



FireSafe Flathead Meeting Notes, May 26, 2022, via Zoom

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, June 23. Venue to be determined but a hybrid option is likely.

Our Mission: We are individuals, neighborhoods, organizations, and agency wildfire professionals working to create and support Fire Adapted Communities and resilient landscapes by providing leadership, technical assistance, and resources.

ARTICLES and VIDEOS:

Returning Fire to the Land (7min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2k5-IVNUpP4>

Living with Wildfire/Headwater Economics (5min) <https://headwaterseconomics.org/wildfire/living-with-wildfire/>

Flathead National Forest and NRCS Field Office Receive Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Project [HERE](#)

USDA Forest Service – Confronting the Wildfire Crisis [HERE](#)

Risk Factor: Find your home's Risk Factors - <https://riskfactor.com/>

"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

Action items:

- **Need to determine the date for "June TBD – Living with wildfire, Montana House, West Glacier (Ali, Harker, HHGV, Lincoln etc.). Ensure this doesn't conflict with our June 28th event in Whitefish.**
 - **Done! Wednesday, June 15 5pm in West Glacier**
- **Ali needs to follow up with Allen re: the HIZ filming site that we discussed last summer.**
 - **Will talk at the North Fork event on June 15**
- **Ali needs to follow up with Rick T re: fire history page on website**
- **Status of Burn Permit system – Dylan Kopitzke**
 - **The current system is failing, and we are exploring interagency-supported options for the future. Dylan has drafted a whitepaper addressing issues and will schedule to present to the County.**
- **Short term rental information from Julia to share with the group (Richard, Ben, Monica, North Fork)**
 - **This project is being assisted by the Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network who is currently undergoing some changes in staffing so will be picked up again soon.**
- **How can we better communicate w/landowners what funding opportunities exist at this time/place?**
 - **Ali has added the NRCS webpage and map to the FireSafe Flathead resources list so we can direct people there and will spend more time on the web design.**

0900 – Welcome & Introductions: Mike West, Ali Ulwelling, Deb Starling, Allen Chrisman, Rick Trembath, Sean Johnson, Karli Becher, Dylan Kopitzke, Mike Kopitzke, Anna Lang, Mike Frost, Logan Sandman, Vicki Hoyt, Lincoln Chute, Ben Devall.

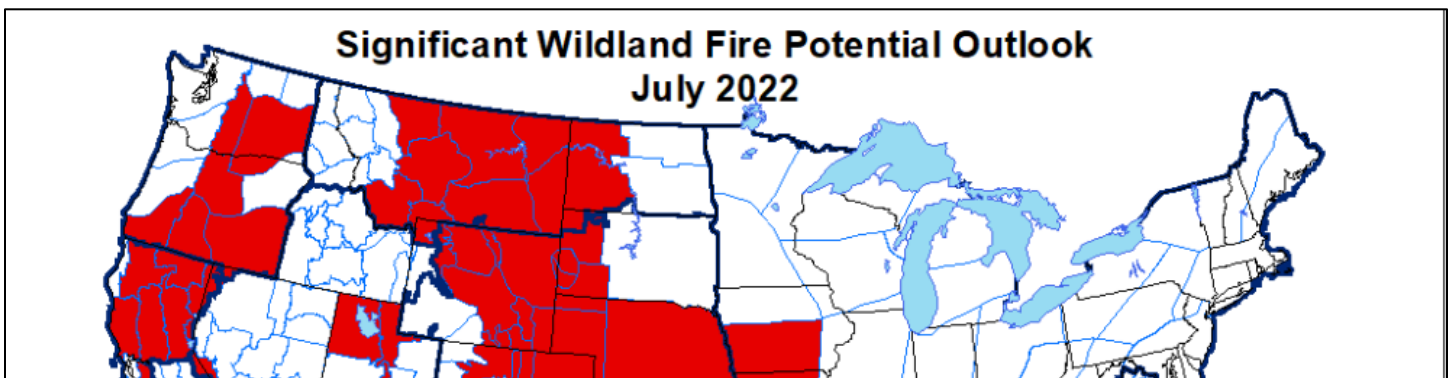
DNRC - Ali Ulwelling

- Attended the DNRC Forestry Assistance Round Up in Fort Benton last week where discussion continued about the formalization of a Cross Boundary Coordination Group, like the cross-boundary coordination that occurs with the Northern Rockies Coordination Center and allocation of resources across the Area.

- We will start ordering more materials to have on hand for any partners who are engaging with landowners (there is a list of publications with links at the end of these notes). Let me know what you would like to have on hand!
- KGEZ radio – Rick Connell will be on Friday, June 17 at 7:20am. I'll be calling around to see who is available for July and August—Mike and Sean update on Joint Chief's? Rick T, any big fire history moments coming up we should be aware of?

Flathead National Forest – Mike West

- Joint Chiefs and other fuels contracts are awarded, work has begun and is looking good. Projects include shaded fuel break, understory removal, pre-commercial thinning, fire line/fuel break. Meeting with a private landowner with 80-acres to achieve cross-boundary work.
- Has been meeting this spring with MT DNRC, Flathead County, and other stakeholders to delineate Potential Operational Delineation and Potential Control Lines. Learn more about PODs [HERE](#) .
- Within a couple of years will be working on fuels treatments and maintenance in the Beaver Lakes and Elkhorn areas (Mike Frost will help to communicate with neighbors.)
- Bootjack Lake community has wanted a second road and construction will be paid for by infrastructure funding. Ben will connect with his community.
- The Flathead NF is seeing great benefits and program growth working with the DNRC Good Neighbor Authority program and foresters.
- Fire Season Update – Its looking like an “average” fire season for NW Montana, understanding that all predictions and models can be completely off. Just to the east and west of us it will/may be a different story. June will be the critical month to watch as far as moisture and how fast the snow melts off. Predictive Services Seasonal outlooks can be found here:
https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf



Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) – Sean Johnson & Karli Becher

- Working on Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPs) and Joint Chiefs contracts. There has been A LOT of interest in the area, and they are asking for additional funds to meet the level of interest. **October 2022 is the sign-up deadline for 2023 projects.**
- *They will have a new intern coming on June 6-August 19 and they will be looking for provide her much on the ground forestry exposure and experience during her time.*
- Interest continues to grow for private forest health and fuel reduction work. Attributes this to grassroots collaboration between landowners, neighbors, homeowners’ associations, American Forest Management, the DNRC, Flathead National Forest, and others.
- They will be heading up to the north fork for events coming up to talk about the Wedge Canyon TIP and outreach to residents.

- Is the information on the FireSafe Flathead website? **Ali has posted the NRCS link to the FireSafe website which can be found here:** <https://www.firesafeflathead.com/resources>

Northwest Montana Hazardous Fuels Program – Deb Starling, Lead Forester

- They continue to have a lot of interest coming their way. These have been in the Lion Mountain area (Whitefish), Foothill Rd and Bigfork area, and scattered in the valley. Deb has about 30-40 applications to pass along to Sean and Karli in the JC funding area. Still working through a few challenges but hope to land on some creative solutions in the near future.
- They continue to receive calls from insurance companies to help perform site visits and offer recommendations to landowners who are

North Fork Mitigation Committee – Allen Chrisman

- Reminder for two upcoming events:
 - **June 15th** North Fork Fire Hazard Reduction Field Trip, 9:30am-3pm (Allen Chrisman)
 - **July 13th** North Fork Firewise Day in the morning (Allen Chrisman, Sean Johnson, Andy Huntsberger, Lincoln Chute and others) followed by interlocal meeting in the afternoon.
 - Looking forward to getting more folks aware of and signed up for the Wedge Canyon TIP.
 - Contact Allen if there are any questions or you would like to attend!

Big Mountain Fire – Ben Devall, Fire Chief

- It's important that we encourage landowners to **simply do the work because it needs to be done.**
- **June 11th brush pick up day** for the fire district. This will enable landowners to do fuel mitigation work with convenient slash disposal.
- Around **July 21st they are planning an HOA picnic/firewise day** to increase interest in evacuation planning, home ignition zone and fuel reduction work for private lands.
- Fire and mitigation information is posted on the Big Mountain HOA website: <http://www.bigmountainhoa.com/fire---safety.html>

Richard Hildner (Whitefish Area)

- Moving forward with planning a **Living with Wildfire** event at the O'Shaughnessy Cultural Arts Center in Whitefish June 28th. Would like to mirror event we did at FVCC this past March 22nd which was the 45-minute living with wildfire video followed by a panel discuss/Q&A. Event will be sponsored/hosted by FireSafe Flathead. Richard will work with Ali Ulwelling to identify who is going to be present and/or on the panel. (Rick C., Lincoln, Richard, Ben, Joe Page, Mike Frost, KU fire,
- Shared a fire publication from Ashland Oregon which can be found here. <https://www.ashland.or.us/SectionIndex.asp?SectionID=539>

Flathead County - Lincoln Chute, Fire Warden

- Worked with the Kalispell Unit fire crew to on chainsaw training—the field portion was held at Herron Park and they were able to work about 3-acres.
- Need to keep pushing the parks department to plan and support thinning projects on county parks.
- **Check on DNRC's Forest Health grant opportunity to be spend on non-federal public lands - [HERE](#)**
- Important to recognize what the Insurance Engines SAY they can do, may be different than what they really CAN do.

Logan Sandman – Lincoln County Fire Safe Council, Fire Adapted Kootenai, and FMO of the Libby Unit

- There is a lot of great collaborative work going on with the Libby Unit programs and with county and federal partners. (Added by Ali) – Congratulations to the Libby Unit who recently received an Outstanding Service Award from Gov. Gianforte who said, “When we actively manage our forests together, like we are in Lincoln County, we reduce wildfire risk, improve forest health, and provide greater predictability and certainty to the wood products industry.” Link here: <https://thewesternnews.com/news/2022/may/13/dnr-cs-libby-unit-earns-outstanding-service-award/>
- They just released a short video (5min) on the Rabbit Tracks Forest Partnership Project that can be viewed from the Fire Adapted Kootenai Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FireAdaptedKootenai>
- The Good Neighbor Authority program is growing and they just hired a new GNA forester.
- Staff is being added to build a fuels crew that would work on the Home Ignition Zone for private landowners. This position will work for their Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator and provide another “tool in the toolbox” to get this important work done!
- More funding is coming for outreach and education, more videography for frequent updates on projects, hiring an arborist as necessary to deal with hazard trees, work on growing the prescribed fire program, and more.

General Discussion

- Insurance companies are doing more home inspections in the area which may be increasing interest in home ignition zone and fuel reduction work.
- Need to continue to encourage folks to do both home ignition zone and property wide fuel reduction work to make a landscape scale reduction in fire behavior.

Events coming up:

~~March 22 – Preparing for Fire Season, FVCC AT139, 6-8pm~~

~~March 29 – Pile burning workshop, FVCC AT139, 6-8pm (Rick Trembath & Ernie Nace)~~

~~April 14 – Era of Megafires, Dome Theatre in Libby 6:30pm (Marcel Getz, FAC Coordinator)~~

~~April 16, 23, or 30 (TBD) – Living with Wildfire – Many Lakes (Randy, Rick C, Holly M, Ernie/Ali?)~~

~~April 22 – Pile Burning Workshop, [Swan Valley Connections](#), 9-1 Registration required~~

~~May 4 – Preparing for Wildfire in the Swan, 6pm Zoom with Swan Valley Connections (Ali, Jack, Mike M.)~~

~~May 7 – Family Forestry Expo (table?) and risk assessment training in Lincoln County (Marcel, Ali)~~

~~May 14 – Women in the Woods Workshop at Lone Pine State Park (Holly, Ali, Ashley, arborist, MCC)~~

~~May 24 – Forest Management, Holly McKenzie, FVCC 6-9pm~~

June 11 – Big Mountain Fire brush pick up day being planned

June 15 – North Fork Fire Hazard Reduction Field Trip, 9:30am – 3pm (Allen Chrisman)

June 15 – Living with Wildfire – Montana House, West Glacier (Ali, Harker, HHGV, Lincoln, ?)

June 26 – Whitefish Fire Service Area Board meeting and potluck

June 28 – Living with Wildfire Event in Whitefish (Richard Hildner, Ali, Rick Connell, Mike West, Ben, Joe Page?)

July 13 – North Fork Firewise Day (Allen Chrisman, Sean Johnson, Huntsberger, Lincoln..)

July 21 – Big Mountain Firewise Day! Details to come...

July 14-15 & 22 – MSU Forest Stewardship Workshop, Kalispell (Register [HERE](#))

August 4-5 & 12 – MSU Forest Stewardship Workshop, Eureka

August TBD – Lion Mountain HOA meeting

Fall TBD – Fall burn & Fire Season Recap at FVCC – Rick Trembath and Co.

Don't forget, I have a lot of these here in my office so give a call if you'd like a stack:

[Be Ember Aware!](#)

[Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide](#) (home hardening)

[Wildfire Evacuation Checklist](#)

[Ready, Set, Go Montana](#)

[Fire-Resistant Landscaping Considerations for Montana's WUI](#)

[Protecting and Landscaping Homes in the Wildland Urban Interface](#)

Thanks for being here and we'll see you next month!

6/2/22 aau