

Lincoln County Firesafe Council Meeting Notes

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

Date: February 15, 2024

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Note Taker: Jennifer Brown

In Attendance: Personally present, Boyd White, Steve Lauer, Mathew Chumley, Ed Levert, Bob Castenada, Vicki Stephens, Marcel Getz, Tyson Piper, Jacob Jeresek, Jennifer Brown, Jennifer Nelson. Virtually present, Seth Carbonari, Sam Martin, RJ McDole, and Brent Teske.

New/Old Business:

- Introductions – Boyd White – EMA director, Jennifer Brown – note taker
 - Jennifer Nelson introduced Boyd White as the new EMA director and Jennifer Brown as the new notetaker.
- New Projects on the Rexford Fortine R.D.
 - Seth Carbonari gives an overview with a map showing different projects the USFS is working on. In the Trego area, the Edna Fortine Project of 3,000 acres has been scoped and is currently working through consultation. The project goals are for fuels reduction and forest health.
 - The East Fork Fire Salvage project has been through the scoping process. The project goals are for economic value, to start the reforestation process, and reduce hazard fuels. It is estimated there will be 4,000 acres of salvage and 400 acres of fuels reduction. The hope is to package the sale and get it out in fiscal year 2024.
 - The Glen Sinclair project is being scoped right now. This area is a priority area for CWPP, the Montana Forest Action Plan, and a priority area for the district with a lot of isolated parcels of forest land. It is a 3,000-acre project with the goals of fuels reduction, forest health and forest resiliency. It is an area with a lot of beetle activity causing concern to homeowners. One intent is to make a strong fuel break using Foothills Road. There is a decision targeted for the end of July with some of the sales advertised in 2024 and some in 2025. The public feedback on this project has been positive so far.
- Other New Projects
 - There were no other new projects reported on.
- Wildfire Awareness Month/Fire Adapted Communities Workshop (KFSC-Ed Levert, Bob Castenada)

- The Kootenai Forest Stakeholder Coalition has funds from a grant that will be used to put on workshops. Currently there are plans for a workshop in Fortine, Eureka and in Troy to be held in May. There will be a presentation covering The Good Neighbor Authority, Montana Forest Action Plan, and The Kootenai Complex. The owner of Northwoods Insurance in Eureka will cover the impact with insurance holders which could be an incentive to homeowners to do something with their property. Ready Set Go, and Code Red will be covered as well as a presentation by Bo Pittman covering the evacuation process. The workshops are tentatively scheduled in May with Fortine on the 8th, Eureka on the 11th, and Troy on the 18th. There was a brainstorm session to come up with fun and informative activities to be implemented to involve homeowners and families.
- Spring Burning Plans
 - The State has the Libby Unit burn in April. It is the first burn on trust lands since 2015. There are a few piles on the Clay Banks that will be burned as well.
 - The Forest Service reports 2,000 to 5,000 plus acres of broadcast landscape burns beginning March and going through May. It is predicted to be hotter and drier than average with an earlier burn window.
 - Jennifer has talked with Dustin about having an earlier burn season starting in March. The sheriff's office is willing to issue citations for illegal burns.
 - Stimson Timber does not have any spring burns scheduled but will be checking piles from last year's burns.
- NFPA Home Assessment Training
 - The rural fire departments used to do home assessments and were paid by the county. It is a goal of the new CWPP to get it back into the hands of the rural fire departments. There is training available that can standardize certification and covers wildfire behaviors, structure exposure, the concepts of the home ignition zone and structure ignition potential. The cost is about \$12,000 for 30 attendees with additional cost for additional attendees. Jennifer will seek the commissioner's approval for use of funds for training.
- Annual Review of CWPP
 - During next month's meeting, Jennifer would like to look at establishing some dates and start setting targets for the goals that were set in addition to the fuels reduction work in priority areas.
 - There is a need for public outreach for online burn permits via newspaper, website, and social media. The Fire Adapted Kootenai website will need to be updated. Included in the outreach material should be the fact that if someone had a burn permit last year, the same permit number will be used for this year.

- Grant Updates
 - For the DNRC, Jeremy has been working on the Montana Forest Action Plan Island Lake fuels reduction project. About 60% of the landowners are signed up. The priority areas are the Chain of Lakes, Elk Creek McGinnis Meadows, Dunn Creek, and Island Lake is the #4 priority. The state is looking at Dunn Creek as the next action plan project. It is still being determined which grant would be most useful for the Elk Creek McGinnis area as it is a larger priority area.
 - Regarding CWBG, Marcel will be doing site visits March and April getting projects lined up for the first year for the fuels crew. There are 109 acres for the first year of the program. The properties are county wide, but the Chain of Lakes area will be targeted.
 - Vicki introduced a map showing Non-CWBG grant coverage areas and CWPP Priority areas. There are 5 listed properties of applicants that have met the criteria since December. Vicki stated three applicants have been rejected. One applicant was rejected as they didn't like the specs of the program and two applicants were not close to the priority areas. Vickie is working on foundational documents before she does any outreach.
 - County wide, there was a targeted grant area on Swede McMillan which was tied to Ripley. Jennifer has been getting a better response now that she has moved Swede McMillan to the Troy area.
 - Rabbit Tracks is set to expire in May. There is approximately \$80,000 in the fund. The state has granted an extension on the grant until the end of the calendar year. There are two larger properties that are being targeted.
 - The Tidbits project will become more active once the weather improves.
 - Jennifer will be closing out the local government assistance grants and the CWPP grant. The Kootenai Forest Stakeholders grant will not be closed out until money can be designated to a project.
- New Grant Opportunities
 - The DNRC grant window is currently open for preapplications but closes on March 15th. There is an array of grant opportunities such as forestry assistance grants, landscape scale restoration grants, wildlife urban interface grants, community wildfire defense grants, and the Montana Forest Action Plan grant.
 - The Department of Interior Grant is a climate change grant that is available.
 - There is a \$20,000 grant that allows converting trucks to engines.
- Round Robin
 - Marcel has accepted a position in the land office in Kalispell. New applicants will be interviewed on Friday and the new hire will start in March.

- PODS 2.0 will be kicking off this next year. Most of Western Montana Forests have been selected. Phase 2.0 is identifying all the values in the PODs and essentially using the ISAP process of wildfire strategic planning. There will be workshops held across the forest.

Meeting adjourned.