



## Wildfire Programs Advisory Council – Meeting

Friday January 17, 2025

The complete Wildfire Programs Advisory Council can be viewed at the following website and serves as the official public meeting record: <https://www.oregon.gov/gov/policies/Pages/wildfire-programs-council.aspx>

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### Welcome

Chair Hunnicutt, Vice Chair  
McCurdy

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The chair welcomed the council members, agency staff, and the public. Roll was taken of the council members present and the council members introduced themselves. Council members reviewed the October meeting summary and provided edits.

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### Director's Report

Doug Grafe

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Director Grafe gave the council a summary of the items he was going to cover including an update on the Southern California fires, some administrative issues, a review of wildfire programs, a brief look at the upcoming legislative session, and a review of the Governor's budget for wildfire programs.

Director Grafe asked Chief Ruiz Temple (DSFM) and Deputy Director Kyle Williams (ODF) to provide an update on the Southern California fires. The chief outlined the equipment and firefighters that have been sent to Southern California to assist CalFire. Deputy Director Williams talked about ODF's efforts assisting CalFire and highlighted that this was Oregon's first deployment through the state to state agreement that was instituted last summer.

Director Grafe touched on a few administrative items including the role of the meeting summaries versus the meeting recordings, the council's role as an advisory group and the freedom that provides, and directs members towards the resources hosted on the council's webpage as a resource to familiarize with the council's previous work and going forward.

Director Grafe then gave an overview of the history of the council and its creation in 2021's Senate Bill 762, as well as some of the work done prior to Senate Bill 762 on wildfire programs in the state. The director talked about the large investment made in the bill and the many programs that came out of the bill's passage, including:

- Utilities mitigation planning and safety shutoffs
  - The Wildfire Hazard Map
  - Landscape Resiliency efforts
  - Community Risk reduction programs
  - Forthcoming defensible space and home hardening building codes
  - Community smoke impact, clean air public spaces, and mask care efforts
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- Expansion of prescribed burn programs
  - Oregon Conservation Corp program

The director also highlighted efforts to work with the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety to provide a wildfire hazard mitigation demonstration in Oregon in 2025 and the planned Oregon Wildfire Resilience Summit in November of 2025.

Director Grafe touched on the wildfire administrative fix-it bill that was expected and the bill intended to create a proactive home hardening program that the council had previously requested. The director acknowledged that there were likely to be about 50 bills relating to fire or wildfire and that he did not have a complete summary yet. He then went over some of the important dates and deadlines on the legislative calendar.

Finally, the director gave an overview of the wildfire provisions of the Governor's budget. It included 150 million dollars in funding from the general fund and an additional 130 million dollars from a funding source expected to come out of the work performed by the wildfire funding work group.

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#### **Public Comment**

All

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Bob Hart provided public comment to the council sharing a recent experience at a town hall in Medford where many people were upset about the implementation of the wildfire hazard map. He cited several issues people had, including: not accounting for individual mitigation efforts and the requirement that family trusts hire an attorney to appeal. Mr. Hart relayed confusion that people had expressed at the accuracy of the map because they viewed the Alameda fire as having taken place largely in a moderate hazard area.

The chair thanked Mr. Hart for his comments. Councilmember Bayer noted that she has received many similar comments from people as well.

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#### **Hazard Map and Code Development Update**

ODF, OSU, OSFM, BCD

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The chair asked the Department of Forestry and Oregon State University to give an update on the roll out of the wildfire hazard map including a general background to catch up new council members.

Derrick Wheeler from ODF provided background on the hazard map from its origin in Senate Bill 762 to the initial roll out in 2022 and the associated challenges, the additional legislative updates in 2023, the added public engagement since 2023, up to the current new roll out of the updated hazard map.

Andy McEvoy from OSU provided additional information on the development of the map and the science involved including the differences between hazard and risk, the scientific basis for assessing hazard, and the definition of the wildland urban interface. He noted the updates that occurred after the legislative changes in 2023 including updated treatment of hay and pasture lands and irrigated farm land as well as smoothing differences between neighbors.

Councilmembers' questions:

- asked about access to the underlying data that was used to create the map and Mr. McEvoy confirmed that top level data is available through the risk explorer, that the PDF report
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contains more detailed data, and that a full breakdown of all data is publicly available for download but would require a level of expertise to analyze.

- Asked whether the WUI definition changed at all between the first and second iteration of the map. Mr. McEvoy said it had not, but that landscape changes over time did adjust the boundaries of the WUI in some areas.
- Asked about impacts of landscape investments on future iterations of the map. Mr. McEvoy confirmed that to the extent that those investments impact the elements that the map is based on, and the data is available, it will be taken into account in future maps.
- Asked if property level mitigation could happen on a large enough community scale to potentially impact the map. Mr. McEvoy stated that it could, but the challenge would be getting reliable data that could be incorporated into the mapping process.

The chair asked Tim Holschbach to give the council an overview of the status of the appeals process. He gave some background on how the appeals process has changed since the first rollout of the map from a department determination to a contested case and how that impacts the process. He gave an overview of the initial data points that had been collected on the early appeals response.

The chair asked Claire McGrew to discuss the development and adoption of defensible space codes by the Department of the State Fire Marshal. Deputy Chief McGrew gave some background on defensible space and the public engagement process involved with developing the new codes. She stated that actual adoption was planned to start in Spring of 2025. Once the code was adopted, enforcement would be delayed to future date that was yet to be determined. The council asked why enforcement was being delayed and Deputy Chief McGrew stated that it was a preference of the governor and that it allowed the department the ability to engage in more public education surrounding the new codes.

The chair asked Alana Cox to discuss the development and adoption wildfire hazard mitigation building code standards by the Building Codes Division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services. Administrator Cox gave an overview of the relevant section of the Oregon Residential Specialty Code (section R327). She noted that the division was both required to adopt the code as required in high hazard areas and to develop a tool to display the building code requirements associated with different regional hazards including wildfire hazard. She stated that the tool was complete and launched last spring: the Oregon Design Criteria Hub. She said that the division intends to start the adoption process in late February targeting a July 1, 2025 adoption date with six month phase-in period to follow adoption. She added that the division also intends to update the administrative provisions associated with rebuilding requirements to require R327 for rebuilds in high hazard zones of the WUI.

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## **Wrap Up**

Chair Hunnicutt, Vice Chair  
McCurdy

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The Chair thanked all presenters and commenters, he encouraged open communication among the council if they had questions about the content of the meeting and noted that they could schedule an additional meeting if necessary. Currently the next scheduled meeting for the council is April 18, 2025.

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