

October 15, 2015 Lincoln County FireSafe Council Meeting Minutes

Attendees; Ed Levert, Lincoln Co; Dawain Burgess, Trego, Fortine, Stryker RFD; Doug Turman and Wyatt Frampton, DNRC; Steve Lauer, Libby RFD; Lou Kuennen, Flathead Economic Policy Center; Bonnie Hudlet, Bull Lake RFD and Kootenai Valley Record; Mark Peck, Lincoln Co. Commissioner; Mike Sanders, Upper Yaak FSA

Round Robin:

Frampton- Wyatt's detail ends on Oct 30 and he returns to the Kalispell Unit. No fires on the Libby Unit recently. Stillwater and Swan Units still planning fall burning. Libby Unit will be burning slash piles in Iron Creek and McGinnis Meadows area.

Kuennen- Grant program is wrapping up for the year. Lou has written 4 agreements and 4 verifications in Eureka area. Finishing up with grants in Bull Lake area.

Burgess- Isaiah Williams is the new fire chief for TFS FSA. The fire department had a successful involvement with local schools during Fire Prevention Week. Marston Fire is still smoking and local folks are now entering phase of complaining about road closures and rutted roads resulting from fire traffic.

Hudlet- Bonnie expressed concern that during the pre-evacuation notices around the Bull Lake area that someone from the sheriff's department had told one homeowner that their property was fire safe. Bonnie disagreed with that assessment. She said that her fire department had received kudos for their work during the fire season.

Lauer- Libby RFD worked with over 580 kids during Fire Prevention Week and were able to get out the FireWise message. Attended BNSF boom training in Boise.

Sanders- Mike said they have not had much activity. Still lots of smoke in the Yaak. Attended an excellent fire summit training in Missoula. South Fork Fuels fuels reduction along evacuation route is looking very good.

Turman- Doug reported his fire overhead team was in California for 19 days and finished up in the Choteau area.

Levert- I expressed my frustration with trying to find a buyer for the Neils fuel reduction project mainly because of the poor lumber market.

I have been involved in the Alvord Lake Community Forest project. There is \$50,000 of cost share money available to start implementing the management plan. This will mainly be pre-commercial thinning, which gives us an opportunity to demonstrate different methods of fuels treatment.

I explained what the present status of the Kootenai Forest Stakeholder Coalition is. We are meeting on the 27th with the Three Rivers Dist. In Troy to discuss our recommendations for additional treatments along the South Fork Road evacuation route. Portions of the prescriptions along the road are inadequate to protect the public. Our stakeholder group was granted intervener status on the East Reservoir project in support of the Forest Service proposal.

Peck- Mark said that there will be an appreciation day for firefighters at J Neils Park on October 16. He expressed his frustration with giving such a short notice, but it has been very difficult to schedule this. Plum Creek Timber Co. and TBC Logging are among the sponsors. It starts at 7PM and includes free food and beverages.

Mark explained that Lincoln County has also been granted intervener status on the East Reservoir project. The hope is that our support for the project will help convince the federal judge of the local support although interveners have no vote in the decision.

I expressed the frustration of loggers and agencies such as the Forest Service in having such a narrow opportunity to burn their slash piles in the Libby Air-shed. Mark sympathized with the situation, but said that there are standards that we just can't exceed. Mark suggested that we get a small group together and discuss some of our options including alternative treatments such as the air curtain burners, grinders, covering piles, etc. I suggested that we have a seminar next spring and bring in additional folks such as the Montana DEQ. My hope is that we can increase the amount of cost efficient slash disposal and lessen the risk of a spring burn getting out of control.

Mark said that Lincoln County had petitioned the US Fish & Wildlife Service to delist the grizzly bear. This comes in the wake of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies petition to upgrade the protected status from Threatened to Endangered.

Mark was asked about the current petition from citizens in the Cabinet View area to re-establish the Cabinet View FSA. The requirements for a valid petition requires 30 residences of the 300 residences in the district to make the request. They had the required number of signees and the request is being considered by the commissioners.

Old Business:

Drone Pilot Project- We continued our discussion on the offer by Trimble Corporation to do a pilot drone application in Lincoln County. Wyatt said that there is a limitation in what the drone can photograph because of privacy laws. This could require requests from the landowners for permission to fly the area. We are still just talking about the OU-3 area in Rainy Creek so that should not be much of a problem.

I stated that if we are going to try this pilot project we need to get serious about stating our objectives, time frames, etc. Everyone agreed to this although Steve warned us not to get carried away just because this was a novel idea. He said that we needed to come up with a valid proposal, which everyone agreed to. I said that we needed someone to work

full time on putting this together. Wyatt said that since he was going to be laid off at the end of the month he could work on the project. I said that I felt that this would be a good idea and that the county could pick him up through Express Services and pay him through Title III funds as long as the stated objectives of the pilot were to improve our efficiencies in defining the fuels risk in the WUI area. Other applications would certainly apply such as what Doug suggested in identifying suppression control points, safety zones, etc. Wyatt will make his report at the next council meeting on November 19. At that time we will either move the project forward or cancel our plans.

Education Committee-

We had a limited discussion with Lisa Osborn not able to attend. We are up against a deadline if we are going to get out our FireWise calendar. I had requested pictures of this summer's fires or other pictures from fire department activities be sent to Lisa. I don't know if she got any pictures and the fate of the calendar is not looking great.

Title III- I passed out a list of proposed projects and activities that are tied to the balance of current funds. The only new proposal was for \$5,000 to be spent if needed on the Alvord Lake Community Forest. I also said that the list had been approved by the county commissioners on September 30. At that time I had also requested that \$30,000 be transferred to Flathead Economic Policy Center to allow the fuel reduction grant program to continue. This would be a 50-50 grant and would apply to worthwhile projects in Lincoln County.

FireSafe Montana- I passed out the Strategy For Fire Safe Montana. I asked everyone to review it and give me their comments. The two comments I received were: what is the director's role and what is the mission statement. I will need to check with Pat McKelvey for those answers.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30

Next Meeting- November 19, 2015

Ed Levert, Chair

