



FireSafe Flathead Meeting Notes

January 23, 2020 0900-1100 at Office of Emergency Services (OES) Conference Room

Attendance: *Ali Ulwelling* (DNRC), *Chris Dowling* (Flathead National Forest, Swan District Ranger), *Keith VanBroeke* (Deputy Fire Guy, Flathead NF), *Toby Thompson* (AFMO Fuels HHGV District, FNF), *Manny Mendoza* (FMO Tally Lake RD, FNF), *Brent Olson* (FMO Swan District, FNF), *Andy Huntsberger* (FMO HHGV District, FNF), *Spotted Bear*, *Mike West* (AFMO Fuels Tally Lake RD, FNF), *Randy Sundberg* (Many Lakes HOA), *Rick Trembath* (all-around fire guy), *Lincoln Chute* (Fire Service Area Manager, Flathead County), *Sean Johnson* and *Karli Becher* (District Conservationist, NRCS), *Deb Starling & Carrie Nelson* (NW MT Hazardous Fuels Program), *Anna Lang* (Zylient Disaster Diagnostics), *Turner Askew* (Suncrest HOA), *Ben Duvall* (Chief of Big Mountain FD), *Kendall* (CalFire, retired), *Luca Kopitzke* (DNRC Fire Adapted Communities); *Bill Swope* (fire guy turned informed citizen), *Allen Chrisman* (North Fork Mitigation Committee), *Christian Mascho* (Mosaic Fire & Fuels LLC).

“Let’s take care not to pile our plates too high, rather let’s bring another chair to the table” – Ashley Juran

Next meeting: February 27th from 9-11 at the DNRC Conference Room

- ✓ **Fire Adapted Montana grant Request for Proposals due January 31**
- ✓ **Send Ali Smoke Column articles and ideas!!**

0900 - We started by welcoming the new faces in the room (**thank you ALL for being there!**) and looking back at 2019 before looking ahead at goals for 2020:

- We hosted [Era of Megafires](#) presentations & brought community discussions to 12 Flathead Valley departments this past spring.
- We supported the 2nd Annual Many Lakes Community Wildfire Preparedness Day in April
- We supported the Eagle Bend HOA, West Glacier, Overlook Ridge, and Martin City communities with presentations discussion tailored for their areas and attended the Whitefish FD open house.
- We brought Peter Kolb and Rick Trembath together to host a pile-burning workshop for 22 landowners this past November.

My conservative spreadsheet records reflect a total of 506 landowner engagements!



Each landowner call has the potential to start a chain of engagement which may lead to a home assessment or community conversation, which may lead to fuels-reduction work, which may lead to projects for local contractors, which may lead to MORE projects in the area, which may haul wood to our mills, & WILL move us forward in creating and maintaining fire-adapted communities & resilient landscapes, AND make our firefighting forces safer & more effective.

While at this time we may not have glossy brochures or a big shiny project with its own website, I will maintain that we ARE doing it and work is getting done by all of us coordinating together. That said, agency leadership is getting more involved in the conversation and this may help in more coordinated project planning...

The [Montana Forest Action Plan](#) is well underway and along with that is the [Statewide Forest Assessment](#).

Updates from our local grant/cost-share partners:

Sean Johnson, NRCS – They do not have confirmation yet, but are optimistic that the Targeted Implementation Plan (TIP) for funding out at Ashley Lake will be approved. They will have funding available for the next five years. We will talk about the opportunities for community engagement and advertising this opportunity. Mike West has done a ton of work out there and should be part of those conversations.

Deb Starling & Carrie Johnson, NW MT Hazardous Fuels Program – They did not receive funding for the Western States WUI grant that they had submitted for the west side of the Valley and have so much interest in the east side that no further outreach is recommended. This grant extends from Ferndale north to Badrock and includes the Many Lakes area where a need for fuels reduction has long been recognized.

They did receive funding for Hazardous Fuels grants submitted for the Overlook Ridge subdivision—a big Thank You to Dick Haberkern for initiating the conversation to make that happen! Ptarmigan Village and Suncrest HOAs (Thank you to Turner Askew!) in Whitefish, along with Stone Mountain Estates in West Valley, are also receiving Hazardous Fuels funding.

There are challenges as the cost of work is going up while the value (stumpage) is currently down so the assistance does not add up like it used to.

Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), Lincoln Chute – The CWPP is nearing a final draft that will be ready for committee review and be sent to the County Commissioners by the deadline of March 1. Brent Olson brought up the importance of communicating and emphasizing life safety in the CWPP. Bill Swope brought up the importance of communicating many of the recommendations as “pre-suppression” actions and that ALL landowners have responsibility: private, industry, state, and federal. We also need to add a reporting component, with FireSafe Flathead as the central holder of any work that has been completed. This is a living document to be reviewed and checked annually (active links...).

Upcoming events for this spring:

- **Two-part series at FVCC:** Wednesday, February 19 - Tree Selection with Rick Moore, Service Forester for the DNRC and Wednesday, February 26th - Pile-burning with Rick Trembath.
- **Land stewardship seminar** hosted each spring by MSU extension, brings together many resources for rural landowners. (We are also working to compile and publish a resource list to share.) If you know of folks who would benefit from a workshop like this, please have them call **Pat McGlynn at 758-5553!**
- Many Lakes Community Wildfire Event – Saturday, April 18th
- [Wildland Firefighter Foundation](#) Event at Grouse Mountain Lodge, Saturday April 18th
- Whistling Andy’s - Thursday, April 23 – Wildfire History, Preparing for Wildfire
- West Glacier, Montana House in Apgar – June 3 or 4

We also talked about inviting more partners to the table to move ahead with engagement with title companies, the planning department, and others.

Thank you again for joining us!