



## FireSafe Flathead Meeting Notes, September 23, 2021, at the Tally Lake Pavilion

**NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, October 28, 2021, 9-11. We will watch the weather and see if there is another outdoor option so that we can meet in person again. It was good to see everyone!

**Meeting Attendance:** Mike West (Fuels AFMO, Tally Lake Rd of the Flathead NF), Deb Starling (NW MT Hazardous Fuels program), Sean Johnson (NRCS District Conservationist), Ali Ulwelling (Forestry Assistance, DNRC), Ben Devall (Chief of Big Mountain Fire Department), Dylan Kopitzke (FMO Northwestern Land Office DNRC), Allen Chrisman (North Fork Mitigation Committee), Virginia and Fiona (Flathead Conservation District).

### EVENTS coming up:

**National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy Workshop** (Virtual) October 4-8 - More [HERE](#)

**National Forest Foundation, DNRC, and Montana Forest Collaboration Network** are hosting a Zoom webinar/panel discussion about Wildfire Science with Dr. Mark Finney, Dr. Jack Cohen, and NIMO IC Bea Day, hosted by Dr. Colin Hardy. Monday, October 18<sup>th</sup> from 12-2pm Register [HERE](#).

**Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network** Fall Workshop – October 18 - 21

**Society of American Foresters (SAF) annual meeting** – October 13-15 Info [HERE](#) Agenda includes: Shared Stewardship, Good Neighbor Authority, Flathead National Forest Current & Future projects, and more.

**Recent articles** – Washinton Post interactive How to Protect Your Home from Wildfires [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 from last month:

- **Ernie and Ali will work on more signage specific to restrictions (“No Campfires”) and will be part of the post-season restrictions’ conversation to make some procedural improvements.**
  - Ali has a bunch of “No Campfire” and “Stage 2 Restrictions” signs ready for next season and will be part of the follow up discussion re: overall Restrictions.
- **Supporting outreach for the Wedge Canyon TIP**
  - Allen Chrisman and Sean are working together on this, FireSafe Flathead, the DNRC, and/or Montana Tree Farm are also available to assist with landowner outreach.
- **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.
- **Montana Tree Farm Peer Network and coordination with Jane Mandala (Ali)**
  - Ali, Jane, Sean, and others did meet up for the Tree Farm Peer Network at Wild Bill and Jane has another planned near Herron Park. It went very well and we look forward to more!
- **Deb had concerns about grant administration and followed up with Ashley Juran and Ali to talk more and consider creative options for future landowner-specific situations.**

## 0900 – Welcome & Introductions – Welcome to Fiona and Virginia from the Flathead Conservation District!

*Ali Ulwelling* – Thanks to Mike West for offering up the Tally Lake campground pavilion for the meeting— what a gorgeous location to see one another face to face.

*Mike West* – Has been busy out fighting fires this season but is back and optimistic that they will be able to accomplish some prescribed fire on all districts of the forest this fall, they should know more in the next week or two as the national fire conditions change. They have not really been able to broadcast burn over the past couple of years because of conditions being either too wet or too dry. Pile burning will occur in October and November.

*Deb Starling* –This fire season has generated lot of interest everywhere. There are some holes being identified as some communities are not geographically eligible for certain grant funding sources. It would be helpful if there was another source that would provide funding to assist landowners in improving the Home Ignition Zone, even if they fall outside of a “targeted area”. **Ali - Explore MFAP, FEMA BRIC, other?**

- Western States WUI application drafted for the Foothill Road area from Echo Lk to Lk Blaine and west to Many Lakes.
- 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
- Highland Meadows – Paul O is working with Ernie to establish them as a Firewise Community and working with Mike and the TLRD to include the road in their project. Meeting on Oct 21.
- Areas of interest to have in mind for future funding and engagement: Lakeside/Angel Point and the Thompson Chain of Lakes area.

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.

This led to a discussion about the responsibility and expectation (NW MT Haz Fuels, DNRC, fire departments) of providing risk assessments/ratings, if there is a “standard” assessment for the home ignition zone that is being used. **Ali has followed up with the DNRC Bureau** for any guidance as the DNRC offers and performs wildfire home risk assessments/reports using the Interra Group Situation Analyst Montana (SAM) program as seen here: [Wildfire Risk Portal — Montana DNRC \(mt.gov\)](https://www.dnrc.mt.gov/wildfire-risk-portal)

*Sean Johnson* – Busy. 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. Also funding greenhouse high tunnels and there are 2 TIPs in the Eureka area near Glen Lake and Etna/Fortine.

They did not have any luck hiring the position that they had announced but will try again, perhaps with a forester position. DNRC Service Forester Derek L is going to be helping with the management plans for the Wedge Canyon TIP and Shawn M is helping with the plans out of Polson.

*Allen Chrisman* – Kudos to Mike and the rest of the Hay Creek Fire Type 3 Team for their management this summer! The NF had a great meeting this summer, Todd Lando presented, and they are working on rustling up more interest in the NRCS TIP in the Wedge Canyon fire area.

*Ben Devall* – Landowner packets have been sent out! They include firewise, district info, in the event of wildfire info, and important numbers. 2/3 of homeowners are signed up for the Big Mountain Community website and this will allow them to push out emergency messages, share Firewise links and info. ***They hauled 12 trailers of brush to large burn piles on their community Firewise day this summer!*** They have been working with Elk Highlands to strengthen HOA guidelines regarding defensible space and the conservation easement work is on hold again. They have a new Fire Danger sign posted!

*Dylan Kopitzke* – Interested in working on the burn permit system, asking the group if we would be willing to help take some of that on, to see how other states are managing burn permits and messaging. Also interested in the shared DNRC/NRCS forester position in Eureka and if there is the possibility for similar in the Flathead.

*Ali Ulwelling* – We are continuing to move forward to improving the [www.firesafeflathead.com](http://www.firesafeflathead.com) website by checking links and adding contacts. Also moving forward with some landowner resources including an all-in-one wildfire preparedness guide, the short-term rental information, the program contact list for NW Montana, and 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.**

Ali will also be 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](#)

We followed up with a walk through the Tally Lake prescribed fire unit that Mike had planned, prepped, and burned in 2018. It is accessible and a great spot to keep in mind for educational interpretive signs or a prescribed fire tour in the future!

Thanks all and we'll meet again in October...  
au 10/1/21



**Montana Tree Farm System**  
**Peer Mentor Network**  
*Sanders, Flathead & Lincoln Counties*

MT Tree Farm is coordinating a network of forest landowners to share their experience, knowledge, and resources with one another.

**No matter where you are on your forest management journey, we want you to join!**

This is an opportunity to learn and stay connected through informal one-on-one visits, group field days, and more!



If you would like to participate or if you have questions, please contact Jane Mandala: [jlsmandala@gmail.com](mailto:jlsmandala@gmail.com)  
(406) 274-2030