

Lincoln County Firesafe Council Agenda

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

Date: June 15th, 2023

Time: 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Jacob Jeresek, Steve Lauer, Jeremy Rank, Gary Kedish, Matt Chumbley, Doug Turman, RJ McDole, Luke Dahm, Brian Hobday, Seth Carbonari, Danny Lemer, Sam Martin, Heidi McRoberts, and Jennifer Nelson.

* Red font indicates action items.

New/Old Business:

- Lincoln County Planning Board vacancy and recruitment (Jennifer)
 - The Lincoln County Planning Board currently has two vacancies at the Libby location. There is a desire to have someone from the Lincoln County Firesafe Council or a member of the public that has fire and fuels experience to apply for the board. Subdivision proposals are required to have a fuels assessment completed and the planning board's duties are to review these and make recommendations. Additionally, the subdivision regulations are up for review and these employees can provide input. The time commitment of the planning board is monthly meetings and when reviewing applications.
 - **If you know of anyone that might be interested, have them contact Lincoln County Planner Jesse Hagg or complete the application located on the Lincoln County Planning Department website.** These positions will remain open until they're filled.
- Lincoln County Firesafe Trailer assignments for the summer (Jennifer)
 - Libby Farmers Market June 22
 - Trego Chautauqua June 28 at the Trego School. **Marcel is unavailable for this event so RJ will check with Ali if she can take this on.**
 - Kootenai River Rodeo June 28 and 29.
 - Possibly the Troy 4th of July. The area is crowded so people are not sure if there is enough room for the trailer. Jennifer will wait for a formal request.
 - Lincoln County Fair August 24-27. **RJ will talk to Ali to see if she can take this on.**
 - Kootenai Forest Fair in September in Libby.
 - Troy Apple Fest in Troy in September. **Matt Chumbley will coordinate this request.**
 - Three Rivers Ranger District in September for a project open house.
- New Agency Projects (Forest Service, DNRC, NRCS, Lincoln County, Timber Companies)
 - Stimson started work in the McKillop Creek drainage.
 - Green Diamond is in the final stages of finalizing contracts for their portion of the Montana Forest Action Plan (MFAP) grant near Island Lake. They hope to begin this work sometime this summer.
 - Green Diamond is also completing forest health and precommercial thinning in the Boiling Springs area.
 - Green Diamond is completing road brushing and maintenance in several of their areas to provide for better fire access.

- Green Diamond is involved in the Chain of Lakes neighborhood plan.
- There was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the Forest Service and the National Alliance of Forest Owners. This MOU was created to improve communications between fire management and private industry with wildfire response.
- On the Three Rivers Ranger District, the Black Ram and Knotty Pine projects are currently in litigation. The Forest Service is seeking injunctive relief for the Knotty Pine project. Due to this litigation and similar endangered species concerns, the Pleasant Pheasant project is currently on hold.
- Lincoln County received funding through the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) to complete fuels reduction on miscellaneous parcels across the county. Some of this work includes a 15-acre parcel near Kootenai Vista. Lincoln County is also working with the DNRC to utilize the fuels crew on county parcels less than 5 acres.
- Grant Updates and Planned Grant Applications (NRCS, Lincoln County, DNRC)
 - The DNRC is utilizing an additional \$60,000 within the Rabbit Tracts MFAP project that was provided by Lincoln County.
 - The Island Lake MFAP grant is currently stalled until the money is made available in July. Currently, there are about a dozen landowners signed up to participate.
 - The CWDG money will not be available until July. The first step will be to hire a fuels service forester and a fuels operations specialist.
 - The DNRC is working on Hazard Fuel Reduction Grants in the Barnaby Lake and Othorp Lake areas.
 - Western States is outreaching for applicants in the Farm 2 Market, Swede Mountain, and McMillan Ridge areas moving south to Highway 2 and Libby Creek.
- Joint Chief's Update (Brian and Gary)
 - NRCS was approved for additional Joint Chief's funding and has been able to fund everyone that has applied to date.
 - The Forest Service is on track to accomplish what was planned in FY23. The Forest service is not asking for funding in FY24 due to the remaining work residing in the Ripley project which is in litigation. The acres within Ripley will still be accomplished but likely through Wildfire Crisis Strategy (WCS) funding.
- Kootenai Complex Update (Nikia)
 - The Kootenai National Forest has accomplished over 8,200 acres in the WCS landscape this year of which about 5,400 acres has been funded by Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Law funds. Currently, there is about \$2 million in contracts of which most has gone to local contractors. The forest is currently working on the FY24 budget request.

Round Robin:

- There was a discussion on the Firesafe Council meeting schedule. It was decided to reconvene on September 21, 2023, dependent on fire season.
- House Bill 883 made \$60 million available to the DNRC. \$30 million of this is to bolster fire suppression by adding 2 handcrews, scoopers, a medium helicopter, and a light helicopter. The other \$30 million is going towards fuels restoration projects. Each program is meeting trying to determine how to spend the money when it becomes available on July 1. The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) program will receive some of this funding. Locally, the GNA program is working with the Kootenai National Forest on projects that meet this need. Additionally, the DNRC is looking at precommercial thinning opportunities as this work is often deferred. There were lots of bills signed this last legislative session surrounding fire suppression and fuels mitigation.

Adjourned