

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

Location: Ponderosa Room (in person) and Microsoft Teams Conference Call (virtual)

Date: June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Time: 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Jacob Jeresek, Tom Lane, Jennifer Nelson, Jeremy Rank, Ali Ulwelling, RJ McDole, Doug Turman, Matt Chumbley, Marcel Getz, and Steve Lauer.

\*Red font indicates action items.

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

- Grant Updates (Jennifer and Jeremy reporting for Brian)
  - Just closed out Kootenai Forests to Rivers Initiative second installment of money. All 2022 funds were allocated and no money was returned. With this, 460 acres are under agreement with 348 of those completed. Total spending was \$260,374 and landowner contributions equaled \$90,497 resulting in an average cost per acre of \$1,076.
  - Western States has \$262,000 available. Outreach is focusing adjacent to the Ripley project. Interested parties so far include two properties on Obsidian Lane, three properties on Farm to Market Road, and one property in Cowell Creek.
  - Rabbit Tracts project is progressing.
  - The bark beetle grant for J Niels Park will begin this fall.
  - NRCS TIP areas outside of Joint Chief's include Edna, Fortine, and Glen Lake. NRCS received funding for everyone that applied in these tip areas. With Derek Luchik accepting a new position, writing forest management plans in the future will be a shortfall. This position has had several funding mechanisms with the latest being provided by the American Forest Foundation (AFF). The current contract with AFF expires in September and AFF has indicated it will not renew the contract. This will leave a significant void and NRCS will be evaluating potential funding options in the future.
- Community Wildfire Defense Grant (Jeremy and Marcel)
  - MT DNRC Libby Unit applied for a community wildfire defense grant that focuses on the home ignition zone with small landowners that is unattractive for contractors. Typically, contractors do not bid on projects under 5 acres. The grant application includes funding for a fuels crew to work 6-9 months per year for a timeframe of 5 years on these types of properties. With this grant, if awarded, the fuels crew can't work on Forest Service ground unless they are operating under a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreement.
  - There is concern that the fuels crew will be taking away work from contractors and other grant programs as Libby Unit would not charge landowners to work on their properties. Continued communication and coordination between Lincoln County and the NRCS will be key to ensure the fuels crew is not taking away work from contractors or other grant programs.
- Joint Chief's Update (Jeremy reporting for Brian)
  - NRCS has fully allocated the fiscal year 2022 funds within the Libby Surround Joint Chief's project. In 2022, this covers approximately 600 acres with \$600,000 being allocated. All forest management plans in 2022 are complete. In 2022, the focus area for outreach was the Farm to Market Road to Haul Road areas including Swede Mountain.

In 2023, the outreach areas include Flower Creek, Panoramic View Subdivision, Parmenter, and Hemp Hill with approximately \$500,000 available to allocate. In 2024, NRCS will still accept applications, but they are unsure which area(s) they will focus on.

- Summer Meeting Discussion (All)
  - For the June meeting, there were some technical difficulties with the internet speed at the Libby Fire Hall and facilitating video and audio for the virtual option of the meeting. **Steve is working with the internet provider to fix the system.** Moving forward, we will continue to use the Libby Fire Hall for the in-person option and Microsoft Teams for the virtual option of the meeting.
  - After discussion about whether to postpone meetings to the fall or continue in July, it was decided to keep the July meeting. If people can't attend because of field season, this time would be used for the Shared Stewardship Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) core team to discuss the operating plan.

### **Round Robin:**

- Home assessment training in May was cancelled. The MT DNRC Bureau is looking at rescheduling this fall sometime.
- The shared stewardship portion of the GNA agreement is being worked on. With the shared stewardship MOU, the Lincoln County WUI roadmap is in progress but an operating plan still needs completed. **An operating plan discussion will be added to the July meeting agenda.**
- Fire Adapted Kootenai (FAK) is growing in popularity. After the Era of Megafires movie, Libby Unit has completed 17 home assessments in the month of May alone. This is more than the last two years combined.
- The Rabbit Tracts video is posted to the FAK website and Facebook page with good feedback.
- The prevention committee is working on a prevention plan for the Northwest Montana zone. There was a request to include Ali and Marcel in these discussions. **Ally Talbot will reach out to Ali and Marcel.**
- On MT DNRC trust lands, there is an active sale behind the Libby Unit office. Also, the Libby Unit secured a hazardous fuels reduction grant for mastication in the Bobtail area covering 180 acres. The unit is also setting up a timber sale in the Libby Creek area behind the Double N Ranch.
- NRCS is looking at a future TIP area behind Crystal Lake. One landowner has interest in participating and owns 200 acres that could be used as an anchor to allow smaller landowners the opportunity to sign up.
- American Forest Resource Council has the Western Pod purchaser's meeting on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. A portion of this meeting will be a field trip in the morning on the Three River's Ranger District.
- The Ripley project is still awaiting a decision from the judge regarding the stay order. At this time, no further information can be disclosed.
- With recent and anticipated litigation on several projects, several timber sales will likely not be advertised in fiscal year 2023. To try and supplement timber volume, the Kootenai National Forest is looking at several areas to complete Categorical Exclusions. The timeline would be to complete the environmental analysis by the end of 2022 and advertise timber sales in 2023. Once the areas are officially identified, more information can be disclosed.

Adjourned