



FireSafe Flathead Meeting Notes, September 22, 2022, via Zoom

NEXT MEETING: October 27 at the DNRC conference room and Zoom: <https://mt.gov.zoom.us/j/88318252631?pwd=R3lVNFJRMzQzSW9oUngwSHl0WlZKZz09>

Meeting ID: 883 1825 2631 and Password: 494037

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:

Thursday, October 6th, 6-8pm – A Review of the 2022 Fire Season – Hosted at Flathead Valley Community College, Arts & Technology, Rm 208 – Join local interagency fire professionals as they discuss the 2022 fire season.

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

Montana Forest Action Plan Grant Request for Proposals (2022) -
<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:

- **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.**
- **How can we better communicate w/landowners what funding opportunities exist at this time/place, when opportunities are evolving?**

0900 – Welcome & Introductions: Ali Ulwelling, Chris Johnson, Walt Tabb (Chief Coram/West Glacier), Rick Trembath (fire historian, educator), Karli Becher (NRCS Conservationist), Dylan Kopitzke (DNRC NWLO FMO), Whitney Matatare (Reserved Treaty Rights Lands (RTRL) Coordinator, CS&KT), Carey Cooley (Lake County Mitigation Coordinator), Henry DeLuca (Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network coordinator), Scoot Countryman (Goosehead Insurance), Toby Thompson (Fuels FMO, Flathead National Forest), Randy Sundberg (Many Lakes HOA), Ernie Nace (Community Preparedness and Prevention Specialist, Kalispell DNRC), Mike Frost (sparkplug!), Katie Mast (Chief, Marion FD), Bill Naegeli (Sanders County Emergency Manager), Shane Feightner (Stillwater State Forest AFMO), Pete Melnick (Flathead County Administrator), Allen Chrisman (too much to list), Deb Starling (NW MT Hazardous Fuels Program and much much more), Ben Devall (Chief, Big Mountain FD), Lincoln Chute (Flathead County OES, Fire Warden).

DNRC - Ali Ulwelling – It was good to see everyone in person and make time for introductions with several new faces in the room! There’s a lot going on with the DNRC regarding grants (Stewardship Program), Cross Boundary Coordination, home risk assessments, new landowner publications and tools.

Ernie Nace – Is back and feeling good! He has been working with the fire crew to get out and complete home risk assessments, is working with Mike Frost to update Firewise status for Elkhorn, working on capturing drone footage of prescribed fires, assisting with GNA projects, and **will be putting out the press release for fall open burning (starts October 1).**

Scott Countryman (Goosehead Insurance)— Kudos to Katie Mast and the Marion Fire Department for their work with landowners during the Elmo Fire—it made a difference. Looking to connect real estate agents across the NW with wildfire home risk assessments. Several companies will not write policies in the WUI, only in Kalispell—we can expect to get insured out of our homes if we do not tackle this together. Lincoln asked about continuing education for real estate agents and if there would be interest in an information sharing session about homes lost in wildfire. Shared a new publication re: SafeCo Ins. Partnering with Chloeta and how services are being made available to the general public (see attached) and [Verisk](#). **There was a lot of interest and discussion around this topic, and we should plan to continue this at a later meeting. Ali will connect Ernie, Marcel, Carey, and Whitney with Scott.**

Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) – Karli Becher – They are working 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. **October 28, 2022 is the sign-up deadline for 2023 funding. (Ali will connect Karli with Katie Mast Chief of Marion Fire Department.)**

Northwest Montana Hazardous Fuels Program – Deb Starling, Lead Forester – Their team is working to wrap up 7 existing grants by this fall. They are not seeking any new grants and are still considering options, but it is looking like they will no longer operate the program as of the end of this year. They are still taking names and getting a lot of requests from West Valley, Many Lakes/Foothill Road, Lakeside/Somers areas.

Flathead County - Lincoln Chute – They did compete about 4-acres of treatment in the Herron Park area under the Joint Chiefs’ funding and used the County Park to hold a saw training class. The piles are built and could be used for a pile burning workshop. Lincoln spent time on the Kootenai Complex and the Elmo Fire this summer and will be putting together information on how to use/set up sprinklers to protect structures during fires. Also found heat between the stucco and sheathing on a home on the Elmo fire AND that people are dropping trees around their home while the fire is advancing, creating an unnecessary fuel load close to the structure —another opportunity for homeowner education. **Follow up with pile burning and connect Lincoln with Henry (Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network) about creating the sprinkler handout that would benefit more people across the state.**

North Fork Mitigation Committee – Allen Chrisman – They hosted a couple of excellent, well-attended events this past summer—a fuels reduction tour highlighting the work landowners have completed and 2) Stephen Quarles and Todd Lando presented on ignition resistance at the annual Firewise meeting. This was recorded and **we’ll need to get that edited to share.**

Big Mountain Fire – Ben Devall, Fire Chief – 107 people attended the Big Mountain District community event with Ernie, Lincoln, and Richard Hildner supporting. They have contact information for 2/3 of residents in district and are sending out the firewise/information packets to everyone. Paul Silverman is working on a project where he is working to pull out the dead trees and brush.

Toby Thompson – Flathead National Forest, Assistance Fire Management Officer of Fuels – Congratulations, Toby, on the new position on the Flathead! We are excited to hear that there is a forest-wide position dedicated to fuels planning. The Lake 5 project sold last week, Round Star project on the Tally Lake district is in the 45-day comment period, Stove pipe is ongoing, also looking at some prescribed burning for fall but depended on weather and new guidance. Also need to pick up the discussion around PODs and see where the districts are in that process.

Carey Cooley, Lake County Mitigation Coordinator, and **Whitney Malatare** - CS&KT Reserve Treaty Rights Lands (RTRL) Program Manager – There’s a lot going on in Lake County! Carey and Whitney are busy getting a plan together, drafting grant proposals, and identifying areas of priority for their work together. They are also working together and with others on some lessons-learned educational opportunities from the Boulder 2700 and Elmo Fires of the past couple of years.

POWER OUTAGE so we did not have CJ’s presentation but did have a fruitful discussion about a variety of other topics.

General Discussion included a quick round robin about cross boundary coordination and where we should focus efforts. Some ideas that were thrown out and agreed upon:

- Anyplace that has critical infrastructure (powerlines, communication equipment, roadways, bridges, watersheds...) across the County.
- Somers/Lakeside has the forest conditions, growth/construction, and interest
- Whitefish to Columbia Falls and Columbia Falls to Teakettle
- The Canyon

Events past & 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!

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

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

October 6, 6-8pm — *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!](#)—Out of stock

[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!

10/07/22 aau