



FireSafe Flathead Meeting Notes

October 22, 2020 9-11am via Zoom

Attendance: Ali Ulwelling (DNRC), Deb Starling (NW MT Hazardous Fuels program), Sean Johnson (District Conservationist, NRCS), Rick Trembath (fire historian and more), Lincoln Chute (Flathead County Fire Services Area Manager), Allen Chrisman (North Fork Fire Mitigation, MT Tree Farm and more), Lorrie Woods (forester, consultant, private landowner advocate), Chris Dowling (Flathead NF Swan Lake District Ranger), Tye Sundt & Zack Miller (Weyerhaeuser raw materials & purchasing), Anna Lang (Disaster research, FEMA rep), Janette Turk (Partnership Coordinator, Flathead NF), Spencer Plumb and Marlee Ostheimer (National Forest Foundation)

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

Next meeting: Thursday, November 19th 9-11am via Zoom

(Note this is the 3rd Thursday of November as Thanksgiving falls on November 26th).

0900 - We started by welcoming the new faces in the room and thanking all for joining us!

Flathead National Forest & Joint Chief's proposal – Mike West is still on assignment in Colorado, but Janette and Sea Johnson stepped up to provide an update. The West Valley Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Project proposal was one of six proposals from Montana reviewed at the regional level and was one of three selected to move forward to the Washington Office for consideration. If selected, it would provide up to 5 million to accomplish the goals over the next few years. If not selected, the next JC deadline is in January; the coordination would also be beneficial when applying for future grant opportunities.

Deb has a lot of interest from this area already and we will wait on any outreach to communities until we are confident that the funds are secured to meet the needs of landowners. If we can channel more funding through future grants, the NW MT Hazardous Fuels program will expand to meet the need. It was also mentioned that some contractors have had to pull out of projects because of Covid, family considerations, over committing and some landowners have had to start looking for replacement contractors, but many are booked out into next summer.

Lorrie Woods is still interested in getting a handout for private landowners that talks about the programs that are available and includes contact information, process, and other ways of getting this work done. Mike and Ali have talked about this and will work together to draft a handout together.

Ali will also work with the Stewardship program to get a better idea of the annual grant cycle. What grants are available, what the parameters are for a competitive application, what the specifications are for work on the ground/education/outreach/measurable outcomes, deadlines, tracking requirements, and anything else. We are also starting to see the need for smaller "working groups" to pre-identify partners within priority areas for work so that we are better prepared for the next funding opportunity.

Natural Resources & Conservation Service (NRCS) – Sean Johnson, Dist. Conservationist – Sign up for EQUIP has started for the area around Ashley Lake and is open through November 17th. If the JC funding comes through, there will be an additional sign up period. There is also a lot of interest in the Foy's Lake area and potential for another TIP (Targeted Implementation Plan). If it goes forward there would be an application

deadline of Feb 12, 2021 for implementation in 2022. Sean is also continuing talks with Allen and residents in the North Fork about another TIP in Trail Creek/Moose Creek, also for 2022.

We also talked about interest in **coordinating more with Ernie** to engage landowners in a wildfire risk home assessment while addressing the forested area around homes AND for **Ernie to have the partner information to provide to landowners who are interested in programs to offset cost.**

NW Montana Hazardous Fuels Program - Deb Starling, Lead Forester – There is always a lot going on and they are currently closing out several grants: the last in Lincoln County, Flathead North, Overlook Trail, and Suncrest. She did meet with Highland Meadows and Ernie will be following up as they are interested in becoming a Firewise Community and need a community assessment. There is a lot interest on the east side of the Valley, and they are continuing work with Many Lakes. Also getting ready to start Notta Road community off Farm to Market. They are getting the training needed to work with the ArcGIS Online account with support from FireSafe Flathead. Again, if there is funding available their program is designed to expand to meet the needs of landowners.

CWPP draft – Lincoln Chute, Flathead County OES – Lincoln is back from fire assignments and **will work on coordinating/hosting a public meeting for the CWPP** in preparation for signatures from Commissioners. It is currently on the County website and available for review and comment.

Zack Miller – Weyerhaeuser log purchaser & SAF Flathead Chapter president – Zack and Tye work with a lot of landowners every day, awareness of cost-share programs would be beneficial so they could share information to those interested. We need to work more closely with our industry partners and better understand and communicate their role. Another reason for us to create a handout!

Other random updates – Ali Ulwelling, Forestry Assistance Specialist, DNRC

- **Montana Forest Action Plan listening session** – Montana Forest Action Plan has been released and the last day to submit public comment is October 23rd. The Statewide assessment is represented spatially and provides guidance on where to focus collaborative, cross-boundary work. Yes, there will be a Request for Proposals soon and we can apply for implementation funding. Think cross-boundary, partners, education and outreach...
- **Landscape Scale Restoration grant** (and others) annual opportunities. How do we position ourselves better? RVCC: [A guide](#) to Funding and Authorities for Collaborative Forestry – Ali will work on this again. Looking for a reference on grant cycles, deadlines, RFPs, parameters... Again, looking at meeting up with FNF districts, DNRC units, and other partners to be better prepared.
- **Firesafe Flathead AGOL account & Storymap** – Starting to coordinate a couple of products for landowner education. Working on an interactive Storymap to tell the story of fire history, fire-dependent forests, forest health, what landowners can do... using local photos, local stories, local people. **Ali is asking for photos and video to include** that capture projects before/after, an opportunity for time-lapse of a project.
- **Website improvements** - www.firesafeflathead.com, [Fire in the Root](#) – What is more important for us to host and communicate?
 - Zack & Lincoln said YouTube videos to share. Especially of equipment on different jobs, being able to better communicate how equipment can be used on large and small jobs alike in a low-impact manner to get the work done.
 - Janette suggested a **contractor list**-- not just the MLA list, but a combined list of “trained” contractors from Zack, Deb, Rick Moore, and others. Along with this should be “Things to consider when choosing a contractor.”

- Complete **list of partners**, including Weyerhaeuser and Stoltze.
- **Publication similar to the Good Neighbor Handbook** (Missoula County) – Started conversations with Flathead Conservation District and MSU extension about each taking a page and deciding what information to include, what partners to bring in. Allen brought up a good point about involvement of county programs and the need to further to discuss.
- **KGEZ radio** – I forgot to mention this, but I have committed to the 3rd Friday of each month to talk about a specific seasonally appropriate land management topic. Along with this we could submit a related article to the Flathead Beacon or Daily Interlake. There was also interest in sharing more widely in Lincoln County.

Rick Trembath – Also reiterated the need to look at California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington, to see what they are experiencing and understand the potential for future fire seasons here. How can we better prepare communities. He also presented on evacuation to a group of students with the University of Maryland and I am certain that they were appreciative of the experience and context Rick could provide. Many think its simple, but its not...

National Forest Foundation – Spencer and Marlee have been working with Janette and are available as partners as we continue to identify priority areas of work on national forest and private or state land adjacent. We will continue to meet, talk, and figure out the best way to coordinate and work together on projects such as Oettiker Creek and Taylor Hell-roaring.

Dates coming up:

- Potential for a pile-burning workshop with Peter Kolb. Stay tuned!
- Next spring at FVCC? Last spring Rick Trembath hosted indoor portion of pile-burning
- Next meeting on Thursday, November 19th 9am via Zoom

Thank you!

10.22.20 au