

January 21, 2016 Lincoln County FireSafe Council Meeting Minutes

Attendees; Ed Levert, Lincoln Co Forester; Dawain Burgess, Trego, Fortine, Stryker RFD; Doug Turman and Wyatt Frampton, DNRC; Bonnie Hudlet, Bull Lake RFD and Kootenai Valley Record; John Huber, Upper Yaak FSA; Bill Swope & Lou Kuennen, Flathead Economic Policy Center; Lisa Osborn, Troy USFS; Jake Mertes, Lincoln Co. Environmental Health; Kirk Kraft, Lincoln County EMA/Fisher River FSA; Steve Lauer, Libby RFD; Mark Peck, Lincoln County Commissioner; Terry Peck, Firefighter Challenge Coordinator; Tim Bumgarner, Libby USFS.

Round Robin:

Mertes- Jake said that Libby's air quality is doing well. We almost went into a Code Red on Wednesday with the advent of an air inversion. Code Red would request residents to stop their burning of wood in stoves or fireplaces. Jake said that poor burning techniques were a problem such as not burning dry wood or shutting down their stoves at night, which ends up causing poor combustion. Kirk said that county dispatchers can put out a Code Red if Lisa Odewaldt is not available. A concern was voiced that the State has been issuing burning permits in the county, but not coordinating with Jake or others. Jake was going to contact the State. Jake said that the county's new web site will try and clarify some of the confusion over burn permits. Tim mentioned that there needs to be a distinction between burn permits and air quality permits.

Burgess- Dawain mentioned that TFS has lost over \$6,000 through embezzlement. The case is proceeding. Activity for the department has been slow with a few mutual aid responses.

Osborn- Our FireSafe calendars have been distributed, although EMA still has some. The Forest budget is bad except for fire. Seasonal hiring is on hold. The Oly project DEIS comment period at Three Rivers RD is open until February 16. The next project is in the Callahan Drainage. The Northern Region Fire Prevention Group Workshop will be held in Billings on April 19 and 20th. This will be a virtual workshop with instructors/facilitators located in Boise.

Hudlet- Activity at Bull Lake RFD has been slow except for several responses to roll over accidents.

Lauer- Steve said that things have been relatively quiet.

Bumgarner- The district is hiring a 10 person crew specifically assigned to the OU-3 area of the Rainy Creek vermiculite site. WR Grace would like to reduce the size of OU-3. There is a possibility of funding to do fuel reduction projects within the area. There will be a smoke management meeting in Kalispell next month.

Kraft- Fisher River FSA had 50 calls in 2015. There is a possibility of a cell phone tower being constructed at the fire hall location. They have ordered a Type 5/6 engine. They have 2 new trustees on the board. They are investigating the possibility of becoming a fire district vs. their current FSA designation, which would allow them to increase building assessments.

EMA- Kirk said that they improving the radio at Meadow Peak, which would help alleviate some of the problems they have had with the Calx Mtn site. He is looking at reviewing the county operations plan as it is fairly general. The county fire coop group training committee, with help from Wyatt, is looking at all firemen qualifications and training needs.

Turman- Doug said that a new State bureau chief for fire has been named, starting work on Feb 8. Doug's office has been working on a waste disposal site with DEQ.

Huber- John was filling in for Mike Sanders. Things were quiet in the Yaak with only a few medical calls.

Frampton- Wyatt said that they were in the process of obtaining water rights in the Fisher River for fire training. You don't need a permit to use water from a natural source in an emergency. The DNRC will be coordinating their future timber sale burning with the Forest Service in Flower Creek to minimize air pollution. This will include a mutual aid agreement for sharing work. All fire vacancies have been posted and hiring will be in April.

Levert- I mentioned that I had mostly worked on Kootenai Forest Stakeholder Coalition projects including the intervener status on the East Reservoir Project. I have also been reviewing the DEIS for the Oly project. The Alvord Lake meeting will be at the Three Rivers Ranger Station on January 26.

Swope- Bill said that they had a \$100,000 grant along the Hwy 93 Flathead/Lincoln County line that would allow some grant funding for projects in this county. The Flathead FSC will be moving forward with a meeting scheduled for next month. There will be a Montana FireSafe Council Meeting in Polson in April that he encouraged me to attend.

Kuennen- Lou said that he has just done a few assessments. He has accumulated a number of possible fuel reduction grant possibilities once the \$30,000 from Lincoln County is received.

Old Business:

Drone Pilot Project- Wyatt said that the contact for Trimble had left the country. There was agreement that there was still an opportunity to use drones in some capacity, but we were essentially tabling the subject for now. I asked Wyatt to write a rough draft letter for me to Trimble indicating our willingness to pursue some sort of working relationship with them.

Wildfire Preparedness Day- Ed proposed that we have another event like we had three years ago. The dates would be May 6 and 7. This would coincide with the national date for this effort. There was agreement to do this. Some suggestions following the same general presentation of our last conference were to kick off the event on Friday night with a presentation from representatives of one of the incident command teams here last summer. Diane Hutton's name came up as a good presenter. Other suggestions for the event were presentations from the sheriff's department, Libby RFD and Deb Lampton(USFS helicopter operations). The smoke issue was also identified as an important subject to address. I said that I would go ahead and reserve the Memorial Center. The first planning discussion will be following the Fire Fighter Challenge planning session on January 26, 2016.

Ali Ulwelling representing the newly formed Flathead FSC offered to help co-sponsor the event. These details are yet to be worked out. Terry mentioned the opportunity of obtaining a \$500 grant for the event through NFPA.

Education Committee- Lisa went through the protocol for reserving the trailer, which was to contact her or Keith Kenelty. Lisa and Doug were going to inventory the educational contents of the trailer so we would have a up to date list. Steve was going to work on improving the shelving and storage since there were complaints that stuff was scattered around. We then had a discussion about the possible use of a TV and generator. There were different opinions on this subject. Doug and Mark discussed some modern technology that would project fire information from the trailer onto the screen and could be downloaded by technically advanced folks. More to come on this subject.

I brought up the subject of a series of fire related articles in the Kootenai Record starting in April and lasting through October. The newspaper has agreed to this with articles in the 350-500 word range. I said that I would do the first introductory article. Bonnie said the papers were delivered on Tuesday and that you would need to have the articles in by Friday of the previous week. Lisa said she had lots of ideas for articles. Tim offered to do one in May. We already have an article by Mike Sanders.

Fire Fighter Challenge- It looks like efforts to get the Flathead group to do the event this year are going nowhere. Several critical players would be unavailable on June 4th so June 11th would be the next possible date. However, unless we can get the organizer of “The Bull Thing” to switch events, we must find a different location such as the Riverbend. There were concerns about the lack of shade at this location.

I mentioned that the FireSafe Council would not be actively involved in the event this year although the offer of financial support was still there. I suggested that we could earmark \$5,000 for the event, which would allow them to pay the entry fees and dinner cost for the participants. We would have our trailer present and hopefully an exhibit, but nothing like the past 2 years.

The first planning meeting will be on January 26 at 9AM at the fire hall.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00

Next Meeting- February 18, 2016

Ed Levert, Chair