

December 17, 2015 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; Mike Sanders, Upper Yaak FSA; Lou Kuennen, Flathead Economic Policy Center; Nate Gassman and Jason Sunell, USFS; Jake Mertes, Lincoln Co. Environmental Health.

The November 19 meeting amended minutes were accepted with a motion by Dawain and a second from Mike Sanders.

Round Robin:

Frampton- Wyatt announced that he is now the permanent fire management officer for the Libby DNRC. (Congratulations Wyatt) He is working on updating the county fire coop agreement. The DNRC will start hiring fire fighters early in January.

Kuennen- Lou has not had much activity recently. He did look at a possible cost share fuel reduction project yesterday. Ed discussed the grant situation and the transfer of \$30,000 from the county to FEPC.

Burgess- Dawain said they had had one fire that destroyed several out buildings. He asked what he should do when the fire department responded to a slash burn during the closed burning season that was thought to be a house fire. Jake said that it was difficult to enforce the laws, but to contact him if such a situation developed.

He said that a masticating machine had been used near Frank Lake by Eureka to treat slash and trees and had done a great job. Ed mentioned the McGrade School masticating job done this summer and offered to take Jake over to look at the results.

Mertes- Jake introduced himself as the replacement for Kendra Lind. He went ahead and discussed the agenda topic about smoke management in the Libby Airshed. The commissioner meeting last Wed. discussed possible changes to the current ordinance regarding management fuels. Possible changes included extending the burning months to include November. Currently you can't burn from November 1 to April 1. Often times however, you have ventilation conditions that would allow slash burning. He pointed out that this year we went straight from fire season into a no-burning season. He believes we need to have more wiggle room to burn.

Jake went on to say that it would take a concerted effort by our state legislators and others to convince the MT DEQ that a change to our ordinance was warranted. However, the current ordinance does allow for burning when such fuels are identified by "written demonstration of need" by the fire agencies. Hopefully the local fire departments would be able to take over this responsibility rather than the FS or DNRC. Ed suggested that he present this subject at the fire coop meeting and emphasize the need for enforcement when individuals are violating the ordinance, within our outside of the Libby air-shed.

Libby is currently considered to be in a non-attainment status, although gradual changes in the community's burning practices have allowed us to actually reach the non-attainment goals. We are likely to have that status soon. Therefore it is important that we don't go backward in our attempt to relax the restrictions. Education will be imperative to avoid that situation. Ed suggested such things as purchasing kraft paper to distribute to prospective burners to keep their piles dry. Jake passed around copies of "Burn Wise". This brochure discusses the proper way to reduce smoke particulates from wood stoves. He discussed the need to upgrade the county website on the smoke issue. I suggested he consider posting this information on our council's web site.

Hudlet- Bonnie said that she would be doing FireWise assessments in the Bull Lake area as soon as the weather conditions change and/ or the snow melts. Bull Lake RFD had their Christmas Party. They now have a new engine.

Bonnie discussed the need for the fire related column in the Kootenai Record. Ed mentioned that he had hoped that Lisa Osborn would be here today so we could visit with Lee Bothman about the column. Bonnie said that her strength as a reporter was in photography so if we had pictures that we wanted in the paper she could take them.

Sanders- Mike said they have not had much activity.

Turman- Doug discussed the State wide DNRC fire review. Currently there is \$100,000,000 in the fire account. The 2015 fire suppression costs were \$12,000,000. Surplus state funds go into this account up to the \$100,000,000 amount.

Sunell- Jason said that the fire fighter hiring would start in February. Interested parties can check with the Job Service.

Gassman- The Montanore Mine FEIS decision will be out next week. East Reservoir is still in litigation. There is no activity yet on the four sales that were sold within the East Reservoir project decision. Road building should start in 2016.

The Oly Sale on Three Rivers District and the Helwick Sale on the Cabinet Dist are close to being ready for sale. The Galton Sale on Fortine Dist is also close. Flower Creek scoping document will be out in the middle of January. The results from air-curtain burner of Spencer were very good. A short discussion then evolved over the slash treatment and in particular the proposed use of an air curtain burner on the Flower Cr. Sale ensued. Doug Turman said that the DNRC is also looking at using an air curtain burner on their Flower Cr. Sale.

Levert- The Kootenai Stakeholder Coalition reached an agreement on the vegetation management guidelines, Wilderness and motorized recreation area designations on the Kootenai N.F. I explained that this was just the successful completion of stage 1 of a two part process. The vegetation guidelines were essentially completed so they would probably not change, but the designations of Wilderness and motorized recreation areas would need a lot of local vetting and support from the agency and local government to

allow them to move forward. The recommendations would probably have to be sponsored in a legislative bill to actually be enacted.

I had met with the Eureka District Ranger to discuss upcoming timber sales and with Tim Bumgarner on the Flower Creek project. I had flagged in another 20 acre thinning area for the Alvord Community Forest.

Old Business:

Drone Pilot Project- Wyatt said he had not had an opportunity to talk with Frank from Trimble. He mentioned that we didn't have to work exclusively with Trimble unless they were going to financially fund the project. He would work on having more information by the next meeting.

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 general agreement that we all wanted to do this event as well as support the Firefighter Challenge. Ed felt that we needed to have more participation on this discussion and since there wasn't an urgency, we would postpone the decision to next month. The 2012 brochure would be sent out so newcomers could see what the event was all about.

Education Committee- The calendars are being distributed. Mike Sanders said that he didn't have any yet. It was suggested that he check with Lisa Oldewaldt because she had some extra.

We had a brief discussion about the need for a coordinated approach to elementary school FireWise education. Nate had some thoughts on this and would contact Ed.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15

Next Meeting- January 21, 2016

Ed Levert, Chair

