



FireSafe Flathead Meeting Notes, January 28, 2021

Next meeting: Thursday, February 25, 2021 9-11am via Zoom

Attendance: Mike West (AFMO Fuels TLRD FNF), Deb Starling (NW MT Hazardous Fuels program), Sean Johnson and Karli Becher (District Conservationist, NRCS), Lincoln Chute (Flathead County Fire Services Area Manager), Ben Devall (Chief, Big Mountain FD), Allen Chrisman (North Fork Fire Mitigation, MT Tree Farm and more), Keith VanBroeke (Deputy Fire Staff, Flathead NF), Ali Ulwelling (Forestry Assistance, DNRC), Lorrie Woods (forester, consultant, private landowner advocate), Eric Hoberg (Northwest Management), Christian Mascho (Mosaic Fire & Fuesl, LLC.), Mike Frost (WAFSC and more), Ernie Nace (Community Preparedness, Kalispell Unit), Jeremy Pris (FMO Kalispell Unit), Joe Page (Chief, Whitefish FD), Andre Dulac (AFMO Fuels SLDR FNF), Logan Sandman (FMO Libby Unit, DNRC), Marcel Getz (Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator, Libby Unit/Lincoln County), Devynn Taylor (Flathead County Health Dept/Air Quality), Hailey Graf (Flathead Conservation District, Resource Conservationist), Anna Lang (Disaster Specialist, FEMA national board member), Dani Southard (National Forest Foundation), Karl Weeks (Chief, CFalls FD).

"It's not always about what or how much you know, so much as it is about connecting the right people, at the right time, in the right place." -Richard Parrish, Bureau of Land Management

Upcoming Dates and Events:

- **Wildfire and Insurance Webinar** – [RECORDING](#) and [COLORADO WILDFIRE INSURANCE GUIDE](#) – Hosted by Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network
- **PODs: Collaborative Fire Planning**, Feb 24-25, 9-12:30MST, Wildfire Risk Management Science **FULL**
- **Land Stewardship Seminar Series** – 7 consecutive Wednesdays (February 17 to March 31) from 6-7pm. Cooperative partners will cover: Soil health & composting, wildlife conflict mitigation, pasture management, forest pests & disease, wildfire preparedness, septic system management, and noxious weed ID & control. Hosted by the Flathead Conservation District.
- **Pile Burning Presentation, Thursday, Feb 25 from 6-7pm** – Ernie Nace, Community Preparedness Specialist, will host a one-hour virtual presentation on safe and efficient pile burning. Contact Ernie for a Zoom invite! enace@mt.gov or 751-2270

0900 – Welcome & Introductions

Ali - Thank you for making the time to be here. 2020 was an odd year and we didn't meet as often, but we are reenergized for 2021! We have been meeting consistently since January of 2016 and always like to take a look back before moving forward.

Mike West – Looking back at 2020, an After-Action Review

What was expected to happen:

- Coordination between partners and staying up to date with one another.
- Continuation of efforts with an increase in activity, as seen in 2019

What actually happened:

- An increase in interest & activity, an increase in people moving here and wanting/needing guidance, increase in notable fires driving interest in quality forestry and fire-related information,
- Connection and sharing of information, awareness of work/programs/needs; this is why we attend.
- A transition to a Zoom format after taking a few months off (other than sharing notes) due to Covid
- True collaboration on the Join Chief's proposal—FNF and NRCS with NW MT Hazardous Fuels program, FWP, Herron Park, DNRC Stillwater & Kalispell Units. An AGOL account for map products!
- Field trip to Ptarmigan village, Haney/Holbrook properties, Big Mountain, private lands. This field trip was helpful in seeing the connection and alignment of work and generated a lot of interest that led to a new partnership with NFF and a strong proposal for the Montana Forest Action Plan RFP.

What went well:

- We, as individual program and as a FireSafe Flathead group, are still relevant. Increasingly so!
- We have solid positive partnerships and relationships that span the topics of forestry, fire, & more
- Connection and information sharing among us and partners through Zoom meetings, field trips
- Zoom meetings allow for more participation from those out of area but committed to the cause!
- GIS training for NW MT Hazardous fuels and conversation of data for the AGOL account.
- CWPP is almost complete, review and signatures should be coming soon.

Looking forward & how we can improve:

- Explore other sources of funding (working on info to share re: grant cycles, FAP staff will also be helping to provide information on additional funding sources for work.)
- Flathead County (Juanita Nelson) will be working on the pre-mitigation plan that will make Flathead County eligible for certain FEMA grants.
- Have a supply of handouts, copies of the CWPP, and contacts to provide to landowners during visits
- Try to meet face to face again, present to local communities, meet in person. Most effective! & fun.
- Capture those before, during, and after photos of HIZ and fuels reduction work to share with landowners.

TO DO:

- **Field trips** – Invite the media and share the stories
 - o Identify TWO locations: Big Mountain and Oettiker (for general group and for FAMLN)
 - o Field trip for Forest, DNRC, and County leadership
 - o Dower draw slash treatments, new method of disposing slash – [Hugel Mounds](#)
 - o Old Scotch pine plantations – Deb has a good example of treating these stands
- **Website / Media / Materials to share**
 - o Work with LCFSC and DNRC bureau programs to create, share and build across the NW
 - o Continuing updating contacts, agendas/meeting notes (Ali)
 - o Build tabs, add photos/videos, create the “go to” place to send residents (Ali w GuRoots)
 - o Coordinate to capture the time-lapse of work you can accomplish in a day, of home assessments, of before/during/after projects.
 - o You tube videos
 - o Smoke Column – Ali is talking with Myers Reece about this! (Ali)
 - o KGEZ radio interviews are set up for the 3rd Friday of each month at 7:20am (Ali)
 - o Contractor list – Deb will work on compiling to share in May
 - o Grant info page – Work with DNRC Stewardship program (Ali)
 - o Stockpile publications to have on hand for distribution (Ali can help with this)
- **AGOL**
 - o Link to [Montana Wildfire Risk Assessment?](#)
 - o Solicitation and procurement processes for hiring GIS contractor to assist (Ali)
- **Meeting format**
 - o Continue 9-11 on the 4th Thursday of each month but will open the doors so we can connect and mingle before and after. We will combine Zoom and in-person when we can meet again.
- **Coordination**
 - o Continue and build coordination, invite new partners to the table
 - o Coordination with Stewardship Program and classes (Ali and Rick so this)
 - o Coordination with partners for land management education, including forestry & fire
 - o Closer Coordination between Ernie’s assessments & where grants are being administered
 - o Joint Chief’s proposal – coordinate to capture feedback and repackage.

Partner updates:

Dani Southard, National Forest Foundation (NFF) – Provided an update on the Montana Forest Action Plan proposal that they have been working to put together. The goal is to connect a lot of the work that has been occurring by helping to fund some hand cut & pile work on private lands and ingress/egress in priority areas, as well as provide educational products to tell the story of collaboration on the landscape. It is a strong application and we are optimistic that it will do well!

Mike West & Keith VanBroeke, Flathead National Forest –

- Mike is going to check on RAC proposal for brushing out NFS roads
- Frozen Moose project up in the North Fork
- Crystal-Cedar timber sale in the lower North Fork
- Planning projects in the Lake 5 area
- Swan Lake District is working with Swan Unit & Swan Valley Connections to get an RFP together for engagement and work on private lands in the Swan Valley.
- Swan Lake RD also working on Weed Lake, Bug Creek, Crane Mountain
- Tally Lake RD is busy north of Whitefish, Olney/Good Creek, Stovepipe, Valley Face, and planned spring prescribed fire projects. Oettiker Creek receiving Hazardous Fuels funding and there is potential for a Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network field trip there or at other locations in the TLRD.

Sean Johnson & Karli Becher, Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) – Have received notice that none of the Joint Chief's proposals submitted from Montana were funded this time around, but there are plans to take comments and resubmit when due this spring. State Conservationist Tom Watson is getting feedback to share with the group to strengthen proposals. Also, there was less funding available for projects this year so fewer projects were awarded less money than in years past.

Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPS) are currently ongoing in the Ashley Lake area west of town. Also looking at TIPS in the Little Bitterroot area and around the Wedge Canyon Fire (North Fork to Canada). Increased interest especially with additional effort put into direct mailings. Also working to coordinate closer with Ernie Nace (Kalispell Unit DNRC) to complete home risk assessments in areas where they are engaging with residents to complete forest health/fuels reduction.

Activities can be seen [HERE](#) on the Montana Focused Conservation Funding Opportunities interactive map!

Deb Starling, NW MT Hazardous Fuels Program – Continued interest & a lot going on, in a good way!

- Hazardous Fuels Grants active in: Dower Draw, Ptarmigan Village, Stone Mountain Estates, Notta Road (Farm to Market Rd), as well as work in Many Lakes, Bigfork to Badrock.
- Pending are proposals for Overlook 2 (to build on Overlook1) and Haskill Basin.
- Also reaching out to areas of interest in the JC area.
- Really interested in getting more of the **Living with Fire** brochures to share with residents. (Ali will call on this!) Tony Harwood has some to share and will send up a box from Missoula. He will talk with the board about spending some budget to get more printed.

Lincoln Chute, Flathead County OES –

- CWPP is in the final stages and ready for signatures
- Working with fire districts to host saw classes/training.
- Interested in finding a subdivision ready to do the work themselves & illustrate the benefits of working together. Will coordinate with Ernie to find a neighborhood where a home assessment can lead straight into getting the work done. And film it!

Ernie Nace, Community Preparedness Specialist, Kalispell Unit DNRC –

- Working on Prevention Plans, causes,
- Completed 106 home assessments using the fire crew this past season, working closer with Sean Johnson and Deb Starling and where they are administering grants.
- Looking forward to coordinating closer with this group
- Working with Rick Trembath and creating a one-hour pile burning webinar.

Devynn, Flathead County Air Quality – They will be updating their air quality regulations soon as they have not been updated since 1996. We have asked that they consider keep us informed of the process and explore the possibility of discussion including the perspectives of fire managers.

Jan Cronin—Has been unavailable for awhile but is happy to see the energy of projects mobbing forward! Interested in writing another article for the Smoke Column (Thank you, Jan!!)

Hailey Graf, Flathead Conservation District – Shared information on their [Conservation Grant Program](#) that offers 75% cost share for projects up to \$5000. These can be multi-faceted and cover thinning, fencing, erosion, pasture... along with a variety of other eligible practices. It closes April 30th. Give them a call at 752-4220!

Marcel Getz, Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator for Lincoln County – Is working hard to get the Fire Adapted Kootenai website built, is working on the burn permit process/website, is looking into equipment to use or purchase so that we can create video/photo content for our sites to share. Looking at Jordan Koppen's equipment in the southwest land office and will provide an update.

Christian Mascho, Mosaic Fire & Fuels, LLC – Has been busy with fuels reduction work all over, a lot going on in the n Swan. Will be doing more burning (300 piles) this spring that will provide a good opportunity for video. Is really interested in working on prescribed fire and figuring out HOW to help private landowners, in the right situation, accomplish prescribed fire on their property. Also interested in sharing his experience of falling trees on fires in California and relating that to WHY he dedicates his work to fuels reduction here. We will provide Christian with materials to share with landowners.

Thank you to everyone!

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