

August 17, 2017 Lincoln County FireSafe Council Meeting Minutes

Attendees; Ed Levert, Lincoln Co Forester; Bill Swope and Louis Kuennen, Flathead Economic Policy Center; Dawain Burgess, North End Representative; Mike Sanders, Upper Yaak FSA; Paige Hageness, Libby District Fire Prevention; Steve Lauer, Libby RFD; Mark Peck, Lincoln Co. Commissioner; Jeff Stevenson, Kootenai N.F. Ass't Fire Staff; Jake Mertes, County Planner/air quality.

Round Robin:

Lauer- Working on a grant for wildland fire equipment. Working with OU-3 crews on procedures for decontamination using Libby's D-Con Trailer. Responded to 17 fires in July. Staying with Stage II fire restrictions.

Hageness- Libby District has had 3 small fires in their fire responsibility area. Jason Cress is the acting FMO in lieu of Nikia Hernandez transfer. OU-3's Rainy Creek and Kennedy Roads closed.

Burgess- TFS had difficulty finding address of party reporting possible fire. Address was not current. Girbralter Fire is over 2,000 acres. Will be manning the FireWise Trailer for the Apple Festival in Troy and the Harvest Festival in Libby. The trailer will be un-manned at the Eureka Fair. A tour of the Eureka area is tentatively scheduled for September 19th with Dawain, Ed, Bill Swope, Lou and district representatives. Dawain will pick up one of Steve's banner signs to hang in an appropriate completed grant area in the north end.

Stevenson- Jeff said that Diane Hutton's team had assumed responsibility for the Tamarack and Peoples Fires. The Peoples Fire wasn't doing much, but there will be full suppression on the Tamarack Fire. Line construction with logging equipment was planned to start today. There are 8 miles of "clipped" or shaded fire line constructed with another 6 miles to go on the Girbralter Fire. The Caribou Fire is 200-250 acres and the Mt Robinson LO has been wrapped. The ERC or energy release component is at 96%, which is extreme.

Kuennen- Lou said that he has written 3 new agreements. So far there have been 42 agreements written on the newest fuel reduction grant. Ten in the Yaak area. He will be looking at opportunities to move the grant signs.

Swope- Bill helped Ed present a FireWise program at the McCormick RFD.

Sanders- Mike said the Upper Yaak FSA has had one new fire. He has recently bought new hose.

Levert- The FireWise program at McCormick went well with about 40 in attendance. Steve and I did the program at the Em Kayan Village annual meeting. Bill Swope and I are scheduled to present the program at J & J's Bed and Breakfast near Troy on August 22. I did voice FireWise ads for Libby's KLCB and the Anderson Broadcasting Network in the Eureka area. The Kootenai Stakeholders sent a letter of support for the Flower Creek Project. There were no objections accepted on the project, but a lawsuit is expected.

I mentioned that I had been called by Tim Bumgarner of the Libby District regarding interest in using the district's new portable air curtain burner by the county. There did not appear to be any need at this time.

New Business-

Firewise Program Direction- I explained that I had met with the commissioners last week to look at the 2018 proposed Title III budget. Since there are no more SRS funds coming into the program the commissioners were concerned about where we could get the most bang for the buck. In particular, some of the educational items

such as the calendar were in question. We also went through the program accomplishments in 2017. I also explained that I put all possible items into the proposal even if some of them were never completed to avoid having to return to the commissioners to ask for permission. We had a lively discussion of the merits of parts of the program without coming up with any solid decisions. Mark expressed concern regarding when the fire chiefs were going to have their next meeting. Jeff asked what had happened to the efforts to get a shared data base from all agencies.

I suggested that a committee be formed to explore the program in more detail. The folks that volunteered to participate on that committee were Paige, Steve, Bill, Dawain and myself. I said I would convene the committee.

County Planning and Air Quality- Jake took questions regarding his new role as county planner and the air quality guidelines. Jake explained that management burns differed from residential burns in that they could take place from March 1- October 31st. A concern was expressed that many times burnable windows were available outside that period. Jake expressed the difficulty of working through the Montana EPA to expand that window. We then had a discussion regarding the size of some of the slash piles and the requirement that all fires had to be out by 5PM. Jake questioned how that could happen with really large piles unless they were reduced in size.

I expressed concern that we needed to have consistency across the county regarding the FireWise recommendations for new sub-divisions. The common accepted spacing between crowns for the grant program is 10'. A recent recommendation for a sub-division required a spacing of 20' between crowns which encourages regeneration and shortens the effectiveness of the treatment.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00.

Next Meeting- September 21, 9:00 AM

Action Items-

Ed convene the committee that will look in more depth at the direction of the program.

Lou and Dawain will look at good locations for placing the Signs for grant funding available and sites where treatments have already taken place.

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Ed Levert, Chair