

Lincoln County Firesafe Council Meeting Notes

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

Date: October 20th, 2022

Time: 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Note Taker: Jacob Jeresek

In Attendance: Jacob Jeresek, Jennifer Nelson, Steve Lauer, Korbyn Dub, Brian Ressel, RJ McDole, Doug Turman, Mark Peck, and Nate Gassmann

*Red font indicates action items

New/Old Business:

- Lincoln County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Update (Jennifer)
 - The CWPP is moving along. In order to hold public meetings, we need a final draft of the CWPP with associated maps. Unfortunately, the County GIS contractor has not been able to provide the maps requested. As a result, Jennifer reached out to the Montana Department of Natural Resource and Conservation (DNRC) and Nick Youngstrom will be providing the requested maps. Currently, there is no timeline of when public meetings may be scheduled but the plan is to have the approved CWPP in January of 2023.
 - Jennifer would like to have a CWPP core team meeting to discuss the public education and home assessment portions of the document. **Jennifer will schedule a core team meeting for Thursday October 27th at City Hall.**
- Home Assessment Training (Jennifer)
 - At the last meeting, Brent Teske provided an expectation to look for ways to increase participation with Rural Fire Departments (RFD's) at monthly Firesafe Council meetings. Home assessments is an area of interest identified to help with participation and there is a desire to place the responsibility of home assessments back on RFD's to complete across the County. Montana DNRC is trying to provide a standardized statewide home assessment training, but this is not progressing. A suggestion was made to look into contracted home assessment training. The National Fire Protection Association is a potential option and requires a minimum of 50 participants per training course. We don't know what the cost of this training may be, but Jennifer stated there are grants available for training costs. If contracted training isn't an option, Steve doesn't see any reason why we can't do our own in-house training. If we pursue the in-house training, we need to coordinate with Marcel as he has completed over 40 home assessments this year. With the desire to place home assessments back on the RFD's, there remains the unanswered question of who will do the data entry of home assessments into the SAM database.
- Future Meetings (All)
 - Regarding RFD participation at monthly Firesafe Council Meetings, a suggestion was made to send out a survey to the Firesafe Council looking at meeting times, days of the week, locations, etc. that would help with increasing meeting attendance. **Jacob will send a survey out to the Council to complete and the topic will be revisited at the next meeting.** Jennifer reiterated that the County pays mileage for RFD's to attend meetings.

- Burn Permit Website for all of Lincoln County (Burn Permit Subcommittee)
 - In 2023, all of Lincoln County will utilize the State of Montana online burn permit system. There is some work associated with updating addresses across the County to have this operational by March 1st. Jennifer will schedule a meeting with the burn permit core team around the November Firesafe Council meeting.
- Fall Burns Planned in Libby Outdoor Burning Control Area (All)
 - All organizations reported on planned burns this fall within the Libby Outdoor Burning Control Area listed below.
 - The Forest Service has landing piles at the Skidale project, piles within the Flower Creek project, and piles in the Libby Fire Cache vicinity.
 - Montana DNRC does not have any burns planned in this area.
 - Lincoln County has a large burn planned on the Mackey property with over 300 piles and smaller projects on Bobtail Cutoff. The landfill would also like to burn the wood pile but is waiting on the air curtain burner that was purchased.
 - Libby RFD has burns planned in the Whitehaven, Bobtail, and Croteau Road area.
 - Stimson has two large burns planned. The biggest is in the old Operable Unit 3 area with landings created from 300 acres of harvest in the Tub Gulch drainage. The other project consists of landings near Spencer Road.
- New Agency Projects (Forest Service, DNRC, NRCS, Lincoln County, Timber Companies)
 - Montana DNRC has two potential new project areas in Lincoln County that rely on successful grant applications. The DNRC is applying for a Community Wildfire Defense Grant in the Thompson Chain of Lakes area and a Montana Forest Action Plan grant in the Island Lake area.
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is developing fiscal year 2023 projects with new landowners applying to projects within the four Targeted Implementation Plan (TIP) areas.
 - Lincoln County has various scattered fuels reduction projects on private lands south of Libby. This fall the County will be working on a project between J Niels Park, the Haul Road, and Kootenai River. Next Spring the County will work on a project between the Landfill and Pipe Creek. The County is also conceptualizing a project in Troy around Kootenai Vista.
 - Stimson is currently working in the Cowell Creek drainage and Sheldon Mountain area. This winter, Stimson will move into the Jackson Creek drainage.
- Grant Updates and Planned Grant Applications (Jennifer and Brian)
 - NRCS has four TIP areas tip areas which include Glen Lake, Edna Creek, Fire Adapted Fortine, and the Libby Surround Joint Chief's project area. In these four TIP areas, the deadline for landowners to apply for projects is October 28th. Areas that are gaining interest include properties adjacent to agency projects in the Fortine area and properties in the Parmenter Creek area.
 - Kootenai Forests to Rivers Initiative (KFRI) is winding down with 530 acres under contract. Of this, 425 acres are completed with another 40 acres expected to be completed this fall. Lincoln County is sitting good in relation to the terms of the grant. Ashley Juran will be in the area the second week of November to tour the KFRI project.
 - Western States has a couple of properties enrolled on Obsidian Drive in the Swede Mountain area. The County will need to do some outreach to gain participation.
 - The Rabbit Tracts Montana Forest Action Plan grant is about 70% completed. The Forest Service mastication contract was recently awarded but will not be completed this year due to the selected contractor's workload. The plan is to work on this next spring. Everything needs to be completed by July of 2023 to meet the terms of the grant. Montana DNRC will be burning piles created on their portion this fall. Tuesday October 25th, Roger Isaac will be in the area touring the Rabbit Tracts projects.

- As previously mentioned, the Montana DNRC is applying for a Community Wildfire Defense Grant and Montana Forest Action Plan Grant.
- Joint Chief's Update (Brian and Nate)
 - NRCS is accepting applications within the Libby Surround Joint Chief's project area for fiscal year 2023 projects through October 28th.
 - The remaining Forest Service work to complete resides within the Ripley project area which is under litigation. The agency is moving forward with project planning to be prepared when the litigation is lifted. The district is working on submitting contracts for fiscal year 2023 within Ripley non-commercial units and plans for Hoodoo Unit 16.

Round Robin:

- Mineral county is looking for a research assistant working with emergency management in a county forester role.
- Lincoln County is looking for a part time employee this winter to work on grant administration, general office administration, and general field work.

Adjourned