

Lincoln County Firesafe Council Notes

Location – Teams Conference Call

Date- June 17th, 2021

Time-9:00 AM-10:20 PM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Jacob Jeresek, Matt Chumbley, Chris Beeks, Doug Turman, Gary Kedish, Brent Teske, Harmony Burow, Greg Archie, Jennifer Nelson, Brian Ressel, Jodi Turk, Chad Benson, Mo Bookwalter, Heather Fuller, Steve Kimball, Derek Luchik, Mark Peck

*Red font indicates action items.

New/Old Business:

- All Lands Prioritization for Treatment within Lincoln County WUI (Steve Kimble)
 - There is a strong need to do more work within the Lincoln County WUI to reduce fire risk. Mark Peck initiated a shared stewardship initiative which developed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the DNRC, Forest Service, NRCS, and Lincoln County. Mark is now the shared stewardship coordinator for Lincoln County. The Montana Forest Action Plan and risk assessment were completed last year. Lincoln County is at the top of the list for wildfire risk between these tools. The goal is to increase pace and scale of treatments within the Lincoln County WUI to reduce fire risk.
 - The current MOU does not prescribe action and there is a desire to update the MOU to define a road map for all partners. Also, the MOU would like to add creating annual operating plans. It was proposed that the Firesafe Council would develop a road map and annual operating plan to help strategize where we go next for treatments. The thought behind this is to promote collaboration between technical experts to provide recommendations. The council would use the updated CWPP for recommendations and prioritizations. Also, this would show industry that there is a plan with a tangible schedule. This effort should utilize the recent work on prioritization and project development in the Lincoln County WUI, such as the Joint Chief's proposal and Rabbit Tracks Montana Forest Action Plan grant proposal. This effort can be viewed as continuation of the existing work to execute the MOU. The Firesafe Council agreed to work on this effort. However, the amount of time available is limited because council members have other duties and priorities. Another goal is to have all information in one place and a common understanding of how to move forward.
 - To avoid potential litigation, as witnessed on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, it was suggested that the council look for areas where the current WUI and proposed WUI overlap. At yesterday's American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) meeting, Jennifer asked Sarah (AFRC Attorney) for legal guidance on the proposed Lincoln County WUI development and Sarah was willing to help.
 - There is also a goal to show where there are opportunities to increase pace and scale as well as funding mechanisms. The Firesafe Council would seek out grant opportunities. There is hope that Lincoln County hires a grant employee to help with

the overall effort. **Mo Bookwalter will send information on potential grants/funding opportunities to the Lincoln County Firesafe Council.**

- There was concern that the CWPP is a stand-alone document developed by the Firesafe Council and the public. The document provides recommendations, not directions, of where to work. Concern was also voiced that members of the Firesafe Council are in these roles as collateral duties and do not have time to take more work on. It was brought up that this ask is not going to create a huge workload but more communicate the efforts that are already taking place.
- NRCS prioritizes TIP areas with a local working group that focuses on the WUI. **Brian will invite everyone to a working group to help NRCS prioritize future working areas.**
- Next step is a meeting in the Fall after fire season and chart out a strategy.
- CWPP WUI Discussion and Potential Issues Update (Jacob)
 - The Kootenai National Forest held an agency meeting last Friday with Forest Staff Officers and Resource specialists to identify if/how the proposed Lincoln County WUI is breaking Forest Plan guidance, law, regulation, or policy.
 - At this time, the only potential issue identified was regarding the exemption and exception acres identified within the Biological Opinion of the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction and KNF Land Management Plan for Canada Lynx habitat. With the proposed WUI expanding (143,000 acres currently in Canada Lynx habitat to 333,000 habitat acres), the KNF may potentially use up the allotted exemption and exception acres at an accelerated rate. If this occurs, the forest would need to re-initiate consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to determine whether the KNF could obtain additional exemption and exception acres due to changed conditions from original analysis or if the KNF is done with these types of acres in Canada Lynx habitat for the remainder of the KNF Land Management Plan until the next revision. However, at this time, the KNF has only used 5% and 18% respectively of the allotted acres since 2007. The forest wildlife biologist will introduce this topic at the next USFWS monthly meeting in July to see what the next steps for the KNF will be.
 - Regarding the Hanna Flat decision on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, it really boiled down to a couple of simple errors made by the district fuels specialist. That individual accidentally referred to two different years of the Bonners County CWPP revision in their specialist report, so the judge did not know which version to use when it came to identifying where the WUI resides. Also, the individual did not include a map of the WUI in the NEPA document so there was no way to prove that the entire Hanna Flats decision was entirely within WUI as stated throughout the scoping document, specialist reports, and decision memo.
- Grant Updates (Jennifer and Brian)
 - KFRI: Lots of interest in the Troy and Bobtail areas. Currently, there is 233 acres under contract with 105 acres accomplished except for burning. There is \$141,000 committed by the KFRI grant with \$57,000 committed by landowners bringing the total commitment to \$198,000. The average treatment cost is \$924 per acre with an average treatment size of 12 acres.
 - Rabbit Tracks received the signed award. Stimson has started work in the project area.
 - Western States: Need to seek permission to enlarge the project area. Currently there are 3 interested landowners that reside just outside of the current boundary.
 - NRCS has three active grant areas and are proposing Joint Chief's funding. Currently, NRCS has nearly \$2 million committed. With the workload, they are trying to build capacity at NRCS. NRCS does have a capacity building agreement with DNRC.
 - Glen Lake project is in year 1 of 5 with several projects getting started. Edna Fortine grant is in year 4 of 5 and is getting a lot of interest with landowners

adjacent to other treatment areas. Fire Adapted Fortine mirrored the Joint Chief's proposal and shared stewardship initiative. The plan is to have a 2024 rollout for this project area.

- Brian had a meeting with AFF over KFRI. He is still hoping for some landowner education through KFRI.
- Change of Command at Libby Fire Department (Steve)
 - Steve was unable to attend. Table this agenda item for a future meeting.
- Prevention Update
 - FS has a prevention tech (Matt Chumbley) at Troy and the fire organization is assuming these roles at Eureka and Libby. The Kootenai works closely with the Northwest Zone prevention committee in providing messaging. Also, the Northwest Zone works closely with the Southwest Zone on media campaigns through gas station tv, billboards, etc that are offered in our local areas.
 - DNRC is purchasing 8 roadside signs for fuels projects in the county and for free home assessments. They are getting door hangers made for the McGinnis Meadows area for free home assessments. DNRC is working with James from Stimson to improve campgrounds in the Fisher River drainage. Currently there are 29 identified campgrounds on the Fisher River and Wolf Creek but due to overuse in the area, 21 sites have been developed illegally. They will be working on installing signs with rules at designated camp sites, closing some of the sites with heavy resource damage, and making some of the sites day use only.
- Evergreen magazine is sending out a county wide brochure funded through the State. Part of the brochure is a resources page. To make the messaging consistent, we need to update the Fire Adapted Kootenai website. **Jennifer will send Jacob the updates to edit the website.**
- Future Meetings Discussion (All)
 - Due to field season and fire season, it was decided that the next meeting would be September 17th, 2021.

Round Robbin:

Adjourned