

Date: March 25, 2008
To: Oregon Board of Forestry
From: Robert Young, Hearing Officer
Subject: Hearing Officer's Report on Vale RFPA ORS 477.320(1) Hearing

Hearing Information

Proposed RFPA: Vale Rangeland Fire Protection Association
Hearing Date & Time: January 14, 2008 1:30 p.m.
Hearing Location: Malheur County Courthouse, Vale, Oregon
Written Comments Due: January 14, 2008 2:30 p.m.
Hearing Authorized: Board of Forestry meeting, June 6, 2007
Hearing Officer: Robert Young, Workforce Capacity & Policy Manager

The hearing on the proposed formation of a Vale Rangeland Fire Protection Association was convened at 1:30 p.m. in the Malheur County Courthouse. Registration forms were available for people who wished to provide oral comments on the proposed formation. The hearing was closed at 2:30 p.m.

Approximately 13 members of the public attended the hearing. 10 people signed the Public Hearing Participation Record form and provided oral comments.

Summary of Oral Comments

Community interest in the formation of the proposed Vale Rangeland Fire Protection Association is high and is strongly supported. A board of directors has been established and a person has been elected chair. Additionally, a set of by-laws has been established, corporate legal status has been applied for, a bank account has been established, some funds have been raised, and commitments of time and equipment have been received.

Landowners and residents of the area are increasingly worried about the incidence of rangeland fire. The past several years have produced numerous, very large, rangeland fires. Many attendees are life long residents that have fought fire for years, but because of federal restrictions are no longer able to assist in fire suppression on federal land. The belief is held that with the formation of a Rangeland Fire Protection Association, additional equipment and formal training, the federal government will recognize them as firefighters. Then they will be able to support not only, private lands fire suppression but assist on federal lands as well. Many fires start on federal lands and spread onto private ground.

No local residents appear to oppose the proposed RFPA formation.

Below are a few selected quotes from the oral comments, which described the tenor of the hearing:

"This will increase our ability to interface with federal agencies."

"We're all out there for the same purpose, to keep the fires small."

"There will be stumbling blocks, but we will be able to work through them."

Summary of Written Comments

No formal written comments were received.

Agency Response to Comments

None.

Robert Young
Workforce Capacity & Policy Manager
Protection From Fire Program