

Minutes of the Jackson County Forestland-Urban Interface Classification Committee Meeting

October 22, 2003 1:00 p.m.
Oregon Department of Forestry
Southwest Oregon District
Central Point

Committee members and staff attendees: Reeve Hennion, Bill Rose, Michael Mattson, Dan Thorpe, Brian Ballou and Jim Wolf

Committee member absent: Lou Gugliotta

Chairman Hennion called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. No members of the public were present.

Mr. Hennion asked the committee to consider the minutes of the October 8 meeting. Mr. Rose drew the committee's attention to details in the minutes from that meeting. On page 1, fourth paragraph, there were sentences referring to lands in the steeper slope class. Mr. Rose asked that the > 25 percent areas be identified. Mr. Wolf listed them as Sardine Creek, Millers Gulch, and areas on the west side of Ashland.

On page 2, paragraph 1, Mr. Rose asked whether further criteria for high-density extreme needed to be added to support the committee's decision. It was decided to add a sentence about the committee's action: "At this time, high-density extreme criteria is not met, but will be re-evaluated at the next meeting."

With these revisions, the minutes of the October 8 meeting were approved.

The committee resumed its work of the previous meeting, reviewing identified forestland-urban interface areas in which the classification subcommittee had questions, or for which aerial photo information was unclear or insufficient. These areas were marked with stars on the committee's draft identification/classification maps.

Since the October 8 meeting, the subcommittee had obtained a new aerial photo series from Jackson County. These new photos enabled the classification subcommittee to complete its draft classification map for the full committee to review.

T37S R4E: The committee focused on an area west of Howard Prairie Reservoir. The area's dominant fuel type is primarily conifer, and was classified by the subcommittee as extreme. Mr. Rose countered that the area doesn't exhibit extreme fire behavior. The committee chose to classify the area as high, rather than extreme.

T37S R3E: A starred area south of Hwy 140, east of Heppsie, along the north fork of Little Butte Creek was reviewed to determine its fuel classification. The aerial photo showed that the dwellings in the identified forestland-urban interface area were sited in

relatively open areas. The committee decided that the area didn't meet the identification criteria, and removed it from the map.

T36S R1E (north): The committee reviewed the area in question, and discussed whether there was enough irrigated land to merit removing or reducing the size of the forestland-urban interface areas. The committee also questioned whether some of the lands within the area met the dwelling-density requirement. The committee deleted the entire area from the map.

T33/34S R1E: The committee reviewed a forestland-urban interface area in the Derby Road/McNeil Creek region. The committee revised the area's boundary to enclose more lots that met the criteria for extreme, and removed some of the lots that had lower risk fuels, and/or were on the low end of the structure density requirement.

T33S R2E: The Lewis Road forestland-urban interface area, near Lost Creek Reservoir, was reviewed. The southern part of the area was deleted since lots in that area didn't meet the structure density criteria.

The committee reviewed the Cascade Gorge area and removed lots sandwiched between Hwy 62 and Mill Creek Drive, up to the Ulrich Road junction. Also, most lots north of Hwy 62 were removed. The committee made the removals because the lands either had quite a lot of green, irrigated land, or the lots were isolated between roads/highways and were small in size.

T32S R1E: In the Prospect area, lots between Mill Creek Drive and Hwy 62 were removed. Also, the entire Red Blanket Road area – and lands on or near irrigated lands – were removed. An isolated area northeast of Prospect was also reviewed and removed.

T38S R2E: A forestland-urban interface area in the Cove Road region was reviewed for its classification. Lots with open grassland in the northeast corner of the area were removed.

T31S R3E: The entire Union Creek area was removed as it was an isolated area, and most of the structures were recreational cabins. The committee said that the Union Creek area did not meet the Legislature's model of a typical forestland-urban interface area.

T32S R2S: In the Elk Creek area, a forestland-urban interface area was modified to remove areas with open grassland, or other light-fuel characteristics.

Mr. Wolf recapped the high-density extreme question, and said he didn't think any area in Jackson County met the criteria. He illustrated a high-density extreme model in the La Pine area, and compared it with an area in Ashland (Granite/Ashland Creek roads) which met some of the criteria for high-density extreme.

The Ashland area being reviewed had fuels that met the extreme classification criteria, had no adequate safety zones, and had several dead-end roads and small lots. The

committee decided that the Ashland area in question met the criteria for high-density extreme. Mr. Rose and Mr. Mattson agreed that the area should be classified as high-density extreme.

Mr. Hennion said that the high-density extreme criterion of lot size less than three acres or of a configuration that precluded a 30-foot fuel break was a problem because not every lot in the high-density extreme area met the perfect model of high-density extreme. Mr. Wolf and Mr. Hennion, through discussion, decided that an average lot size of three acres meant that the occasional lot of four acres should not be excluded from within a high-density-extreme area.

Mr. Thorpe also noted a problem with fitting in fuel breaks on some lots that had irregular configurations. To compensate for the problem, the committee decided that the solution may be to class all properties in a common manner so all individual gaps and irregularities be compensated for by community action.

The committee discussed responsibility in situations where an easement existed along a property's border. Easement areas are public lands, and it wasn't clear in the Oregon Forestland Urban-Interface Fire Protection Act statute or its administrative rules as to who was responsible for performing fuel break work within easements.

Mr. Rose recommended tabling the decision about designating a high-density extreme area in Ashland until after Rick Gibson, ODF's policy fire director, could be brought into the discussion.

Also, Mr. Rose and Mr. Wolf said they would discuss the issue with the Ashland fire chief.

The committee discussed plans for its public meeting scheduled for Nov. 17, 7:00 p.m., at Sams Valley School. Staff can set up after 6:00 p.m. ODF will send out notices, bring tables, and handle other logistics.

An agenda was discussed:

- Opening presentations on background of the act, and the committee's tasks
- Overview of how the committee worked, the tools it used, and how it made its decisions
- Committee and staff members would field questions and provide answers

The committee will make available a form that landowners may use to request that a property be reviewed for inclusion/exclusion in a forestland-urban interface area.

Staff will prepare a list of criteria the committee uses as its decision tree – statute and rules, local fire knowledge, working conventions (such as excluding irrigated lands), and input from local fire professionals and residents.

The committee decided to not meet again until after the public meeting.

The quorum meeting ended at 4:00 p.m. after Mr. Thorpe left. Mr. Hennion, Mr. Rose and Mr. Mattson continued a work session.

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Bill Rose, Secretary

Date