



MEETING NOTES

2015 Fire Program Review, Wildfire Policy Work Group

May 19, 2016

Oregon Department of Forestry
Santiam Room – State Forester’s Office Operations Bldg. D
2600 State St., Salem, OR

Welcome and introductions

- Committee members and guests introduced themselves and their representation.

Opening remarks

- Doug Grafe shared that State Forester Doug Decker was invited this week by the USFS to come to Washington, D.C. to discuss urban interface issues and wildfire, recognizing that these topics are being discussed at the highest levels. He anticipates this meeting to bring focused recommendations and themes to share with the full FPRC on June 6th.

Scope of Wildfire Policy Work Group

- The Co-Chairs expressed appreciation for the willingness of all participants in this work group and are looking forward to the final product. They noted that while today will be more focused on the landscape resiliency piece we will seek consensus on all work group recommendations. We have provided drafts of these as a starting point to work from today and will provide clarity and have discussion around these as well as define any other new information to be added to the list.
- Discussion on format and content of draft recommendations, with some members voicing concerns with narratives perceived as biased and concerns with the focus on forests and not rangelands. Chief Grafe noted that there was outreach to rangelands for inclusion on this work group, specifically to come together to understand the discussion and to note that the land and the risk, is shared.
- Chief Grafe noted that the final report to the FPRC will be more succinct, with details of the final recommendations and potential appendices to provide context, if needed, and limited narrative.

Presentation: Analyzing Wildfire Risk Transference on Fire Prone Landscapes

- Dr. Alan Agar, USDA Forest Services, Missoula Fire Sciences Lab delivered a presentation titled “Network Analysis of Wildfire Risk Transmission.”
 - The ‘network analysis’ process is used for people, disease transmission, aquatics, stream network analyzation, habitat, and ecological networks. The USFS is working to take physical networks such as fire and disturbances to combine with social networks such as people and communities to find connections between them to analyze the problems and manage risk.
 - Modeling shows variances in climate change scenarios to predict fires activity. for Oregon & Washington, most risk to communities from USFS lands comes from managed or multiple-use land allocations, not ‘protected’ lands, which is

- encouraging. The fragmentation of landscapes drives the transmission problem. Ownership patterns affect transfer of risk and risk governance issues.
- The USFS is developing tools for prioritizing restoration, generating revenue through timber sales by optimizing planning areas.
 - Fire suppression actions during incidents are not included in the model. It is very difficult to model suppression, especially large fire containment, at this scale.
 - Discussion: This work is relative to USFS but we've been discussing the checkerboard, which includes BLM. It would be good for ODF to participate in this type of analysis for comparison. Mike Haske, BLM, noted that the new BLM plan discusses resiliency and that BLM is interested in the equity and fairness discussion, but wants recommendations to be based on science, not opinion. He suggests a potential ODF analysis be discussed with BLM planners as some work may have already been done. The BLM is supportive of additional collaboration but has different drivers than USFS. Agencies should collectively work to address risk transfer.
 - Discussion regarding how to design the ODF analysis: Noted that the work presented focuses on WUI rather than the value of all lands, using the presumption is that a structure is more valuable than any other land. To a private landowner, the value of the land is more important than the WUI. Rex shared a handout showing a comparison table of state protected vs. national forest protected for the last 14 years, reiterating concern over fire spreading across ownerships. There is an opportunity to consider defining statistics on this topic relevant to the number of acres of shared boundary. This is important work to continue into the future. It was affirmed that, in ODF's potential analysis, all private land would be included, not just a focus on the WUI and to include small woodland ownership and rural residential. Include the risk transfer of ODF protected lands in the analysis. This model would work for risk transfer specifically to private timber lands, but is not ready to differentiate between resource capacity, response time, firefighting, or even differences in landscape/fuels hazards. However, the USFS is working on how to show where more 'managed' fires could be conducted without transferring risk.
 - Rick Stratton, USFS, is doing some quantitative risk assessment work for Washington & Oregon and provided two briefing papers of the early stages of this work. His final report will include all lands, and he emphasized the importance of good communication with ODF and other cooperators, working together to analyze data and fight fire.
 - Dr. Agar noted that public perception of 'risk' is poor and that educating about risk is as important as the risk assessments themselves. He will send a link to a smaller analysis of the complexity of wildfire risk to communities, using social survey data to show which communities have the most risk, or are most educated on 'risk'.
 - Note on potential recommendations: If the state is going to continue to invest in this work, it needs to be based on targeted science that shows where the risk transfer can be done so we can reduce the risk to the state and be more sustainable.

Oregon Federal Forest Health Program: Chad presented a backgrounder on the Oregon Federal Forest Health Program to help inform any potential recommendation to the full Committee. It was noted that this model is focused on preventative work on forest service timber lands but the rangeland component can come into play. ODF will seek a Good Neighbor Authority agreement with the BLM.

Discussion Topics & Potential Recommendations

- Fuel Hazards and Fire Resiliency

1. *Encourage the State Legislature to increase the State's financial interest in increasing the pace, scale and quality of restoration.*

- a. *Specifically, fund the Federal Forest Restoration Program (FFRP) in ODF's base budget and include federal funds spending limitation for GNA projects.*

- This recommendation may conflict with one coming out of the Large Fire Funding Work Group, regarding a constitutional referral for funding large fires which has potential to fund restoration work, possibly resulting in competition for funds, short term. Re-work it from this group or defer it to the LFF for explicit support of risk management activities to include "...increasing the pace, scale and quality of forest restoration..." We may provide a statement of support to alleviate inconsistency. Remove "specifically, fund the FFRP in ODF's base budget..." is it in the base budget of ODF or part of a POP? This is a good opportunity to make GNA a standalone recommendation, not tied specifically to FFRP.
- Timeline discussion: Not on the ballot until Nov. 2018 and in effect Jan. 1, 2019, allowing for 6 months in the 17-19 biennium for 'bucket filling'. Due to unknowns of design, there is uncertainty on threshold 'spillover' to use for risk management activities. The recommendation should encourage the State Legislature to continue the state investment in increasing the pace, scale and quality of forest restoration to assure it doesn't pull funding from the existing program.
- Economic viability discussion: Rex cannot support this recommendation as he feels tangible results have not been produced by ODF and has concerns with how money was spent from the 2012 report. Bottom line is that the state is paying for activities on federal lands and believes the \$5M can be better spent. Requested that the recommendation add language to promote economic viability in restoration. There is a significant amount of work that will never hit a market or have a revenue source, generating money through a viable commercial operation, such as saw logs, but the program was designed in the spirit of supporting economic viability of rural communities to keep mills open. Agreement that the language of this recommendation needs to be worked to address the economic issues. Suggest adding "with an aim toward sustaining the economic viability of communities" and/or "...increase pace and scale of restoration and economic outcomes." Asked if the definition of economic viability can also mean "it helps to reduce fire intensity", which was generally agreed it did not. It would be better to use state dollars on small private land or other places for better economic benefit.
- It was noted that the greatest value of the GNA is to increase pace and scale of restoration on federal lands. Mike Haske, BLM, asked if the GNA is specific to BLM because it already has an umbrella agreement with USFS. Chad agreed because it is all federal lands, but a specific recommendation from the group would allow ODF to enter into GNA with BLM
- Two recommendations came out of this discussion – 1) provide spending limitations to do GNA and 2), to seek a GNA between ODF & BLM.

2. *Request that the Board of Forestry maintain its Federal Forest Subcommittee and elevate its voice on the importance of active management to increase fire resiliency on lands managed by the USFS and BLM.*

- a. *Outreach to Oregon's Congressional delegation and encourage the Governor to work with the Western Governors Association to advocate for a policy fix to fire borrowing in the USFS budget.*
 - b. *Request the BLM to engage local collaboratives to build social agreement and utilize tools (such as Stewardship Contracting) to ramp up treatments to reduce forest fuel loadings.*
 - Discussion: Need statutory reforms to national forest and BLM management as well as the fire budget citing statutory and/or policy barriers that prevent them from doing active management. There are problems in the lack of success in USFS collaboratives as initial efforts are now starving due to the rejection of additional gains and there is not enough money to go around. May be difficult to find consensus for specific recommendations here, as the fire borrowing conversation in Congress is very fluid. Suggestions that a more general request be made that the work group would like the Federal Forest Subcommittee to continue and reinvigorate around these topics.
3. *Request that ODF Resource Planning participate in the USFS and BLM forest planning process to capitalize on the opportunity to affect change and address transfer of risk to private forest lands.*
- Discussion on recommendation language focusing on one-way or two-way transfer of risk (private/federal), on private landowner recourse/liability issues when fires move between ownerships, and how Dr. Agar's research identifies 'transfer' as fully interconnected social/community/ownership/jurisdiction networks. Also that the federal asset is more hazardous than state protected lands due to less road access, limiting the ability to fight fires, coupled with a higher density and concentration of unmanaged, dead and dying forests, which are harder to suppress fires/provide for initial attack.
4. *Request that the Protection Division work with the Partnership Development Program to more effectively pursue emerging landscape-scale funding opportunities.*
- Amanda requested clarification on this recommendation, which Cindy Kolomechuk explained was to position ourselves to more efficiently take advantage of those landscape opportunities when they come along. ODF has been working with smaller grants so has been doing smaller planning. Amanda made a suggestion to look internally within the agency at landscape priorities. Add a "such as" clause to this for clarity.
5. *Request that ODF Resource Planning staff work with researchers and the collaborative network to conduct a Wildfire Transmission Analysis to help prioritize landscape level treatments (possible recommendation based upon Alan Ager presentation)*
- Discussion: Place this recommendation above 3 and 4 since this work would be completed first and 3 should be a subset of 5 adding "to inform." Request to add "agencies and cooperators" with cooperator defined as somebody that has a vested interest in land, property, resources, fiscal, in-kind, etc. and to move the transfer of risk phrase from 3 to become a sub-bullet of 5, changing from "help prioritize" to "transfer of risk."
 - The potential ODF risk analysis is very likely to move forward and could be tied to the outcome to inform the sub bullet of 5 and to give more clarity around the

BLM/USFS risk transmission issue. Suggestion that the ODF analysis be limited to interface with private lands, since the modeling discussion noted that treating just around the WUI is not the biggest bang for our buck but upland, away from what you're trying to protect. Rex noted that the plans for every national forest should be amended as these codify and provide legal sufficiency for future activity. He suggested that ODF should engage more with the federal government planning efforts, potentially with an active staff person dedicated to forest planning and NEPA engagement with USFS/BLM and advocating for issues that are important to cooperatives. Unsure how to fund this. Consensus on this recommendation with revisions.

- Smoke Management & Prescribed Burning

1. *Request that ODF Protection Division work with the USFS, BLM and DEQ to identify and document the limiting factors under current policy to prescribed burning on both public and private lands.*
 - Discussion including encouraging expansion of partnerships from those listed, contacting Washington state who is already exploring this issue, the role of cities in smoke management and liability issues from the landowner perspective. Provides an excellent opportunity to talk about the why landowners aren't burning or treating fuels. A survey was suggested.
2. *Request that ODF Protection Division and ODF Public Affairs develop a partnership with the USFS, BLM, private landowners and collaborative groups to conduct a public outreach campaign to increase social support for prescribed fire.*
 - Suggestions that it is premature to do public outreach before you know what the limiting factors are, noting that the reduction of the field burning program is an example of what happens when public support/social license is lost. DLCD is participating in an ad campaign to increase social support and understanding for the use of prescribed fire. It may be ambitious to assume public support for this but if we can educate as to 'why', it may be helpful. Tom Fields, ODF, mentioned that there was a successful program at DFPA regarding the pasture burning program that concentrated on promoting the results of good work and how effective it was later on. Request to include other partners including OFRI, OFIC and possibly OSU Extension.
 - Consensus for this recommendation to be moved forward with revisions.
3. *Request that ODF Protection Division identify policy framework for reducing landowner liability associated with prescribed burning.*
 - Chief Grafe noted that we have made a good run at this in the past but it was a tough sell. There's a lot of consternation, specifically from private landowners, inability or hesitation to burn due to liability. Although this gets raised in a lot of different venues, there are no good answers and uncertainty as to what the Division could do with it. Discussion on cost vs. liability as reason for landowners not to burn, existing tools to increase liability not being used to help the issue (hazardous fuels assessment) and use of "impediments to burning" language in recommendation.
 - Consensus was made to move forward on recommendations #1 and #2, review the language around #3, perform the survey of private landowners and to roll the

“identify opportunities to coordinate training among partners” idea into #3, forming a statement that encourages the practice and that burning is training tool for firefighters.

- Rangeland Fire Protection

1. *Request that ODF Protection Division identify and develop avenues to enhance coordination between Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, the BLM and other collaborative partners to reduce unprotected rangelands.*
 - Robert Skinner, RFPA, suggested the change of the word “reduce” to “protect’ with consensus reached.
2. *Encourage the State Legislature to develop incentives to proactively reduce rangeland fuel continuity (such as the Harney County Wildfire Collaborative).*
 - Does the State Legislature have a role in “encouraging incentives”? Chief Grafe clarified that #1 is funding for RFPAs on suppression readiness, while #2 refers to investments in restoration.
 - Editing suggestions included to take out “state legislature” and talk about exploring opportunities to increase investments in restoration, coupled with recommendation #3 (innovations being made to help landscape management and restoration in these areas). Also to change “proactive” to “strategically” to be clearer. (Doug noted this is true for both recommendations 1 and 2).
 - Discussion on ODF/Board and RFPA relationship: ODF/Board enable the RPAs to form and can support training and equipment development, but this happens with legislatively appropriated funds, not ODF funds. Chief Grafe suggested there should be a conversation around how RPAs can work more collaboratively take the next step to mitigate risk on the landscape piece.
 - Mike Haske, BLM, suggested the group could recommend to the state legislature to improve or give ODF more authority to interact with RFPAs. Randy suggested that long term, it needs to be determined where RPAs belong – ODF or somebody else (i.e. Ag.), with it noted that RFPAs will resist leaving ODF.
 - Amanda mentioned the need to express continuation of fire, or reduction of fire-related investments made through SAGECON, with the perception that if pressure is off, investments don’t need to continue. One biennia of funding to try to reduce fire risk in this area is not going to complete the work.
 - Proposal to combine recommendations 1 and 2, take out “state legislature” and “Protection Division,” encourage conversation about incentives, SAGECON, and add something about a long term vision for where they fit in.
3. *Request the Protection Division work with OSU Extension in building capacity for supporting innovations and research in landscape management (e.g. precision restoration project being implemented in sage grouse country).*
 - Robert Skinner, RPA, corrected the reference from OSU, to instead be USDA Ag. Research Station. Mike Haske, BLM, noted a large science component to this work, with some work already completed (do not wish to create competition). He also noted that the DOI is very willing to help support research for rangelands regarding fire.
 - Co-Chairs will revise language for 2 and 3.

- Wildland Urban Interface: Land Use and Development

1. *Request that ODF Protection Division and ODF Resource Planning collaborate to develop an analysis to explore linkages among WUI development, ODF protection responsibility, and increased firefighting costs.*

- Roger Beyer, OSWA, has concerns with the draft narrative on recommendations, and that statements are not backed by data, citing that Oregon large fire costs are not spent in the WUI. He suggests amending to address the increase in firefighting costs, the role of ODF in the WUI and that land classification committee should be involved. Increased cost in the WUI is to base budgets, not large fire costs. Bob clarified that the county forest land classification committees look at where ODF should be protecting the land.
- Randy had a technical question regarding process for changing district boundaries – clarified that it's an administrative rule change requiring approval from the Board of Forestry, public hearing and report back to the Board with some kind of recommendation for the Board's approval. The county land classification committee looks at the forestland within the county to determine which lands should be classified and then recommend to the district forester to change if it is deemed necessary. Concerns were raised about lack of focus for current classification studies, specific issues in Clackamas and Washington counties and reports that some classification are occurring within city limits.
- Suggested to lose the assumption that ODF has increased firefighting costs and frame it to help inform what ODF's role is in the WUI and see where it leads. Bob noted that there is no capacity or standard of data for this project, which is why it hasn't been done in a long time and uncertainty if it is ODF's role to determine,
- Suggestion to break this recommendation into two separate ones: 1) Addresses ODF protection responsibility and 2) Develop analysis standards to explore connections between WUI and firefighting costs.
- Co-Chairs will research these questions.

2. *Request that ODF Protection Division collaborate with the Department of Land Conservation and Development to document, evaluate, identify opportunities, and determine staffing or resource needs to optimize and align the current array of regulatory siting tools (including a full review of SB 360).*

- Roger Beyer noted that recommendations 1 and 2 both concern defensible space and relate to SB 360 and suggested developing one recommendation dealing with both. Tom Fields, ODF, noted two different parts to SB 360 – funding the administration and providing assistance to homeowners and that a group was formed this last winter to refocus the efforts of SB 360.
- Sadie Carney, DLCD, added that when combining the two, regular siting tools can be a bit broader than just homes and private structures. The black carbon bill last leg. session would determine what kind of expansion of the UGB would create a vulnerable community because of the exposure to wild fire risk. The general concept may return in future legislative sessions.
- Mark Stern, The Nature Conservatory, suggested that fire adapted communities should be tied into this as one of the principles of cohesive strategy.
- The work group will recommend a re-look at SB 360 and re-tool recommendations 1 and 2 under defensible space.

Wrap-up Discussion

1. Particular note was taken regarding concerns with the narrative, please discuss with Chad at your convenience.
2. Timeline: This work group will soon get an email with a set of draft recommendations for review and a comment/consensus period, which Chad hopes to be out early next week. The deadline for a draft set of recommendations from the three work groups to the full Committee is May 31st.
3. Mike Haske, BLM, inquired as to what happens if there is no consensus on the recommendations or no recommendations at all. Chad replied that the hope is for consensus, but if not, those who had concerns will be able to voice those at the full Committee meeting.
4. Meeting adjourned at 2:11 PM

Attendees

[Conference call = CC]

- Doug Grafe, ODF Protection Division Chief, Fire Program Review Committee Chair
- Chad Davis, ODF, Wildfire Policy WG Co-chair
- Bob Young, ODF, Wildfire Policy WG Co-Chair
- Rod Nichols, ODF Public Affairs
- Rex Storm, Associated Oregon Loggers
- Randy Hereford, Starker Forests, Inc.
- Jamie Paul, FPRC Project Manager
- Cindy Kolomechuck, ODF National Fire Plan Coordinator, Wildfire Policy WG Facilitator
- Gary Springer, Starker Forest and Board of Forestry
- Mike Haske, Bureau of Land Management
- Sadie Carney, Dept. of Land Conservation and Development
- Roger Beyer, Oregon Small Woodlands Association.
- Dave Larsen, ODF District Forester SWO
- Chrystal Bader, ODF Core Team
- Dr. Alan Agar, US Forest Service
- Seth Barnes, OFIC
- Ron Graham, ODF, Deputy Fire Chief
- Rick Stratton, USFS
- Robert Skinner, Jordan Valley RFPA
- Amy Patrick, OFIC
- Mark Stern, The Nature Conservancy
- Amanda Rich, The Nature Conservancy
- Tom Fields, ODF Fire Prevention Coordinator