



FireSafe Flathead Meeting Notes, October 27, 2022

HOLIDAY MEETING SCHEDULE: Thursday, December 1 & Thursday, December 22. Location to be determined, but a remote option will be available. * For 2023 we are going to change our meeting day from the 4th Thursday of each month to avoid future conflicts with holidays and to better accommodate participation from Flathead NF and Flathead County partners with meetings in direct conflict with the current time. Stay tuned! *

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.

Recent news & Events:

NEW!!! Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network “Creating a Fire Adapted Montana” guide -
[DNRC Adapted+MT+Booklet Pages Interactive Final.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)

Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/grants>

Montana Forest Action Plan Grant Request for Proposals (2022) – Closes Sunday, November 6
<https://www.montanaforestactionplan.org/pages/request-for-proposals>

“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: (waiting on)

- North Fork Mitigation Committee recording from last summer’s presentations – ask Allen C.**
- A spreadsheet of grants, opportunities, dates and deadlines, max & min, parameters. – Ali**
- 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. A solution needs to be identified this winter.**
- How can we better communicate w/landowners what funding opportunities exist at this time/place, when opportunities are evolving?**

0900 – Welcome & Introductions: Mike West (Flathead NF Tally Lake RD AFMO), Ali Ulwelling (DRNC Forestry Assistance), Rick Trembath (fire historian, educator), Karli Becher (NRCS Conservationist), Henry DeLuca (Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network coordinator), Scott Countryman (Goosehead Insurance), Mike Frost (sparkplug!), Deb Starling (NW MT Hazardous Fuels Program and more), Ben Devall (Chief, Big Mountain FD), Lincoln Chute (Flathead County OES, Fire Warden), Marcel Getz (Fire Adapted Community Coordinator, Lincoln County and Libby Unit DNRC), Richard Hildner (FBAN, retired smokejumper/firefighter, NF landowner).

DNRC - Ali Ulwelling – Kicked off with reveal of the *new* Fire Adapted Montana Learning **Network Creating a Fire Adapted Montana Preparedness Guide!** Thank you to Julia Berkey, Ashley Juran, and Henry DeLuca who dedicated much creativity, time, and energy into creating this publication for us to share with landowners across the state. **We are ordering more and will get some to the NFLA (Richard Hildner and Allen Chrisman), Ben Devall and Big Mountain FD, Mike Frost, and others when they arrive.**

Discussion about some of the other outreach and education opportunities we have over the next several months:

- GNA / Stupak** winter harvest out on Farm to Market / Bootjack Lake would be a good chance to highlight this work, capture drone footage, **talk with Ernie, Brook, Ben D, and James to get this coordinated.**

- ❑ **Another project in Bigfork**—connect with landowner about possibility of touring and telling the story of their work. *Ali will connect with Rick Trembath and the landowner.*
- ❑ **Richard Hildner** brought up the work ongoing up the North Fork, the efforts of HHGV in the thicket of lodgepole up there. *Lincoln will connect with Huntsberger about that project.*
- ❑ **Richard Hildner** – and FFRG would like to pair up to host another presentation/conversation at the O’Shaughnessy this spring. *Let’s start planning and get the date on the calendar!*
- ❑ **There is conversation about a legislative ask to decrease setbacks between properties to five feet.** This would have an obvious impact on fire and response. *Ali and Lincoln will find out more about this.*
- ❑ There is a **pile burning workshop** being hosted by MSU in Thompson Falls next Tuesday if anyone is interested.
- ❑ Lincoln will be burning about **100 piles in Herron Park** when the time is right. Anyone is welcome to join, take photos/video, burn. *Talk with Shawn Morgan about use of the drone. Ali will follow up with Lincoln on the timing of this.*
- ❑ **Pile burning** – Mike Frost thought that we should have pile burning videos and information on our FireSafe Flathead website. *Ali will find the video that Peter Kolb recorded and the one that Ernie and Rick Trembath have been working on and get those up on the site.*
- ❑ **KGEZ** – Thank you to Cameron Wohlschlegel with FH Stoltze Land and Lumber for meeting with KGEZ during Forest Products week to talk sustainable forestry here in the Flathead. *Next month we hope to hear from Caleb Dietz and American Forest Management (AFM) about their growing role.*
- ❑ **Prescribed fire** – Mike Frost – It would be beneficial to see more coverage of the successes of prescribed burning.
- ❑ **Home Ignition Zone and landscape architecture** – Mike Frost has a neighbor and friend he will contact about this concept of developing a more aesthetically pleasing visual for the Home Ignition Zone, rather than the barren depiction that we often share that is less appealing to homeowners. *Ali will follow up with Mike.*
- ❑ **FVCC**- work with Rick T and FVCC to get dates on the spring calendar and in the spring catalog— Fire History in NW Montana, forestry and tree selection, preparing for fire seasons... *Ali is working on this.*
- ❑ **Graphics and Ads in the local papers** through the spring and into the summer fire season – *Ali will look into this and see what we can get lined up so when the funding is available, we can make it happen.*

Home Ignition Zone training (Ali, Marcel, Ernie)– The DNRC Fire Protection Bureau and the Community Preparedness Specialist are working on updating training and will have a working draft for review before Christmas with plans to incorporate feedback and have a final product ready for delivery early this spring. This is a priority, and we will be working with and following up as the progress continues.

Lincoln Chute - Is working on new subdivision regulations to ensure that the recommended fuels reductions occurs before going to final plat. (What else is being considered to update?) Lincoln is also working on gathering information for a sprinkler handout—*Henry (FAMLN) and Rick Trembath are also interested in supporting and adding to this information to share, Ali will make sure they are all in contact.* With NW Montana Hazardous Fuels closing their doors at the end of the year, we are also looking for a new partner to help administer the USFS State and Private fuels reduction funding for private landowners. Other Counties have staffed foresters and mitigation coordinators (Lincoln, Lake, Ravalli...) to help engage with forest landowners, deliver funds, draft management plans; Lincoln will inquire whether this option could be considered for Flathead County.

Scott Countryman (Goosehead Insurance)— **A big Thank You to Scott for being here and contributing a much needed and valued perspective!** Scott has found that there are some updates to be made in the system that determines the PPC (Property Protection Code) for homeowners. He is working with Amanda Brown to get some of this done as soon as possible; insurance rates and accuracy for select homeowners will depend on it.

- ISO and Verisk – (<https://www.isomitigation.com/ppc/>) Verisk uses dated satellite imagery to determine ratings but cannot be used to change insurance policies or premiums.

-Could we provide more information to home inspectors who have permission and access to interior and exterior of the home and could they also assess/report on the Home Ignition Zone?

-The onus is on the SELLER to make their property more sellable. How can we engage with real estate with info sharing?

Flathead National Forest, Mike West – Several projects (Round Star, Lake Five..) are moving forward across the Forest and fuels reduction targets are increasing (see complete list of projects here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/flathead/landmanagement/projects>). They are increasing efficiency but also encountering obstacles to work through. Joint Chief's funding area work is going well with 1250 acres treated and additional funding for new roads/infrastructure being built that will add options for ingress/egress and neighborhood safety. Prescribed fire season went well on the Flathead, as did managing fires for resource benefit on the HHGV, Swan Lake, and Spotted Bear Districts. They continue to send resources out each month of the year to support fire operations across the country. Mike also continues to respond to calls by meeting with folks out in the field and assisting them with their forestry questions; we can expect to hear from Meadow Lake HOA as they have called with interest.

Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) – Karli Becher – They continue to work on Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPs) in Ashley Lake, Bitterroot Lake, and Wedge Canyon (North Fork), as well Joint Chiefs' contracts (west and north of Kalispell from Foys to Haskill Basin). There has been A LOT of interest in the area, and they are requesting additional funds to meet the level of interest. Applications to fund 2023 projects closes Friday, Oct 28. They are also looking to hire 2 forester positions—one in Eureka and one in Kalispell to help meet the demand.

Northwest Montana Hazardous Fuels Program – Deb Starling, Lead Forester – Deb has been out in the field with Carrie as their team is working to wrap up 7 existing grants by this fall. They are not seeking any new grants and it is still looking like they will no longer operate the program as of the end of this year. It will take more deliberate coordination with partners to hand off the list of interested landowners, as they continue to call looking for funding to help with the cost of reducing fuels. They are still taking names and getting a lot of requests from West Valley, Many Lakes/Foothill Road, Lakeside/Somers areas and will continue to contribute and participate in these FireSafe Flathead meetings, events, and ongoing efforts! They appreciate the conversation about insurance and inspections, and support increasing efforts in education as opposed to more regulation.

Big Mountain Fire – Ben Devall, Fire Chief – They are working on their Firewise update and there is renewed interest in a 2nd egress option off the hill but it's rather unrealistic. They are also looking at a couple of creative ideas for early detection of wildfires using AI cameras like they are using in Big Sky. **Ali will connect with Dustin Tetrault of Big Sky to see how those are working, what they require for maintenance and support, if they are effective and recommended.**

Thanks for being here and we'll see you next month!
11/04/22 aau