

**Firesafe Flathead notes** – Mike West and Toby Thompson (Flathead NF), Dylan Kopitzke (DNRC), Ali Ulwelling (DNRC), Niki Porter (District Manager AFM), Ben Devall (Big Mountain), Ross Gilbert (Guardian Forestry), Emma Merdovic (DNRC), Holly McKenzie (KU Service Forester, DNRC), Jeremy Pris (KU DNRC, FMO), Ean Moore (Big Sky Forest Management from the Bozeman area), Parker (NRCS), Caleb Deitz (Flathead Ridge Ranch), Allen Chrisman (NF, Tree Farm, MFOA), Mike Frost (Elkhorn HOA), Scott Countryman (Goosehead Insurance), Amanda Opp (Flathead Electric), Richard Hildner (NF & Flathead Families for Responsible Growth), Randy Sundberg (Many Lakes HOA), Marlee Ostheimer (National Forest Foundation)

**Flathead National Forest** – Toby Thompson - Sold another 526 ac timber sale on the Dayton project. GNA (House Bill 883) Flathead National Forest generated \$6 million in applications with \$3m approved on the FNF, now looking at GNA capacity building to implement restoration projects. Keystone agreement with NFF- finalized agreement \$3.6m work on the Flathead NF, position out for advertisement to work with the NFF to be the Flathead project coordinator to manage projects. Joint Chiefs- in 3<sup>rd</sup> year with NRCS, Flathead NF out for bid IDIQ 850 (work) + 250 acres (optional work). Keystone agreement > NFF is the congressionally designated non-profit, but the NFF can solicit on their behalf, they can administer work on the FNF and the adjacent private lands. Allows for flexibility and is tied to the Wildfire Crisis Strategy (WCS) and Bipartisan infrastructure Law (BIL) funding that has been designated for keystone partners (ref graphic below...) to increase pace and scale of forest and fuels management on NFS managed land.

Conversation about contractors and “the list”. How do contractors get on the list for different projects? State, NF, NRCS, MWED, private landowners? This has been a topic of discussion for a long time, and we could follow up. Post meeting, we talked about pushing out a survey to contractors that would populate a spreadsheet with > Name / contact information / location / description of specialty or preferred work (job size, type) / insured for what / ALP certified / can burn piles... We should work with a local contractor to build this survey to populate the spreadsheet to share. Ali is asking about support for this as well.

## Region 1 Keystone Partnership Projects

- **Trout Unlimited**- AOP and aquatic restoration projects across the Region
- **NFF** and Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscapes, \$6M Participating Agreement
- **Mule Deer Foundation** and Lolo NF, \$1.5M Participating Agreement; Forest-wide Hazardous Fuels Reduction
- **Mule Deer Foundation** and Bitterroot NF, \$4M Stewardship Agreement; *Darby-Sula Eastside Fuels and Habitat Project*
- **NFF** and Flathead NF, \$3.6M Stewardship Agreement; *Wildland Urban Interface Fire Resilient and Healthy Forests*
- **National Wild Turkey Federation**, Stewardship Agreement
  - Bitterroot NF, \$6.14 M- *Bitterroot Front Restoration*
  - Custer Gallatin NF, ~\$3M- *South Otter Landscape Restoration and Resiliency Project*



**Jeremy Pris**- Put out a press release/ email, press release asking for people who are interested in being on “this list” of contractors—reaching out to MLA, contractor groups and how to best get in touch with them, Marlee said that they will also be posting any RFPs on their website so anyone who is interested in the work can find out more there.

**Flathead Ridge Ranch** – Caleb Dietz, is working near Bitterroot Lake and connecting landowners with NRCS.

**NRCS** – Parker – They are going through ‘Act Now’ IRA funding and getting ahead of the curve for Bitterroot (still going) and Ashley Lake (final year), should have \$\$ by March, a lot of JC applications this year/final year (Haskill Basin, N and SE of Kila). Working on a plan to apply for another JC for FY25.

**Montana West Economic Development (MWED)** – Couldn’t make the meeting, working on Haz Fuels funding in a couple of areas (Reservoir Road, Good Creek, Many Lakes, Kila, Somers, Lakeside...) and the WUI grant out on Foothill Road. Will be receiving HB883 funds for area SW of Kalispell and perhaps continue the work on Foothills.

**Flathead Electric** Amanda Opp “all things vegetation management” Swan Lake Feeder project is moving forward from Bigfork down the Swan. Vegetation management also addressing Ashley Lake/ Marion driven by lightning strike potential and fuels in the area. Receiving a grant (one of 3 applied for) should know more in March.

- Richard Hildner, question about vegetation management plans for the base of Big Mountain Road? Amanda - There is potential for future projects, they are currently working out on E Lakeshore Road.

**North Fork** – Allen Chrisman and Richard Hildner – Interlocal coming up Feb 14 and they will set the date for the summer interlocal/Firewise Day (likely July 10<sup>th</sup>) as well as set a date for the fire training in June. Should know firm dates by the next FSF meeting. Completed annual Firewise Renewal.

**Richard Hildner**, Flathead Families for Responsible Growth had a gathering with professionals from fire and others in Whitefish. A suggestion about a QR code for fire updates, especially for people coming in from around the country. Several in the room think that MTFireInfo.org would be the best link to provide. **\*Dylan will follow up with this\***

**Also, “overwhelmed by the number of fuel modification grants from all the different agencies and organizations if there a single source clearinghouse for grants and projects.”**

**Allen** – Share the short-term rental product that Henry worked on – share with Monica, share with the North Fork. Another QR code.

- **Link to those products can be found here:** [Preparedness Folder | Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network](#)



**Dylan Kopitzke** – Adding a Service Forester on the Stillwater Unit to work 93 corridor to Eureka and N Flathead County, sharing workload with Libby and Kalispell SFs. GNA in the Flathead is going strong and looking to add capacity, finished interviews with Community Preparedness Specialist for NWLO (includes Libby, Plains, Stillwater, Swan, and Kalispell) and will announce next month. Through HB883 Fire Protection Bureau is increasing fire preparedness and has approval to purchase new detection planes, increase number of T2 crews and improve performance of helicopters.

**Jeremy Pris** – Would like to give a **shout out for Flathead County AQ** doing a good job monitoring and communicating forecasts, opening up opportunities for people to burn during the winter months. DNRC fire is in training season, both taking and providing. Seasonal applications for firefighters are now open mt.gov will be hiring Feb-June.

<https://statecareers.mt.gov/>

**Holly McKenzie** – Working with MSU extension, Flathead Conservation District and others on the Land Stewardship Series that will be hosted March/April. Will be hosted at the NMAR office behind Lilienthal (110 Cooperative Way) and will cap at 40 people. More to follow!

- **March 28:** Pasture Mngt and Soil Health taught by Haey's Goosey and Patrick Mangan of MSU Extension.
- **April 4:** is Weeds and controls/preventions - Noel Jinings, Flathead County Weed Department with help from Dept of Ag.
- **April 11:** Forest Fuel Mitigation and Wildfire taught by Kelly, maybe Marcelle or Ernie.
- **April 18** is Forest Health and Disease, Draught, Insect issues with Holly, perhaps Caleb Dietz (Flathead Ridge Ranch) or Andy Reed (Flathead NF).

- **April 25:** Wildlife with Ryan Wilbur of People and Carnivores...a non-profit.
- **May 2:** Water, Septic, Wells, and living near waterfront by Flathead Conservation District.

**Emma Merdovic**– Forestry Assistance Specialist, will be hosting a Service Forester Round up next week, looking for every opportunity to get out and learn!

**Kellie Kulseth** – KU Community Preparedness – It's [Keep Montana Green](#) coloring contest season, training, Smokey's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday reading list. Kellie the new go-to person for community preparedness and fire prevention for the Flathead area.

**Marcel Getz**– Libby Unit Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator – CWDG grant update – hired a service forester (Vicki Stephens) and will be working at the Chain of Lakes area and Marcel is hiring the 6 person fuels crew that will treat 500 acres of HIZ around homes, lining out year 2 of Chain of Lakes, getting set up with trucks, PPE, doing outreach of program, crew will also be assisting with GNA prep, Trout Creek District may be using the crew for burn operations in spring and fall. A lot going on in Lincoln County.

- Question for Marcel – Will you be hosting NFPA home assessment training? Jennifer Nelson is taking the lead on that and will share when ready.

**Ben DeVall** – Firewise meeting March 5 at Base Lodge, will be a scaled down version of what they host in the summer, and still has loads of handouts left over. Topics: How do we communicate in the event of an emergency? Juanita is meeting with vendors to find a better higher functioning option for communication. Also being requested to add air raid sirens... but people do not know what all that involves (towers, power). DC Haas is the new Chief of the Whitefish Service Area.

**Scott Countryman** – This Friday talking with Real Estate agents about how to “think like a firefighter” Lunch and Learn 12-1 at Keller Williams. Will follow up with a Home Inspector training in February. **Follow up with Julia and Henry about what they are working on with the Home Inspector training.**

**Randy Sundberg** – Many Lakes HOA and KW Real Estate agent. HOA lists are available through the title companies, if we are looking for a list of HOAs. Sometimes insurance is impacted by the neighbor's situation, not the landowners themselves. Still working with the County Parks Dept on getting some fuels reduction completed. County Road department has been doing work along the roads.

**Nicki Porter** – District Manager, American Forest Management (day 3) – Largest private forestry consulting firm in the nation, focusing on private landholdings over 5 acres or bundling acres in a neighborhood, (writing grants, land management plans, executing the contracts...). A local resource.

**Share Nicki's contact information! And add Nicki to the email list.**

**Mike Frost** – Love Richard’s idea about the QR code and will pass it along in Maui. Look at Mike’s video of what happened in Lahaina last year, and the importance of these meetings, the importance of awareness of the high wind driven wildfire (like the Marshall fire, December 30). Really appreciative of all that has been going on and this group, hopefully we’ll make a difference.

**Upcoming events – (check dates)**

KGEZ radio morning talk show – always looking for speakers and topics!

7:20am 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month

January 19<sup>th</sup> Real estate and home inspector training at Keller Williams office

February 21 follow up with the home inspector training at KW office, walk through the home risk assessment.

February 22 Fire History talk – Rick T

March 2 – FVCC pile burning – Rick T and Mike, Kellie.

Flathead Builders Association – March 2-3

March 5 Big Mountain fire Preparedness

April 20 – Many Lakes

April 27 at Glacier Hills, Mark Newbold 9:30-12:30 at the Fire Hall

May 4 – Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network and Rx fire public information event at the Glacier Hills – TBD?

West Glacier / Apgar TBD

Flathead Families for Responsible Growth – Richard Hildner, TBD

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