



FireSafe Flathead Meeting Notes, October 28, 2021, via Zoom

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, December 15th 9-11am. Venue to be determined.

Meeting Attendance: Mike West (Partnership Coordinator, Flathead NF), Deb Starling (NW MT Hazardous Fuels program), Sean Johnson & Karli Becher (NRCS), Ali Ulwelling (Forestry Assistance, DNRC), Ben Devall (Chief, Big Mountain Fire Department), Dylan Kopitzke (FMO Northwestern Land Office, DNRC), Allen Chrisman (North Fork Mitigation Committee), Randy Sundberg (Many Lakes HOA), Paul Okerberg (Highland Meadows HOA), Mike Frost (WFASC sparkplug), Rick Trembath (fire historian), RJ Hannah (Tally Lake Fuels AFMO), Nick Aschenwald (Area Operations Manager, NWLO DNRC), Lincoln Chute (Flathead Fire Service Area Manager).

EVENTS & ARTICLES:

November 2, 7pm at the O'Shaughnessy Center and via WebEx - Whitefish Fire Department Master Plan presentation. Link here: [Cisco Webex Meetings - Meeting Detail](#) Password: Flr3M@st3rPI@n

Nov 3, 6:30 to 7:30 Wildfire and Elk Nutrition with Swan Valley Connections via Zoom :
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83458922265#success>

This week! November 4-5 (Zoom) - Montana Forest Collaboration Network 6th Annual Workshop – “The Role of Collaboration in Forests & Grasslands – where we live, work, and play.” Register [HERE](#).

National Forest Foundation, DNRC, and Montana Forest Collaboration Network hosted a panel discussion about Wildfire Science with Dr. Mark Finney, Dr. Jack Cohen, and NIMO IC Bea Day, hosted by Dr. Colin Hardy. The recording can be found [HERE](#).

Indigenous Fire Management, August 2021 - Tony Harwood (CSKT) and Swan Valley Connections presentation recording: <https://www.swanvalleyconnections.org/presentations>

Recent articles – Washinton Post interactive How to Protect Your Home from Wildfires [HERE](#)

KGEZ radio interview – F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber, Cameron Wohlschlegel on forest management [HERE](#) !

“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:

- **Supporting outreach for the Wedge Canyon TIP**
 - Allen Chrisman and Sean will work together on this next summer in advance of the Oct deadline by posting in the spring newsletter and presenting at the annual Firewise meeting.
- **Home Risk Assessments being requested by All State insurance, so Deb and Ernie are conducting these. What are the responsibilities, liabilities, opportunities for more consistency, payment for services, and/or the responsibility for insurance to learn the assessment process themselves?**
 - Ali has sent an email to the DNRC Bureau re: the responsibility, expectation, and liability surrounding this increase in requests. We are in transition with new Fire Protection Bureau Chief and Community Preparedness Specialist soon to be in place. Guidance at this point includes awareness that assessments are not standardized and that there is not currently any certification, that they are to raise awareness and educate about vulnerabilities but not to assess homes on behalf of insurance companies.
- **KGEZ – Ali will be looking for another to interview for November 19th at 7:20 in the morning.**

- **Many Lakes community presentation this spring** – Deb, Ernie, Lincoln, Rick Connell. Randy will get the date to pencil on the calendar.
- **Fall Pile-burning workshop for 2022**
- **Spring FVCC workshops for Community Education calendar**

0900 – Welcome & Introductions – Welcome to RJ Hannah, acting Fuels AFMO on the Tally Lake District & Congratulations to Mike West, acting as the Partnership Coordinator for the Flathead National Forest!

Ali Ulwelling – A LOT has been going on over the past month, the momentum is building with population growth and there have been a few workshops and field tours highlighting the work, bringing up challenges, and embarking on creative problem solving. FireSafe Flathead is one of several groups across western Montana participating in the Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network and connecting to generate ideas. Topics include [Potential Operation Delineations](#) (PODs), the [Unequal Impacts of Wildfire](#) (Headwaters Economics), continuing coordination with [Shared Stewardship](#), the [Montana Wildfire Risk Assessment](#) among others.

Mike West – The Flathead National Forest has been making progress on the backlog of prescribed burns across districts this fall and it's gone well. They completed the burn in the Whitefish municipal watershed and Taylor-Hellroaring; these are both long-term projects where the Forest will make multiple entries so we can expect more fire over the years as conditions allow. ([Controlled burn kicks up smoke in Whitefish \(kpax.com\)](#)) They do have an annual goal that, for multiple reasons including capacity, typically exceeds what they are able to get accomplished but are in discussions about how to increase the level of landscape scale prescribed fire. They have been piling/burning this fall and have been capturing drone footage of the Oettiker Creek project from start to finish so will have that to share the story!

They have multiple engines & staff out assisting areas where fire season is still active.

There should be more funding available for fuels reduction work but waiting on final infrastructure bill.

Joint Chief's – Still waiting to hear about the projects that will be funded for 2022. The Flathead and Kootenai both submitted proposals and are waiting notification.



For the next several months Mike will be acting as the Partnership Coordinator. They recently met with the [National Forest Foundation](#) re: innovative finance and exploring options to work with [Blue Forest](#) on large scale projects if the Flathead is determined to be candidate for funding.

[Good Neighbor Authority](#) (GNA) program funding Kalispell Unit fire crew to get some GNA work completed. More to come.

Deb Starling – Hosted the tour of Many Lakes and surrounding area a few weeks ago and that went well. Able to connect with Andre and connect re: projects on the Island Unit that may open opportunities to address the “hole” over in the Lakeside area. Other areas of interest include: Raabe Road, Lake Five, West Glacier, Whitefish Hills.

Western States WUI application drafted for the Foothill Road area from Echo Lk to Lk Blaine and west to Many Lakes and should know more about that soon.

Has been working with Ernie, Paul, and Mike in Highland Meadows to complete home assessments and include roadways into the Stovepipe project area.

- Finishing up the last WUI grant in the Badrock to Bigfork area, also includes Many Lakes
- Moving forward with a new contractor in Ptarmigan Village
- Dower Draw moving forward, looking for a couple more landowners to participate (Carrie)
- Stone Mountain is coming along (Tony Willits)
- Haskill Basin has 9 landowners interested and Carrie is working in that area
- Notta Road is still moving forward but also looking for additional landowners (Carrie)
- Little Bitterroot
- Areas of interest to have in mind for future funding and engagement: Lakeside/Angel Point and the Thompson Chain of Lakes area (an area where Libby Unit and Lincoln County Forester are targeting.)

Deb and Ernie have also received numerous requests from All State insurance holders for wildfire home risk assessments to be completed and a report generated. Expecting that there will be more.

Sean Johnson – Everyone funded out at Ashley Lake, over 300-acres. 5-year project looking at 6-700 total acres of treatment. Little Bitterroot approved, working on a little more interest in the Wedge Canyon area up the North Fork, deadline looming for 2021 applications (Oct 29). Subsequent interest will have to wait and apply for 2023 funding. Also funding irrigation, greenhouse high tunnels, and there are 2 TIPs in the Eureka area near Glen Lake and Etna/Fortine.

Will plan to work with Allen to grow interest in the Wedge Canyon TIP by including in the NF newsletter and presenting at the 2023 Firewise Day in the North Fork.

Ernie Nace – Has been working with Ben on renewing Firewise status with a new community assessment and in touch with Lazy Bay community for the same. Wondering if Mike Frost would be willing to chat with them in the spring via Zoom to highlight the benefits of becoming Firewise.

Allen Chrisman – Increase in interest in the Firewise topics from new landowners. He will also be presenting at the [Montana Forest Collaboration Network](#) workshop next week. At 3pm on Thursday, Nov 4th Allen will be speaking on a panel “**Where we live: Ex-urban development and responsibilities.**”

Lincoln Chute – Has been working with the Parks Department and the new Director Christopher Maestas to move forward with work on the County Parks.

Ben Devall – Has been working with Ernie Nace to get a complete Community Risk Assessment updated (last was in 2014) and renew Firewise status. A big Thank You to the Flathead NF! Thought the recent prescribed

burning went well and that the Flathead NF did well with communicating about the event, also good to see that the Holbrook piles have been burned.

Enormous amount of participation this year with the Mountain doing work, landowner packets sent out; they include Firewise, district info, in the event of wildfire info, and important numbers. 2/3 of homeowners are also signed up for the Big Mountain Community website (www.bigmountaincommunity.com) and this will allow them to push out emergency messages, share Firewise links and info. As of now, it sounds like the Elk Highlands fuels project will move forward...

Rick Trembath – The Boulder 2700 Fire has generated a lot of interest this year. Working with Tony Harwood and the CSKT to capitalize on this interest. Rick sent out information on the October wind event and is wondering if there were any thoughts? Also sharing about the Echo Lake fire 100-year anniversary and the awareness of local events like that, the importance of the historical perspective of wildfire.

Ali would like to follow up with Rick to start building the Fire History page on the FireSafe Flathead website.

Randy Sundberg – Thank you to Lincoln for presenting at the recent HOA meeting; many landowners took what was presented to heart and started work that day. There is a new gate in place on Rolling Ridge that has been talked about for a while and is now in place. There was the possibility of adding a new gate/exit through Kaufman Lane, but with new staff at Creston Hatchery that is no longer an option. Would also like to maintain contact with Deb in the event there is more funding for fuels in Many Lakes.

Ali Ulwelling – Has continued to move forward to improving the www.firesafeflathead.com website by checking links and adding contacts and will be boosting and reorganizing the Resources tab. Also moving forward with [Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network](#) on landowner resources including an all-in-one wildfire preparedness guide, the short-term rental information, the program contact list for NW Montana, and a separate the Living in the Flathead Guide. This is a collaborative effort and exciting to see! **Ali will prep packets of info for everyone to have on hand for landowners, including the contact list, and work on a FireSafe Flathead card to hand out.**

Also working with partners on Restrictions, Burn Permit solution, and anything else that comes this way!

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](#)

Interpretive signs or a prescribed fire tour in the future?

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

Ali

11/1/2021

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