Fire Defense Board Meeting

January 22, 2015

La Grande Fire Dept.

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

In Attendence:

Bruce Weimer City of La Grande, Jenny Reinheardt – CWPP

Chancey Ferguson – La Grande, Katy Nesbitt – CWPP editor

Scott Gogh – state fire marshal, Mike McDonnell – FMO-FS, La Grande

Mitch Williams - ODF, Mike Barry – Imbler Rural Fire

Sam Martin - North Powder, JB Brock – Union County

Ron Warnock – Cove Fire Chief, Joe Hessel – Oregon Dept. Forestry

Scott Loree – Cove Fire Assistant,

Willy Crippen – Forest Service

Scott Gogh –

1. there is a S-290 class being put on in Heppner in February. (I did not get the exact dates)

JB Brock –

1. provided introduction of Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) process and current progress.

Joe Hessel –

1. Covered the importance of the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy addressing the three goals specifically: Fire-Adapted Communities, Wildfire Response, and Restore and Maintain Landscapes and their relevance to the Rural Chiefs and the CWPP.
2. Cohesive Strategy – it’s the foundation of the CWPP – National Fire Plan 2000 established the national level initiative – NE Oregon Region, Northern Blue Mountain Pilot Project. The expectations are that we take the vision of the Cohesive Strategy and work with the three goals.
3. Approximately 3000 miles of ODF lands border public lands and approx. 2000 miles border rural fire districts.
4. It is important to use roads, ridge tops, and places that make sense where we can stop fire – not political boundaries – early WUIs were exclusively private land. Identify 2-digit Forest Roads that would be good defense locations. Ridge tops give federal partners opportunity to treat adjacent lands and tools to acquire additional funding – we need rural input to move this toward the county plan.
5. Collaboration is important. We will work with rural departments individually first to get their input, then begin to expand to cooperators and members of the public. We will also have a cooperators meeting soon followed by several public meetings in areas such as: La Grande, Elgin, (Imbler), Cove, Union

Mitch Williams –

1. Provided a history about the 2005 Union County CWPP, it’s role in the county, and it’s support toward dollars, activity accomplishments, and other benefits.
2. He emphasized the county will be well positioned to get grants when money becomes available.
3. First CWPP allowed for acquisition of federal surplus equipment, bridge construction, Mt. Emily stand treatments, etc. Without CWPP competing for grants and funding will be limited.

JB Brock –

1. Emphasized importance of updating and incorporating new information into the CWPP, importance of collaboration while developing the document.
2. JB provided information on the CWPP process. It is a design for how we handle and are prepared for wildfire in Union County – what resources do we have, what do we need – goals to acquire equipment.
3. Rurals and private lands make up a great deal of the WUI areas. It is important to have full range of involvement of agencies such as: FS, ODF, Rurals, Private
4. The original plan was completed in 2005, we are past the five year revision. We needed to update using the cohesive wildfire strategy as overarching guidance and goals.
5. We hope to create a template within BMIDC footprint providing other with what we think a CWPP should look like then, roll it out to other counties.
6. The reason Blue Mountain Area (BMIDC) got named as a pilot is we are doing a pretty good job. It’s the only pilot in state of Oregon and one of 13 pilots in the nation for this.

Jenny Reinheardt –

1. Explained showing needs for addressing wildfire in the county is important along with “Why” the need exists. Having data and local knowledge in the CWPP that identifies the risks and conditions, provides rational for treatments, improvements, developments, and changes.
2. It also Strengthens the requests for funding to improve all areas and meet goals of CWS.
3. Jenny provided an overview of depth of data in the West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment – 17 western state wildfire assessments. Explained how the State of Oregon fits into the National setting and Union County Wildfire conditions compare to other Oregon Counties.
4. Provided explanation of the importance of wildfire reporting of all information whether optional or not – Lat. Long. , fire size, etc. in NIFRS data base. Incomplete report information could not be used and therefor under-represents the fire load in some areas.
5. Jenny – enlarging WUI boundaries supports treating middle ground as per the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy verses only private lands and adjacent to structures.
6. It is important to incorporate local knowledge because it:
7. Allows plan to be needs-based on local fire response and conditions
8. Health Forest Restoration Act *requires* collaboration, prioritization (fuels), and treatments to reduce structure ignitibility
9. Can help influence how federal funds for projects on non-federal WUI lands may be obtained for vegetation/fuels treatments.
10. Validate base information from models used.
11. Provides opportunity for new ideas and new approaches

Joe Hessel and JB Brock guided fire chiefs through an exercise of brainstorming needs for their areas. List follows:

1. Thief Valley Area – river creates barrier for access to other side. Road connection to other side below dam would help. Thief Valley area – goes through private ground the road makes a funny curve – if we go out on the wrong side of the river by the time we get out there and can see the fire there is a huge amount of time to get back around to the fire. – Wildfire Response CWS goal
2. Multiple sites with water with limited access for large apparatuses. Mitigation - Water Sources – develop access for tenders/engines in areas such as Anthony Lakes, Wolf Creek, Pilcher Reservoir, other? Mitigation could be extending boat ramps for summer water access. – Wildfire Response CWS goal
3. Finding locations and drafting reduces firefighting time. Mitigation - Develop pressurized systems/ and locations that eliminate the need to draft. – Wildfire Response CWS goal
4. No known decision protocol for identifying when to evacuate residence and activate conflagration act. Mitigation - We need to identify trigger points/management decision points using mapping exercise for evacuation orders and conflagration activation. Wildfire Response CWS goal.
5. Signing needs improved and messages diverse for applicability during summer. ( include burning conditions/restrictions at boundaries)– Fire Adapted Communities CWS Goal
6. Identify Priority Key Access Roads that can be widened/improved for use as Fuel Breaks – include surface type, width, etc. – Wildfire Response & Restore and Maintain Landscape CWS goal
7. Development codes need reviewed for Fire Siting Standards
8. Educate Public/Homeowners about Risk/Access/Building Materials – Fire Adapted Communities CWS Goal
9. Identify Critical Access roads for structure protection and make recommendations for improvement taking into account ingress/egress of large engines. (Mitigation is hire personnel to collect data using – INTERRA) - Wildfire Response CWS goal
10. Rurals are limited on knowledge of technology uses and availability. Mitigation - Provide technology training for fire departments for mapping and geo-referencing on site. Fire Response CWS goal
11. Public unaware of home vicinity conditions and fire risk. Mitigation - Educating public (homeowners) about home fire risks using Mailer messages as part of solution. - Fire-Adapted Communities CWS goal
12. Coverage in Cove RFD needs increased. Mitigation - Create substation for Cove RFD in lower Cove. - Fire Response CWS goal
13. Low interest in firefighting from local community. Mitigation - Develop firefighting recruitment program to draw interest. – Fire Response and Fire Adapted Communities CWS goal
14. Shortage of interface fire apparatuses. Mitigation - Increase number of fire engines and strategically locate them. – Fire Response CWS goal
15. Qualification for wildland firefighting lacking - Limited training opportunities for developing wildfire qualifications. Mitigation – uniform training and across agency training for Rural Fire Depts. Identify local instructors. Fire Response CWS goal
16. Low interagency incorporation of rurals into IMTs. Mitigation - Increase level of RFD/City personnel into the Wildland fire qualifications. Provide opportunities for training/experience with FS and ODF agencies. Fire Response CWS goal
17. Significant levels of fuels and vegetation conditions outside of historic conditions posing extreme (fire threats) in Beaver Creek Watershed. Mitigation - Explore opportunities for projects and implementation plans for project work of fuels and vegetation treatments. - Restore & Maintain Landscapes CWS goal.
18. Resource reporting is sometimes doubled with BMIDC and 911. Mitigation – Connect BMIDC with Union County 911 to create backup reporting system and reduce confusion of resources onsite. – SAFETY – Fire Response CWS goal
19. 911 dispatch software is outdated and no meeting all needs. Mitigation – Obtain/Install new updated dispatch software for 911 centers. Fire Response CWS goal
20. Dispatch centers information located and accessed separately. Mitigation – co-locate information sharing for Dispatch centers. Fire Response CWS goal
21. Structure resources have limited roles and experience with wildland firefighting. Mitigation – identify opportunities to integrate these resources with existing Type 3 IMT or develop their own for full emergency management. Fire Response CWS goal
22. Cross boundary fuels treatments are slow in planning and accomplishing. Mitigation – increase pace and scale to maximize cross boundary treatments on public and private lands through CWS objectives. - Restore and Maintain Landscapes CWS goal
23. There is currently limited use of biomass material during vegetation treatments. Mitigation – find ways (innovative) to utilize material. Restore and Maintain Landscapes CWS goal
24. Main roads are not maintains and many are seeing an increase in vegetation. Mitigation – develop an implementation plan to maintain public road right-of-ways to minimize fire risk and create fuel breaks for defensible location. Prioritize roads including state highways. Fire Response & Fire adapted Communities CWS goal
25. Limited coordination for fire risk with Utility companies. Develop relationships and work with utility companies to identify issues and reduce risk concerns. There are a couple sections where sections of power lines are always coming down – face of Mt. Emily - Fire-Adapted Communities CWS goal
26. Rural departments are functioning with minimum required PPE and no surplus materials. Create needs list and fill any gaps of equipment with updated equipment. – Fire Response CWS goal
27. Multiple locations throughout county where large groups gather within WUI’s on an annual basis and no fire plans are in place. Mitigation – Identify locations and develop individual fire plans, evacuation plans and defensible space plans for these locations. Examples: Church camps – Cove, Elkahna. River Bend – Hillgard, etc. – Fire Response and Fire Adapted Communities CWS goal
28. Multiple areas where dwellings are in unprotected locations. Mitigation – Identify unprotected areas with dwellings/communities and chart a path to incorporate these into protection areas. – Fire Response and Fire adapted communities CWS goal
29. County is void of Satellite stations for protection purposes. Mitigation – Identify locations needed and develop satellite stations for these areas. – Fire Response CWS goal
30. Agency water sources are not all under use agreements. Mitigation – develop agreements for these locations. - Fire Response CWS goal.