

Final Meeting Minutes – Forestry Subcommittee
March 22, 2023
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Hybrid Meeting, Boundary County Annex Building

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Andrew O’Neel, Boundary County
Ara Andrea, IDL
Austin Terrell, Office of Species Conservation
Carl Petrick, USFS
Cindy Lewis, NPCCS
Erik Sjoquist, Idaho Dept of Lands
Frank Wright, CCFVD Fire Chief
Jeff Hood, Citizen
Jeff Lau, USFS, IDL
Kevin Knauth, USFS
Kierstin Cox, KTOI
Michelle Richman, IDWR
Mitch Prophet, USFS
Nathan Rogers, IDL
Nicholas Boring, NRCS
Rich Stephens, Boundary County
Robert Akins, IDFG
Ryan Dillin, Citizen
Scott Soultis, KTOI, Fish & Wildlife Dept.
Shelby Therian, KTOI, Fish & Wildlife Dept.
Theresa Wheat, KTOI, KVRI Facilitator
Tim Bertling, Boundary County
Tim Patton, Citizen

Carl Petrick spoke about the need for better communication and understanding about firefighting during the KVRI meetings. The purpose of the meeting was to promote learning and understanding about firefighting in today's world.

Nathan Rodgers, the Northern Zone Fire Manager for the IDL, gave a briefing on the Fire Program. He explained that the IDL has suppression jurisdiction over 6.2 million acres of land throughout the State of Idaho, which is divided into 10 districts. As someone responsible for coordinating resources in the five Northern districts, Rodgers explained that each district has an Assistant Fire Warden, two Engine Captains, and two to nine crew members. They staff two to three engines, seven days a week during the Fire Season which runs from May 10 to October 20.

Rodgers also mentioned additional resources, including a Type 2 helicopter stationed at the Coeur d'Alene tanker base and contracted single-engine tanker planes or fire bosses. He also mentioned a six-person IA module located in Sandpoint. State code dictates that all fires in the IDL's jurisdiction must be suppressed, and if anyone is interested in more information about what they do, they can check out Title 38 Idaho Code Chapter 14 for information on fuels laws.

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/statutesrules/idstat/Title38/T38CH14/>

Department of Lands (IDL):

Initial attack: The IDL aims to respond to wildfires within 30 minutes or less and to have initial attack resources on the scene within one hour or less.

Final Meeting Minutes – Forestry Subcommittee
March 22, 2023
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Hybrid Meeting, Boundary County Annex Building

Containment: The IDL aims to contain 95% of wildfires to 10 acres or less and to keep the average fire size to 5 acres or less.

Suppression costs: The IDL aims to keep the average suppression cost per wildfire to \$3,000 or less.

Rehabilitation: The IDL aims to complete rehabilitation work on 90% of the acres burned by wildfires within two years of the fire.

Fire prevention: The IDL aims to reduce the number of human-caused wildfires by 5% annually through prevention efforts such as public education and enforcement of fire restrictions.

The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) works with partners such as the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, BLM, and Forest Service to allocate resources to high-priority fires during the Fire Season. The goal is to prioritize resources based on human life, property, infrastructure, and private timber value. The IDL works with other dispatch zones to coordinate resources and prioritize fires across the Northern Rockies geographic area, which includes North Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Yellowstone National Park. When resources are scarce, prioritization becomes more critical, and the national inter-agency coordination center ultimately decides on priorities amongst the geographic areas. The IDL's focus is always on initial attack, and new starts are the number one priority, followed by prioritizing fires based on their level of threat. Ultimately, hard choices may have to be made about which fires receive resources based on availability.

During the meeting, the attendees discussed the prioritization decisions that need to be made during a wildfire event. They talked about how the IDL has a higher priority in protecting values at risk compared to backcountry fires. The decision on where to allocate resources depends on the values at risk, accessibility, and probability of success in controlling the fire. The attendees emphasized the importance of setting priorities and making trade-offs during a wildfire event. The attendees also talked about how the public may have a hard time understanding concepts such as fire spotting, aerial ignition, and the capabilities of planes and helicopters. They highlighted the need for the public to understand the realistic expectations of what can be done during a Wildfire Event. Finally, the attendees discussed the need for allocation of resources during initial attack and the importance of waiting to see where the fires are before allocating resources. They emphasized that many factors go into the decision-making process, and that they learn from each season to better manage wildfires in the future.

More Discussion followed

Ara Andrea, the Statewide Sheriff Stewardship Coordinator for the State, presented on the Idaho Shared Stewardship Agreement signed in December, 2018 by Governor Little, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the two Regional Foresters. The Agreement aims to increase the pace and scale of active management and fuel reduction treatments on the National Forest in Idaho and to coordinate inter-agency resources beyond suppression efforts. The Agreement designated two initial priority landscapes based on fire risk analysis and resource accessibility, which are the Panhandle and Boise National Forests, totaling about 4 million acres. These priority landscapes involve shared stewardship efforts between the Forest Service, NRCS, and IDL. The presentation also touched on the successful Good Neighbor Authority Agreement, which allows IDL and State Foresters to use their contracting processes to complete sales on Federal forest and BLM lands. In the northern priority landscape, IDL has a Contribution Agreement with the

Final Meeting Minutes – Forestry Subcommittee
March 22, 2023
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Hybrid Meeting, Boundary County Annex Building

Forest Service to pay for half of a Forest Manager's salary, who will work in their Coeur d'Alene staff office to facilitate cross-boundary work and break down government silos.

Jeff Lau discussed the efforts being made in North Idaho to coordinate preventative treatments on the ground for forest health and fire risk reduction. He explained that the North Idaho priority landscape covers roughly 2 million acres, with approximately half of that being private land and 40% of that half being small to mid-size family forests.

Lau emphasized the need to prioritize certain areas for treatment, rather than attempting to focus on all 2 million acres at once. He mentioned that they had received input from a variety of partners, including the Idaho Department of Lands, Forest Service, BLM, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), to put together a program of work.

They had initially identified Two Red Polygons as the areas of focus for their initial resources, and were just starting to transition up into the Boundary County area. Lau expressed excitement about the timing of the meeting, as they had resources and time to start engaging with local teams, including KVRI, Emergency Management, and NRCS, which had a functioning team working on projects and coordinating land management within the area.

Lau discussed some of the resources and partners that they were bringing to the table, including contracted private forestry consultants to assist with public education, a 50-50 position for an additional Shared Stewardship Forester, and coordination with the University of Idaho Forestry Extension Program to provide educational opportunities for the community.

He emphasized the need to line up treatments, such as the West Side Restoration Project, to prioritize treatment and avoid leapfrogging over ownership. He discussed the importance of engaging with local expertise to identify critical areas for treatment, including forest health and fuels reduction work.

Lau concluded by expressing hope that they would be able to present in-depth on their program at a future meeting, highlighting their efforts to coordinate not only with Federal Land Managers and IDL-endowment lands, but also with private non-industrial and industrial partners to ensure communication and coordination of treatments on the ground.

More discussion followed with no updates, meeting was called at 8:35 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Kierstin Cox