Shared Stewardship Initiative and Memorandum of Understanding encourages the Forest Service to complete work within the WUI.
 - The Montana Forest Action Plan proposal used the Idaho Panhandles methodology and looked for NEPA ready projects within the WUI.
 - The Council admits that knowing what is happening around Eureka with the Forest Service is a weakness. **The Council needs to identify what area is next to be prepared for grants, etc.**
 - Mo Bookwalter with the Forest Service Regional Office is open to hosting a training/webinar on Shared Stewardship or topics around State and Private forestry. Gary is looking into conservation finance training as an option.
 - There is a desire to utilize Categorical Exclusions (CE) more increase pace and scale within the WUI. **Gary will investigate CE authorities that may be utilized for Precommercial Thinning and fuels projects outside of timber production.**
 - There was discussion on the challenges with NEPA and time to perform an action on the ground. Good Neighbor Authority was brought up as a way to boost the NEPA workforce.

- Grant Updates (Jennifer)
 - KRFI has funding that will continue for at least another two years. Jennifer still has people contacting her on potential projects. Currently, there is approximately 140 acres in projects. Jennifer is getting more interest with the boundary being expanded with requirements lessened.
 - Western States Grant has been signed and sent back.
 - Montana Forest Action Plan: Has been submitted but haven't heard anything back yet. Jennifer should hear sometime in March whether the project was awarded or not.
- Amy Katz Internship Possibility (Jennifer and Amy)
 - Amy is a first-year master student with University of Montana. Her master's program is in environmental policy and GIS. Amy currently has an internship with the Heart of the Rockies and is receiving funding through the Weiss program. The Heart of the Rockies is a land trust collaborative that focuses on lands from the Crown of the Continent to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. She is interested in opportunities where people need support in meetings either taking notes or facilitating so she can learn more about land management programs through these meetings. She is also interested in helping with GIS support needs.
 - The wilderness foundation reached out to Jennifer on the possibility of an internship and experience for Amy. **Amy will get back to the Council with her interest in the Council and what she has to offer.**
- Round Robin:

Jeremy Rank is having a meeting with WR Grace tomorrow on forest practice laws they need to abide by for fuels reduction activities within OU3. Western States WUI grant is open right now for proposals and may be an option for WR Grace to help fund fuels reduction projects.
- Action Items from Past Meetings:
 - **Jacob will send Marcel the Lincoln County Firesafe Council Bylaws (Done).**
 - **If you have any 4K pictures or regular pictures of Lincoln County, send those to Marcel for the website development.**

Adjourned