

Agenda Item No.:	D
Work Plan:	Fire Protection Work Plan
Topic:	Ongoing Topic: Rangeland Protection Association Formation
Presentation Title:	Request for a Name Change and a Hearing Request to Expand Ash Butte Boundary
Date of Presentation:	June 8, 2016
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**SUMMARY**

The purpose of this agenda item is to obtain Board approval to change the name of the Ash Butte Rangeland Protection Association and proceed with a public hearing on the subject of expanding the current boundary to include additional rangeland not currently protected.

**CONTEXT**

This is part of the Department’s ongoing effort, pursuant to ORS 477.320, to assist rural communities in eastern Oregon to develop wildland fire protection coverage in areas that are currently unprotected.

State Forester Decker and the Board of Forestry received a letter on March 30, from the Chair and Secretary of the Ash Butte Rangeland Fire Protection Association (Attachment 1). In the letter they requested to change their name from Ash Butte to Ashwood-Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association.

State Forester Decker and the Board of Forestry received a letter on February 25, from the Chair and Secretary of the Ash Butte Rangeland Protection Association and several representatives of rangeland owners in Wasco County (Attachment 2). In the letter, they requested the Board hold a public hearing on the subject of providing protection from fire for rangelands in the vicinity of Antelope and Shaniko, by expanding the current boundary of the Ash Butte Rangeland Fire Protection Association (Attachment 3). Part of the expansion will include lands already under protection by the Twickenham Rangeland Fire Protection Association, but by agreement, will be moved under the Ash Butte Rangeland Protection Association.

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

Rangelands in eastern Oregon present a concern to Forest Protection Districts because of the lack of fire protection. Fires starting on these lands, left uncontrolled, have frequently threatened or spread to forestlands protected by the Department. This creates a dilemma for the district and potential use of district resources on unprotected lands that do not financially support the protection district.

The 2004 Fire Program Review identified assisting local communities in developing fire protection on unprotected lands as a high priority. Rangeland Protective Associations have been formed in Ash Butte, Blue Mt., Brothers Hampton, Burnt River, Crane, Fields-Andrews, Frenchglen, Gateway, Ironside, Jordan Valley, Juntura, Lookout Glasglow, Lone Pine, Post Paulina, Silver Creek, Twickenham, Vale, Warner Valley, Wagontire, and WC Ranches.

The area the private landowners are considering for fire protection is interspersed with other land management agencies.

Although the emphasis is protection of private lands, opportunities will exist for partnerships and mutual aid agreements with other entities to strengthen wildland fire protection throughout the area.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Department recommends the Board approve the name change and the landowners' request to hold a public hearing on the subject of providing protection from fire for rangelands in Wasco County, Oregon.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Department will hold a public hearing and determine the support for providing fire protection in Wasco County, Oregon. If there is sufficient support, a request will be made from the landowners to the Board to determine whether the rangeland should be included within a protection system.

If the Board determines that the rangeland should be included in a rangeland protection system, the Board, in cooperation with interested persons, will establish the extent and type of protection to be provided. Such protection shall be commensurate with the values and uses of the rangeland to be protected.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- (1) Letter from Ash Butte Rangeland Protection Association
- (2) Letter from rangeland owners in Wasco County
- (3) Current and Proposed Boundary of Ash Butte Rangeland Protection Association