

Idaho State Fire Plan Working Group
June 6-7, 2007
Meeting Notes

In attendance: Brett Ingles (Facilitator), Jackie Young (Notetaker), Steve Kimball, (NFP Coordinator), Larry Timchak (C-T Forest Supervisor- June 6), Gary Jarvis (FS-R4), Chris Ourada (FS-C-T), Leonard Wehking (BLM), Jerry Miller (IDOC&L), Robert Cope (IAC), Joe Daniels (IAC), Russ Manwaring (RC&Ds), Dave Summers (IDL), David Hasz (IEMA), Doug Brown (IFCA), Dean Ellis (IFCA), Harry Steele (IDL-June 6), Sandy Von Behren (IEMA- June 7), Richard Wolfe (GIFF- June 7), Paula Jones (RC&D- June 7), David Jackson (BHS- June 7), Julie Thomas (FS-SNRA- June 7), Len Diaz (BIA). Kurt Naccarato (IDL) and Brian Shiplett (IDL) Joined on conference call on June 6.

In addition there were several Forest Service employees from Region 4 Forests for the Above-Base presentations and discussions.

June 6

Introductions & Round Robin Opening Remarks

Steve Kimball (new Idaho National Fire Plan Coordinator) opened by discussing his role in implementing the National Fire Plan in Idaho. Steve is a FS employee, but working with Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) as resource for the state, counties, and citizens of Idaho. Steve is here to help lead the Fire Plan for Idaho. First goal is to get around and meet folks in the counties and agencies. Steve would like to get out on tours and learn about local concerns and ideas. He's looking at current activities— including grants & fire protection plans (learning about goals and issues in different areas in the state). An important goal is to help lead integration of agencies with county and private efforts. His role includes coordination, collaboration, facilitation, and removing barriers.

IDL's vision is for the State Work Group to be self-led. Steve will certainly provide leadership to the Work Group and will work with the group to define leadership roles. A clear goal of Steve and the Working Group is to continue building strong, sustainable networks (counties and agencies) that will successfully work through fire issues into the future. Idaho has become a national model with the counties as focal points for this work. Steve is asking for open discussion in this meeting on what is going well, and where we might head differently, or what we may evolve to as a State working group..

Refocus on National Fire Plan and Idaho's progress. **Refer to attached handout: "Idaho National Fire Plan Talking Points."**

Group discussion included:

Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) has defined the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) – \$ for treatments restricted to within the WUI. Look at County work groups to identify WUI. WUI boundaries are never stable, new subdivisions, etc. and will need to expand. Need counties to reassess WUI's annually. Be strategic: consider landscape restoration and how to plan for and fund ecosystem restoration (other funds may be required).

Need to start adopting WUI codes effective for new subdivisions. Puts burden on developer to build fire-safe development (included in County protection plans). Kootenai commissioners have adopted a WUI code.

Could we develop maps that showed subdivisions for each county showing hazardous areas? It would be useful to have a map in each County WFPP showing vegetation and fire history, fuel loads, etc.

Take assessment of where we are at right now – diversity of activity with various counties.

There are probably 20-25 actual strong county working groups.

Discussion on strengths, weaknesses and barriers of the ISFPWG

Round Robin results (flipchart notes):

Strengths

- WG Basis for restoration activities
- Participation in Above Base funding across R4 improves communications with communities
- County-wide coordination of funding
- Flexible (but need to maintain)
- Coordinate projects - increase CWPP involvement
- Communication and group cohesion
- Improvement/Involvement with CWPP
- Individuals on the committee
- Exposure to the group has increased awareness, interest
- Newsletter and Website
- Harry Steele (IDL) as Public Relations

Weaknesses

- Involvement with Keep Idaho Green
- Addressing local fire capabilities
- Ecosystem restoration
- Informal mgmt. role for Coordinator/Working Group (how should we form our committee)
- Communication/information sharing (counties/agencies/state)
- No emphasis on grazing for fuel treatment (incorporate in county plans)
- Some method to measure accomplishments
- Tying into Bio Mass committee
- Relationship with legislature
- Relationship with Governor
- Leveraging resources outside the fire community
- Disparity between finding leads/county coordinators
- Get strong counties working with weaker counties to improve plan
- Need to get counties up to par
- Need to communicate with congress/state level
- Limited opportunity in working with tribes
- Better coordination of projects across agency boundaries
- Add working members to contact list
- Community Fire Protection (Stevens) Dollars, has had less involvement (same level of funding for this year in R4 -\$800,000 divided up)
- Need to identify our effectiveness as group
- Need R1 FS representative on the committee
- Communication with IEMA may help
- Communication with FS/BLM/Local Fire Dept/County (radios) (terrible/Oneida County)
- Option to maintain CWPP in uninterested counties
- How and where have projects been effective
- Prioritization
- Not having IEMA in Work Group

Barriers

- Elections (County Commissioners have a lot of turnover)
- Unsure of who is on sub-committee for Western states
- Fluctuating funding levels
- Not recognizing WUI on tribal lands
- Agencies have time limitations (lack time) heavy workloads with federal agencies
- Need to be ready to help counties
- National and strategic prioritization process – limits state level input (DOI)
- Low sage types
- BLM cannot treat in fire regime 4 (not a priority)
- Improving the effectiveness of local working groups
- Not enough travel \$ for smaller counties
- Changing emphasis away from fuels barriers (bio mass/carbon)

Jarvis: Work of this Work Group is being filtered back to the FS Washington DC Office. Many compliments to the group on what has been accomplished. (we are actually a model for the nation, 44 active county collaborative working groups, etc.)

Hazardous Fuels Treatment Maintenance: – Sandy VonBehren, IEMA. Program in Northern Idaho that consists of Boundary County “Fire Safe”, Benewah County “Fire Safe”, and Kootenai County “Fire Smart”. Website – <http://plrcd.org/NOFIRE/>.

Slide show presentation on the importance and difficulties of maintaining hazardous fuels treatment. When a fuel break is created on property owned by a single private landowner who does not live near or is perhaps an absentee owner, there is little motivation or benefit for the owner to perform the maintenance.

The suggestion was made that we establish a program to provide grant funding for those fuel breaks which provide benefits to the public but impose financial hardships on the property owner. Allow the counties to direct up to 5% of their grant to the maintenance of a limited number of fuel breaks, if they are for the benefit of a large number of citizens, such as protecting a watershed. Direct funding for maintenance would allow the use of the counties’ HFT Program contracted vendors which would provide much needed consistency.

Insurance companies are beginning to look into charging higher rates to individuals who do not participate in a fire break program, or even not insure those individuals at all. Need to come up with some incentive/disincentive programs.

2006 Idaho Fire Plan Implementation Highlights – Naccarato

Grant Applications are posted on the idl ftp site. Working group members are invited to review and submit comments – hard to get commitment. 2006 sent to Western States Fire Managers for review.

Summary of Western States grants that were funded is included in meeting packets.

Lincoln Co. Funded 300 acres protected 60 structures. \$182.00 per acre

Bonner Co. – Has a strong working group – working with two Ranger Districts and the BLM.

Elmore Co. – Going forward with RC&D, writing the application for the county.

Franklin Co. - New county for us. Some extra \$ for Bear Lake

Nez Perce Co. – Agency issues, however, everyone is OK with going forward – local fire warden is moving forward.

Shoshone Co. – County and local district agreed to spend funds on steeper terrain the County didn't want to do.

Boise Co. – Has come a long way in a year – up into Lowman, Garden Valley, and Idaho City.

Fremont Co. – Island Park – folks interested – fire dept will have to take lead.

Bonneville Co. – Finishing in Swan Valley. County working group has a meeting June 20.

Boundary Co. – Lost FEMA funding. Hired full time fire individual – meeting 14th in Bonners with County, local, and tribe.

Counties with active working groups

County Projects: Lincoln, 5 Northern counties (Panhandle Area Council), Franklin, Boise, Blaine.

Counties with Committees: Elmore?, Franklin, Boise, Fremont?, Bonneville? (June 20 mtg.) 5 Northern Co., Bonner, Kootenai, Shoshone, Boundary, Benewah.

South Central Idaho – (Gem, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Minidoka), Bannock, Clearwater, Idaho, Nez Perce, Lewis, Latah?, Bingham, Clark.

Unsure - Jefferson, Bear Lake, Butte, Madison, Teton, Bonneville, (don't know where they are at with committees)

Blaine Co. will be putting in an additional application.

Power Co. – Meeting June 11th.

Target Counties:

Washington

Custer – because of what the Forest is trying to do there.

Valley (*formed a new working group*) – *county hired consultant to do pre-evaluation and take to RC&D*

Clark

Fremont

1 Highlight for 2006

Revised Statewide Implementation Strategy: Communication Strategy (need more)

HFT – 13,000 acres

CWPP Template (Annual Update) (17 counties have sent them in)

44 CWPP implementing and updating.

2007-2008 Emphasis: (Where do we want to go next with this Work Group)

Information sharing

County Working Group Support – targeted counties

State Working Group – broaden scope of our work to include other fire issues

Measuring results/effectiveness

Shifting from reliance on grant program to individual landowner responsibility (incentives like insurance companies)

Integrated projects – efforts for Federal, State, and private geographically working across boundaries

10-Year Comprehensive Strategy – *Revised* (what does it say and are we following)

Landscape restoration

Specific Goals

1. Biomass – know what is out there. Liaison with state biomass committee (Russ Manwaring) Jerry Miller has been assigned as a Liaison for that committee, so can help communicate with the groups.
2. Increase awareness throughout the state on ordinances and building codes (involve insurance companies). (Try to get the Fire Marshal involved). Brett Ingles will put together a study outline for the next meeting.
3. Communication Plan. Steve Kimball, Brett Ingles, Harry Steele will work on this.
4. Working with Legislature or Governor's office (Crapo, Craig, Simpson, Soli). Steve Kimball will lead.
5. Continuing to work with target county groups. Brett Ingles, Kurt Naccarato will lead.
6. Restoration – Landscape Scale – Steve Kimball will lead.
7. Fire Regime 4 (barrier)- Leonard Wehking will lead.
8. Building projects from the ground up (more interagency development).

Committee will be involved in reviewing the State of Idaho All-Hazard Mitigation Plan Revision with Bureau of Homeland Security. Steve Kimball will help insure County CWPP's are incorporated in the plan.

Wrap up of June 6

Steve was impressed with the statewide outlook from the group. We're together with focus on benefit to the entire state. Also, pleased with strong, balanced participation. Next meeting is set to be in Sandpoint, Idaho – October 3-4, 2007.

Day 2 (June 7)

Community Fire Protection/Partnership Funds Progress Report

Applications are due 25-26 June, split between R1/R4. Steve Kimball will find out IDL's process for selection and send note out on team voting. Projects are private land adjacent to federal land.

In the past projects were presented to the work group and they voted. This was highly time-consuming and inefficient. We consciously moved to a subcommittee approach.

Jarvis needs map and polygon data to send electronically to all Forests so they know where the projects are (so Forests can coordinate their projects with community/private projects).

Steve asked for volunteers (2-3) for potential interest in joining grant subcommittee to review applications. Send Steve e-mail if you are interested. Dean Ellis volunteered. Cope could participate via conference call, Russ Manwaring, Dave Jackson, Joe Daniels are also interested.

Grant Applications Western States:

Funded all but two projects. Adams Co. not funded as the proposed project was not in the CWPP. Valley Co also had a project that was not funded. These were sent forward to Western States Fire Managers for consideration.

New FS State & Private Forestry grant initiatives:

1. Landscape-scale partnership grants- agency and private restoration of landscapes – due by July 13th.
2. Woody biomass grants – \$25,000, \$75,000 - June 29th deadline.

These are on the FS/State and Private national page website. Brett will add to the ISFPWG website.

Bannock County Fire Mitigation Working Group/GIFF Presentation/Richard Wolfe

Johnny Creek Fire – 1987

Slide show showing Firewise/Defensible Space projects inside WUI.

Bannock County is a fire prone county. They have lost several homes, out-buildings and have lost firefighters. There is rapid growth in the area. Some 200-300 homes. Many other close calls to losing homes. Probably more homes lost in Bannock County than any other county in the state.

New codes have been passed that developments must comply with. Fire Districts can enforce codes, and part of that includes maintenance for 10 years. This has been in place for about two years (Firewise/Defensible Space).

Presidential pilot project selected the Portneuf, Westbench project. Environmental groups were involved in the assessment. There are fuels projects for years to come.

GIFF – Gateway Interagency Fire Front – FS/BLM, Bannock Co., Fort Hall Fire Dept., Dept. of Emergency Management and local fire departments, they meet every month. Formed after the 1987 fires. Primary mission is to smooth out communication for fire suppression. Also includes fire prevention.

GIFF has been instrumental in helping developing the WUI Plan. Been provided tools, ISFPWG has been a good source. Bannock County Working Group does see some inconsistencies, such as change not in the grant with short turnaround time. Forms changed. IDL is the grant administrator for the ISFPWG. ISFPWG needs to help remove those barriers.

Update of the Idaho State All-Hazard Mitigation Plan – Dave Jackson

Dave would like input from the committee to update the wildfire hazard components. He will e-mail a link to members with the plan. It is considered a strategic vision to reduce hazards. The plan is valid for three years, and needs to be updated and approved by FEMA by 11/2/04. Goal to have a draft plan out by the time this committee meets again. Passed out handouts that show chapter outline samples, potential funding sources, hazard specific mitigation goals, hazard specific potential mitigation actions, etc. The plan covers floods, wildfire, earthquakes, landslides, severe weather and drought. It is intended to define and prioritize hazard/site specific projects and goals. Includes eligibility for FEMA mitigation grant programs.

Mitigation Action Categories include; Hazard Management – structural actions, non-structural actions, critical infrastructure protection; regulatory/community planning, code development and enforcement, information/public education and hazard mapping/analysis.

Counties must be on-board to get help from FEMA. Once the plan is signed, this is another way for private, county, etc. to get grant money from FEMA for fire hazard mitigation.

IDL, Geological Survey, and Dept. of Water Resources are the only state agencies participating in the plan at this time. They do have federal partners.

Above Base Project Presentations – WUI (Gary Jarvis & FS Staff from Idaho's NF's)

Sawtooth NF:

Soldier Creek – Fairfield District. Two treatment units – 12 miles north of Fairfield, ID. Bridger and Soldier Creek - Both projects are adjacent to the Soldier Creek drainage with private homes (year round) 59 acres hand thinning, multi-year project. Have tried to work with the counties. Homeowners have not been receptive to participation.

Rock Creek – Minidoka District. Process of completing all of the mechanical treatments. 780-acre prescribed burn to reduce conifer. Mountain View watershed. One air mile from structures, and main recreation corridor heavily used. Approximately 40 miles south of Twin Falls. Collaborative effort with Twin Falls County (CWPP), Idaho Fish and Game, Mule Deer Foundation, County Commissioners, Wild Turkey Federation. Community has been involved as a whole.

Salmon-Challis NF:

Hughes Creek Fuels Reduction HFRA EA

This is Lemhi County's number one project. FRCC 1 and 3. Serious terrain, high fire hazard. Heavy fuels run directly down to Highway 93. Collaborative effort with Idaho Conservation League, RMEF, Counties and Bio Energy. All acres treated mechanically will have follow-up of prescribed fire. Community has been actively involved.

Boise NF:

North Prairie

Two miles northwest of Prairie, Idaho. Hazardous fuels reduction in WUI - \$25,000. Huge support from homeowners. One hundred acres of WUI that adjoins a small subdivision NW of Prairie. Contracting for thinning and piling, burning will be in-house. Collaborative effort by Elmore County.

Wapiti Blue Stewardship Project

Lowman District - 1000 acres of commercial/non commercial thinning. Reduce risk of uncharacteristic wildfire, including to communities. Summer homes in the area, with a history of large fires in the area. Stewardship project with a lot of collaboration with Idaho Conservation League and County Commissioners. Received a RAC Grant. WUI and in County Mitigation Plan. Based on Forest-Wide hazard risk assessment – moderate to high fire risk. Summer home owners have been supportive.

Idaho City – 100 acres of thinning, 300 contract thinning and biomass, 300 prescribed fire. Under two NEPA documents. Warm Springs Ridge. Collaborative – Included in the Boise County Mitigation Plan, high hazard area. Community is involved. Asking only for implementation dollars. In Lower Elk Creek Municipal Watershed.

Caribou-Targhee NF:

North Island Park WUI

Ongoing project area with Island Park Interface, we have exceeded our targets. Henrys Lake has four subdivision areas, three private. Trying to create a fuel break, all of which the private homeowners don't work in doing on their own, but have applied for community assistance grants. Covered under Fremont County Fire Mitigation Plan CWPP– moderate fire risk. Beetle infestation left dead timber. Collaboration with homeowners for the last couple of years. Stewardship opportunities and Biomass utilization do exist; one million board feet of saw timber, firewood, post and poles. Some harvesting around the subdivision. HFRA. Contract will be private. No watershed. Island Park area of Fremont County is high priority.

Fall River Ridge WUI

Seven miles east of Ashton, roughly 21,000 acres. Asking for planning \$. Private ground west of area. Subdivision in area was rated high in mitigation plan, another subdivision rated moderate. Collaboration with RMEF, Idaho Fish and Game. HFRA. Biomass possibilities – small timber. WUI is identified. Been working with County Fire Dept. and homeowner associations.

Pebble Creek

I-15 corridor – Inkom. Pebble Creek Ski Area. Inkom Volunteer Fire Department Chief is past FS employee, so they have been doing some work. In cooperation with GIFF, Inkom Fire Department. In CWPP as a priority project. Number one Forest priority. Community actively involved. Red Zone near completion. A lot of development and growth of permanent homes. Ski area has also been doing work.

Calamity Summer Home

All on FS land, no interagency collaboration, southwest of Palisades Reservoir in Bonneville County. Not identified in County Mitigation Plan. Actively working with summer home residents. Previously have not been allowed to do defensible space work because of it being on FS land. Area identified as high risk in county plan. No stewardship, potential for biomass with firewood. About 80% contracted. No municipal watershed.

Darby-Sorenson

Planning project – prescribed fire project with wildlife benefits. Treatment around girls camp, surrounded by heavy timber, 70% bug killed. Big Horn Sheep habitat. Requested by WY Game and Fish. Entire area is rated as a high priority, massive sub divisions. Area has a completed plan on the Wyoming and Idaho side. Teton County Fire Dept. has been doing homeowner assessments and works with BLM. Fire risk in Idaho plan is high. State plan – low to moderate. Lot of opportunity for Stewardship Project. Possible funding from Game and Fish. Stand exam contracted, and archaeological surveys. Biomass – firewood, logging along lower edge. Anticipate using HFRA EA. No watershed.

Berry Creek RX – Non WUI

Looking for Implementation \$. CE. Cooperation with private homeowners, 600 - 1200 acres prescribed fire. Collaboration with Idaho Fish & Game for mule deer – working on RMEF. Spring habitat for fawning. No Biomass. Ecosystem management category.

Williams Creek – Non WUI

Aspen conversion project. Planning completed. Conifer encroaching. Non-WUI project. FRCC 2/3. No stewardship/biomass. No contracting. (C-T has been tasked with completing 20,000 acre target). Ecosystem management type plan. C-T largely WFU.

Suggestions

Next year provide a one-page instruction check list as a guide to the presenters on what their presentations should consist of. Include the timeframe allowed. Need to have a firm deadline for the projects to be submitted.

Above-Base Score Results

- **Boise N.F.**
 - Idaho City – 28.2
 - North Prairie – 17.9
 - Wapiti Blue – 20.5
- **Caribou-Targhee**
 - Calamity – 15.2
 - Darby-Sorenson – 19.9
 - Fall River Ridge – 12.6
 - North Island Park – 20.6
 - Pebble Creek – 23.7
- **Salmon-Challis**
 - Hughes Creek – 26.5
- **Sawtooth**
 - Rock Creek – 21.3
 - Soldier Creek – 17.3

Non-WUI

- **Caribou-Targhee**
 - Berry Creek RX – 14.1
 - Williams Creek – 10.5

Membership and Leadership

IDL, Idaho Fire Chiefs Association, State Fire Marshal, Idaho Association of Counties, Idaho Dept. of Commerce, Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM, FEMA, FS, BIA, RC&D, NPS, Bureau of Homeland Security, Governors Office.

It was proposed that IEMA (Dave Hasz) become a voting member on the ISFPWG Committee. Motion was approved. Steve Kimball will update the charter to add IEMA.

Leadership roles for the Work Group were discussed. This will remain the same for now.

Round Robin Agency Updates

IAC - Idaho Roadless Rule going on – rule by Nov. of 08 per Caswell.

IEMA – Region 2 is in the process of redoing their Fire Mitigation Plans to be completed by end of summer. Clearwater County has a Chiefs Association, Idaho and Lewis County collaborating with a Chiefs Association. Counties actually have a committee to assure that plans get updated.

BHS – Elmore County meeting on wildland fire planning. 10 of 12 projects funded. All planning applications pushed through. Awards to Bonner, Bear Lake, Franklin, Oneida Minidoka, Blaine and Jerome have hazard mitigation plans. Shoshone now has applied.

Jerry Miller – They will split from the Dept. of Labor July 1. Agency involved in SW Idaho biomass effort. Applications go to Governor's office. Legislative \$ from USDA Rural Development for counties to improve growth management policies.

BIA – 8.1 million in tentative 08 dollars – tribes in NW. 5.4 in WUI, 2.8 in Non-WUI. WUI and Non-WUI acre targets for FY07 – Ft. Hall 366 acres; Nez Perce 978 acres; and Coeur d'Alene 2,743 acres. He attended EPA Smoke Management meeting in Spokane with various agencies.

Fire Chief – changes in leadership. Partnered with BHS on mutual aid system. Meeting June 25, 16. Mutual aid project for state, received federal grant for that. FF license plate grants – 6th year. Was \$8000 a year – now \$60,000 a year in the area of FF safety and training.

RC&D – Education outreach program continuing. Received funds from BLM to complete red zones. SW Idaho active in heading up project. SW Idaho biomass initiative hopefully funded for three years. Payette now requiring biomass removal with timber sales. Statewide committee looking at.

FS – Will treat 43,000 acres for 07. Continue working with forests. There is a need for more communication with this ISFPWG. Nationally FS going through a lot of change. Explained fire borrowing. Fire is 42% of the budget. Going through downsizing. Appropriate Management Response (AMR). Resources is a big issue also. No people available to put the fires out.

IDL, Dave Summers – Suggestions - Elevate the issue of having decision makers at these meetings, including insurance companies. Maybe propose to insurance companies that they add criteria of how defensible homeowners need to be involved. Need Legislatures and Governor involved more.

Next Meeting

October 3 and 4, 2007 – Federal Building, 1500 Highway 2, Sandpoint, ID. Possible tour of project in Bonner County. Feedback: suggest one agency be put in charge of full set up of the meeting.

Wrap Up

Steve Kimball thanked everyone for their participation. Steve welcomed Dave Hasz and IEMA to the Work Group. Think of where Steve and the IDL team could come out to see projects and issues and invite them. Also please send Steve suggestions for program and State Work Group.

Idaho National Fire Plan Talking Points
June 6-7, 2007
Idaho State Fire Plan Working Group Meeting

1. National Fire Plan (2000) Goals:

- Make firefighting resources available
- Emergency stabilization/rehabilitation (for landscapes affected by wildland fire)
- Reduce hazardous fuels in forests and rangelands
- Provide assistance to communities affected by wildland fire

2. Idaho's Progress with NFP

- State and County Work Groups: national model of state, county, federal agencies working together on NFP
- 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy
- Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy (partnership between State Working Group & County IA Working Groups; focus is reducing hazardous fuels and increasing local fire protection capability)
- County Wildfire Protection Plans completed for all 44 counties (HFRA 2003)
- Strong fuels reduction grant programs with statewide prioritization (\$ XX awarded since 2000)
- Monitoring of accomplishments and adaptive management is underway

3. Some Future Goals of Idaho's NFP

- Strengthen County Working Groups for long-term capability for fire protection and local stewardship of forest and rangeland conditions
- Landscape-level restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems through integrated county-state-federal planning and project implementation