



**Wildland Fire Leadership Council Meeting
March 28-29, 2022
Spokane Valley, WA**

*Mirabeau Park Hotel and Convention Center
1100 North Sullivan Road, Spokane Valley, WA 99037*

Meeting Minutes

MEETING INTENT: To view, understand and build from on-the-ground successes that support WFLC priorities and the goals of the Cohesive Strategy; to discuss leaders' intent and build strategic opportunities to encourage additional successes; to further the WFLC policy priorities; and to give strategic direction to the Regional Strategy Committees, workgroups and agency and organizational leadership.

GOALS FOR MEETING:

- 1) Understand and provide leadership on key items related to the following WFLC priority issues:
 1. Implementation of Landscape Level / Infrastructure Related Opportunities
 2. Proactive Role of Fire on the Landscape
 3. Equity and Environmental Justice
- 2) Develop solutions and set WFLC policy agenda around priority issues.
- 3) Provide guidance to the WFLC Regional Strategy Committees for moving strategic opportunities forward.
- 4) Serve as a forum to exchange information, views and advice relating to the integration of wildland fire management activities.
- 5) Capture outstanding issues and opportunities for WFLC consideration.

ATTENDEES:

Council Members or alternates: Meryl Harrell (USDA), Eric Werwa (DOI), Randy Moore (FS), Laura McCarthy (NGA), George Geissler (NASF), Chad Fisher (NPS), Paul Steblein (USGS), Michael Nedd (BLM), Mitch Ellis (FWS), Johnna Blackhair (BIA), Lori Moore-Merrill (USFA), Rich Elliott (IAFC), Matt Kingsley (NACO), Jim Durglo (ITC), Cory Ashby (NLC), Nate Fisher (Governor Little's Office), Mike Zupko (WFLC Executive Director).

Numerous guests, partners and support staff were in attendance as well. Full list available.

MEETING SUMMARY

MARCH 28 – FIELD TOUR OVERVIEW

The field tour provided an opportunity to view multiple forest resilience projects in Northeast Washington. Tour attendees learned about the 2015 Tower Fire that provided a good wakeup call for forest landowners and land management agencies in Northeast Washington. Attendees also learned about the results of multiple collaborative efforts underway across federal, tribal, state and private lands. The tour highlighted the successes, challenges and future opportunities for collaborative forest resilience including hazardous fuel reduction, commercial harvest, non-commercial thinning, prescribed fire and community education. There was opportunities to discuss the challenges of securing social license to perform multiple types of work on the landscape, in and adjacent to communities in Northeast Washington.

ITINERARY

- Non-commercial thinning and hazardous fuel reduction on Washington State Parks Lands using correctional and fire suppression crews
- Small forest landowner “do-it-yourself” cost share project using mechanized equipment
- WA DNR State Lands commercial harvest adjacent to a recreational community, challenges, successes and the future of commercial forest management
- Lunch: Kalispel Tribe Welcome and 2015 Tower Fire Presentation
- Kalispel Tribe entrance project which includes a commercial harvest followed by mechanical mastication
- Indian Creek Community Forest project which will provide landowners opportunity to view a variety of forest treatment options
- Colville National Forest Geophysical Project will highlight one of the many collaborative forest resilience projects on the forest.



MARCH 29 – BUSINESS MEETING

OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Chair, Meryl Harrell, Deputy Undersecretary, USDA, Co-chair, Eric Werwa, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, DOI, and Mike Zupko, Executive Director, WFLC, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Everyone in the room introduced themselves.

WELCOME AND LOCAL OVERVIEW

George Geissler, WA State Forester, introduced Hilary Franz, WA State Commissioner of Public Lands. Geissler provided a brief overview of the Commissioner's role overseeing the WA State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), highlighting some of the achievements she has had during her tenure as Commissioner. Commissioner Franz then welcomed the participants to the State of Washington.

TOUR REFLECTIONS AND TAKE AWAYS

Mike Zupko facilitated a round-robin discussion of the WFLC members to gain perspectives and insight from the field tour the prior day.

AGENDA REVIEW AND ADMINISTRATION

- Zupko reviewed the agenda and key objectives for the meeting.
- The minutes from the January 25, 2022, WFLC call were unanimously approved.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LANDSCAPE LEVEL AND INFRASTRUCTURE RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

Objective:

- To understand multiple approaches to landscape level implementation using existing and new sources of funding
- To understand tools and strategies in how to engage multiple partners by using data driven systems
- To consider gaps and challenges (e.g. supply chain stressors) and build a collective understanding of needs to efficiently implement new funding streams and programs.

Brian Ferebee (USDA FS) and Jeff Rupert (DOI) facilitated the discussion. Ferebee emphasized that we have to have administrative guidance on how money is spent, and that the concerns of stakeholders have to be addressed.



Rodney Smoldon, (R6 USDA FS) gave an overview of work being done in the Forest Service Region and on the Colville National Forest.

Jason Fallon (DOI) shared a presentation on Shared Wildfire Risk Mitigation, Pilot in Washington, and Paul Steblein (USGS) shared a presentation on the Science-to-Management Innovation Landscape. ATTACHMENT I

Jen Watkins (WA DNR) shared a presentation on the WA DNR Forest Health Tracker and Forest Action Plan. She emphasized that we are great at showing what we have done, but we need to put some focus on where we are going. ATTACHMENT II.

Annie Schmidt (FAC Net) gave a presentation entitled Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, Building Sustainable Capacity and Crossing Boundaries. She emphasized that if are going to make the changes we need to make it is going to take time. We need to invest in communities, and we need to look at how we legitimize a lot of different solutions. ATTACHMENT III

Outcomes:

- Shared understanding of tools that facilitate landscape level implementation and joint prioritization across multiple partners
- Identified potential joint leaders' intent that can be utilized through agencies and organizations around approaches at the state level
- Joint strategies to implement cross-jurisdictional approaches.

Action Items:

- Data collection, consistency, coordination: Harrell indicated that this item should be an agenda item for the next WFLC meeting. There is an opportunity for WFLC to coordinate an understanding of governance and leveraging across the government spectrum.
- Communications: Determine better ways to utilize data and joint communications out to constituencies, including the public.
- Public health: Further coordination between land management and public health agencies, federal, state, tribal and local.
 - Reconvene the WFLC Data Nuance Working Group
 - Reconvene the WFLC Joint Communications Working Group
 - Identify next steps stemming from the EPA and CDC research on tradeoffs between prescribed fire and wildfire.



PROACTIVE ROLE OF FIRE ON THE LANDSCAPE

Presenters: Paul Hessburg and Dave Calkin (FS), Will Harling (MKWC) and Craig Foss (IDL)

Objective:

1. To understand the role fire has and will play across the landscapes of the west and nationally
2. To understand the differences in approach and ability to utilize fire across the landscape proactively, including social and political license and the sharing of risk in regard to fire management.
3. To explore opportunities to further utilize fire to restore landscapes to a more natural condition and reduce overall wildfire risk while enhancing ecological function.

Jaelith Hall-Rivera (USDA FS) and Jim Karels (NASF) facilitated the discussion.

Paul Hessburg (U of W and FS) provided a presentation of changes that have been made to landscapes, covering the various change agents that have played a critical part in the change. ATTACHMENT IV

Dave Calkins (FS) shared a presentation regarding fire history and approaches to collaborate in decision-making. ATTACHMENT V

Will Harling (MKWC) shared a presentation on Implementing the Cohesive Strategy to Restore Fire Processes. He emphasized that traditional fire knowledge is a national treasure that needs to be preserved. ATTACHMENT VI

Craig Foss (IDL) discussed the legal restrictions states face as well as the opportunities to partner with states to implement many of the management options previously discussed.

Outcomes:

1. Shared understanding of the various roles, benefits, and approaches to proactive fire across the landscape
2. Identified various legal, political and social license that may/may not be available with utilizing fire in different circles and geographies
3. Identified opportunities to use different tools, approaches and systems in decision-making for when and where fire as a management tool may be available and applicable.

Action Items:

- Communications and Education: How can WFLC coordinate communications to be more effective on the proactive use of fire and understanding the state of social license in this space?
 - Understand tools that can inform decision-making and impactful communication/engagement with local communities

- Build from Traditional Ecological Knowledge and learn from Tribal Nations as to ecological need and communicating the benefits.
- Barriers to Prescribed Fire: Liability insurance remains a major barrier in many locations. Can WFLC help further the understanding and need to overcome these barriers and continue to promote the use of prescribed fire in the right place at the right time?
 - Consider a study or working through other organizations to better capture the gaps and opportunities.
 - Work with the Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils, WFLC's Regional Strategy Committees and other entities to evaluate current policies and their impacts on the ability to utilize prescribed fire across states (e.g. literature review or deeper study).
- Smoke Management and Air Quality: Tie in the public health conversation in the first issue topic. Looks for ways to build upon joint communications. Additionally, expand WFLC relationships with public health agencies, especially at the state and local level.

EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Presenters: Jaelith Hall Rivera (FS), Jim Durglo (ITC) and Kelly Pohl (Headwaters Economics)

Objective:

Develop an understanding and engagement opportunities within WFLC member agencies and organizations to better address the challenges and needs of disadvantaged, underserved and socially vulnerable communities.

Kimi Barrett and Tyson Berton-Riggs facilitated the discussion.

Tyson Berton-Riggs, Rural Voices Community Coalition, shared a presentation on Equity and Environmental Justice. He emphasized that the information is his perspective coming from a rural community. ATTACHMENT VII

Discussion:

- How can we uncover what might be in our systems that we don't even notice because we have been doing them for so long. Are they serving everyone? What barriers can we remove?
- We need to figure out where our vulnerable communities are.
- State and private forestry programs are serving all 51 states, so we are looking at what we need to shift so all people have access. States place value on serving all people that come through the door, but what if they don't know how to find the door.

Jim Durglo gave a brief overview the make-up of the Intertribal Council, and shared some of the work they are doing on improving forest management on tribal lands and further opportunities to both leverage TEK as well as building additional ways to engage Tribal Nations.



Kelly Pohl (Headwaters Economics) shared a presentation titled Tools for Equity in Fire Adaptive Communities. She emphasized that as wildfires are becoming more extensive, more communities are impacted. She also noted that the impacts are not being felt equally. She encouraged people to check out the website www.wildfirerisks.org. ATTACHMENT VIII

Tyson Berton-Riggs asked what can we do about these things? Is there anything WFLC can do collectively to move forward?

Outcomes:

1. Increased understanding of equity and environmental justice issues and ways in which federal, state and local agencies can approach communities that may be considered disadvantaged and underserved.
2. Explored tools and methodologies to identify, partner with, and invest in these communities.
3. Identified strategies across federal, state, and local agencies to better address the needs of disadvantaged, underserved, and socially vulnerable communities.

Action Items:

- Cross-reference and look for engagement opportunities from the USDA, DOI, DHS and DoD equity action plans. Also, build from work of EPA, CDC and Tribal Nation engagement/identified opportunities.
- Evaluate WFLC serving as a clearinghouse for common themes, approaches and best practices in the equity and environmental justice space for wildland fire and land management circles.
- Continue to incorporate DEI approaches into WFLC strategic priorities as appropriate.

WGA WORKING LANDS, WORKING COMMUNITIES CONNECTION TO WFLC PRIORITIES

Nate Fisher (Idaho Gov. Little's Office) and Troy Timmons (WGA)

Nate Fisher gave a brief overview of the Governor's Initiative that kicked off in 2021. The intent of the initiative is to help shape the next Farm Bill and other policy opportunities as they are developed. Troy Timmons indicated that a report on the initiative will be issued by the end of June. They have received a lot of good feedback from the workshops and from many others. There was then a request that if anyone has more input or ideas they should be sent to Timmons.

Timmons went on to share that COVID has really impacted a couple of other things they have been working on with WFLC. 1) Getting a roadmap for wildfire affected communities. It is a low amount of money, but the potential would be higher. 2) Post fire navigators for communities. He



asked that WFLC make a decision on whether this will be getting to the finish line. Zupko responded that the Council will review the report and see if there are next steps to be taken.

Action Items:

- Zupko to work with WGA on the intersect of the Working lands, working communities initiative with WFLC strategic priorities and elevate how to align and leverage identified approaches.
- Zupko and Timmons to directly approach USDA and DOI about support status for the poste fire navigator and roadmap approaches to fill a gap in post fire interaction at the community level.

**REGIONAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE UPDATES AND IMPLEMENTATION
INSIGHT TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

- a) Northeast Regional Strategy Committee
 - Dave Celino provided an update on activities in Northeast Region. No handout was provided.
 - b) Southeast Regional Strategy Committee
 - Representative was not present. Attachment IX was distributed after the meeting.
 - c) Western Regional Strategy Committee
 - Joe Stutler and Katie Lighthall provided an update on activities in Western Region.
- ATTACHMENT X

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Clarren Nilsson, Lost River Fire: There is a need to involve the private sector in the response and mitigation conversation. They become part of the team and it gives them a lot more of a vested interest. She discussed the ability of the private sector to help grow the workforce.



WLFC MEMBER ROUND ROBIN

Each member was asked to share policy items that WFLC could work together on.

NEXT STEPS AND CLOSEOUT

1. Action Items – Zupko will work with the co-chairs on specific action items to address key points raised in the presentations and subsequent discussions by WFLC members.
2. Future Meetings (set tentative schedule)
 - Late Spring – DC (target date June 13)
 - Early Sept – Field Tour
3. Closing thoughts
 - Zupko, Werwa and Harrell shared their final thoughts.
 - Appreciation was expressed by many members to the WA DNR for hosting the tour and meeting.