

## ***Lincoln County Firesafe Council Agenda***

Location – Teams Conference Call

Date- May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Time-9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Gary Kedish, Doug Turman, Jeremy Anderson, Logan Sandman, Brent Teske, Jacob Jeresek, Harmony Burow, Dean Whitney, Jeremy Rank, Bruce Rowland, Brian Ressel, Jennifer Nelson, Logan Sandman, Ali Ulwelling, Josh Letcher, Mark Peck, Derek Luchik

**\*Red font indicates action items.**

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

- CWPP WUI Discussion and Potential Issues (Jacob and Jeremy Anderson)
  - Recently, it was brought to Jacob's attention that there may be issues with the newly proposed WUI for the revised CWPP and concerns around Canada Lynx habitat. Also, it was suggested that other concerns may exist with different resource areas but those are unknown at this time. Recently, the Hannah Flats project was litigated on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and the Forest Service lost due to WUI utilized in the project designated by the CWPP and HFRA authorities.
  - For Canada Lynx, the biological opinion (BO) issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service lays out what we can and can't do in Canada Lynx habitat. In the BO, the Kootenai National Forest was allowed to exempt 6 percent of Canada Lynx habitat acres across the forest within the WUI which equates to 60,000 acres. Between 2007 and now, the Kootenai has only used 3,000 acres within the exemption on Forest Service ground leaving a balance of 57,000 acres identified in the BO. This exemption exists for the life of the forest plan. Canada Lynx habitat is typically found above the 4,000 feet elevational band. As of now, this could be an easy issue to resolve or complex and more information needs to be researched.
  - **Jacob will schedule a meeting with Kootenai National Forest staff officers to determine if any additional concerns exist and report out at the next meeting.**
- Fire Adapted Kootenai Website Update and Future Meeting (Jacob and Jennifer)
  - Marcel, Jennifer, and Jacob met with Matt from GuRoots this week to go over the final agreement to give the rights to the website over and training to administer the website. <https://www.fireadaptedkootenai.org/> is now live!
  - **If you have any edits or suggestions, please get those to Marcel, Jennifer, or Jacob as soon as possible.** Matt offered free service until June 1<sup>st</sup> to make any changes to the website that we would like. After that, we will be billed hourly for his assistance.
  - Part of the Rabbit tracks proposal is offering an educational piece. To meet this requirement, the website will be incorporated on mailers sent to residents.
  - The DNRC purchased high end camera equipment for media campaigns. Marcel will be looking at adding videos and photos to the website. Also, the County has a drone which could add high level action videos of various activities and projects.

- Grant Updates (Jennifer, Brian, and Gary)
  - KFRI currently has 18 agreements in place with \$137,000 allocated to these agreements. These agreements account for 247 acres of work on the ground. Several other agreements are currently in the works. Getting a lot of interest in the Tobacco Valley and Troy areas.
  - Western States is gaining momentum.
  - Rabbit Tracks is waiting for the MFAP agreement. Grants and Agreements will not allow KFRI as match for this project. Grants and Agreements are adjusting the budget information to reflect this change.
  - Joint Chief's proposal will go out today for signatures. The proposal this year dropped Osprey Landing project area and added 10% to FS projects in case we want to pursue additional GNA opportunities. Ripley was signed this week so all projects are NEPA cleared. Current timelines for Joint Chief's proposals are due to the Regional Office 05/21/21, we will get proposals back with suggested feedback by 06/05/21, final proposal packages are due to the Regional Office on 06/18/21, and 06/25/21 for the Washington Office.
  - NRCS has \$750,000 in funding for FY21. Currently they are putting together agreement packages. Two thirds of this money is going to Glen Lake area of which 450 acres is under agreement which exceeds expectations. The Enda Creek area has \$250,000 in new agreements.
  - NRCS was preliminary approved for the next area in fiscal year 22; Fire Adapted Fortine Grant. Next year NRCS should have 3 active funding areas for grants.
- Change of Command at Libby Fire Department
  - Steve Lauer is the new fire chief at the Libby Fire Department. Nobody was on the call today to address questions raised of the organization and who is responsible for Steve's previous duties.
  - **Table this topic for the next meeting.**
- Issuance of Burn Permits and Burning Conditions (Bruce, Jennifer, Logan, and Jacob)
  - Stimson currently has a fire on Turner Mountain. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Stimson lit a 50-acre broadcast burn. They wanted to be safe and burn earlier. However, heat remained longer because only half of the fuels burned due to higher fuel moistures. On Monday with the high winds and low humidities, the entire 50-acre unit reburned with some minor slopovers on Stimson and Forest Service lands. As of yesterday, only a few smokes remain. The plan moving forward will be to demobilize resources today and monitor in the coming weeks. The unit is scheduled to be planted in two weeks. Stimson will be checking all piles that were burned last fall for remaining heat.
  - DNRC has been busy with every timber sale that had piles burned last fall because these areas are still hot after the mild winter. They are using excavators to rip apart piles and mop-up.
  - The Forest Service has several units that were burned recently with heat remaining. On Monday, some of these units were moving around but still within the burn areas. The most notable is a burn in the Callahan drainage west of Troy that is very visible.
  - So far in 2021, we are at or exceeding records for fire conditions and low fuel moistures. With the rain today, it was decided to continue issuing burn permits through May and evaluate whether we should continue in June.
  - **Jacob will schedule a meeting for next week to make a decision on burn permits in June.**
- Firefighting Capacity for 2021 Fire Season (All)
  - The Forest Service is down on forces from the top down across the forest. There are

multiple permanent positions vacant now and due to hiring issues, the temporary workforce is also down. To mitigate this issue, the Supervisor's Office is considering options of requesting Severity money sooner and bringing in outside resources earlier than normal to boost firefighting capacity.

- Libby Unit DNRC is fully staffed with only two new firefighters this year. Three engines will be fully staffed with an additional engine staffed with unit specialists. Recently hired a new dispatcher for the State. The only limitation this year is lacking in Type 3 Team support in all functional areas except operations. The Libby Unit will be leaning on the Northwest Land Office for help. The Libby Unit does have some recruits that would like to help with logistics and plans but need training.
- Lincoln County is at normal capacity. They plan to have a fire co-op meeting soon. At this point, there are no issues or concerns.
- Stimson will do what they do every year by sending out a notice every Friday notifying the Forest Service and DNRC of where equipment is located on their lands.
- The fire restriction site is obsolete now. All public information with QR codes and links to the website needs to be removed. For all jurisdictions, the southwest prevention zone is working on a new website option. Currently they are compiling GIS polygons of areas so the public can determine restriction status from the website.
- Prescribed Fire Goals, Targets, Outcomes of Burns Along Highway 37 (Harmony and Jacob)
  - Eureka: Prescribed fire and fuels projects along Highway 37 are a partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration. Fish Wildlife and Parks gives grants to improve habitat to replace what was lost with the reservoir construction. Recently, there is a focus on bighorn sheep habitat from the Kooconusa bridge to Libby Dam. NEPA was behind for projects in this area so there was a several year lapse since previous burns. This year Eureka completed three burns in this area. One burn was hand ignition for 130 acres and the other two were aerial ignition burns for about 780 acres. Objectives of the burns were to reduce fuels and rejuvenate forbs and shrubs. Eureka coordinated with Libby on firing personnel and helicopter use to reduce costs. One of the notifications in the burn plan is the highway department. MDOT also leant a reader board sign to notify the public. One of the burns got pretty smoky on the highway and the Forest Service shuttled traffic through the burn area. Also, when burning along the highway, fire vehicles with flashing lights are placed on each end of the burns to help slow traffic. A question was raised about beetle mortality following burns. The Regional Insect and Disease specialists come up pretty regularly and look for beetle hazards following burns. To this date, there have been no real concerns.
  - Libby: Similar to Eureka, BPA grants were available for prescribed burning within the East Reservoir project in the Cripple Horse drainage. This year Libby completed three aerial ignition burns and several hand ignition burns for approximately 2,500 acres. Objectives were to reduce fuels, improve wildlife habitat, and reintroduce fire.

### **Round Robbin:**

- Jeremy Rank brought up a concern of forest health along the Kootenai River Road on the first mile or so. This is owned by a combination of Lincoln County, City of Libby, and Department of Transportation. The ponderosa pine are dying and this is a critical ingress/egress route. Discussion surrounded around logging systems and Bruce was going to look into Ponsse systems in the area.

Adjourned