



Wildfire Programs Advisory Council (WPAC) – Remote Meeting

Friday, January 16, 2026

9:00am - 12:00pm

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

[WPAC: January 16 Meeting](#)

Webinar ID: 845 1259 8344

Welcome

Chair Bayer, Vice Chair Browne

Chair Bayer welcomed council and introduced herself, followed by Vice Chair Browne introducing himself. Vice Chair Browne excited to welcome new members. Chair Bayer asks for cameras on for initial introductions if possible. Roll of the council was taken, members also identified who they represent. Chair Bayer discussed meeting etiquette, expectation being WPAC members are on camera during meetings, agency and other presenters are off camera unless speaking. Council approved previous October meeting summary. New members introduce themselves: Kenton Brine, representing insurance; Mark Corless, representing fire/service; Nick Snead, representing city planning. Director Grafe acknowledging new list of appointments and re-appointments with terms lasting through September 2029, while members not named by the Director have terms through September 2028.

Chair and Vice-Chair have mapped out the schedule for the year and are sending out schedule invites for everyone, flagging that the next meeting will be occurring in person with a tour. The April meeting will contain agency reports for discussion. The July meeting will be virtual with an opportunity to establish subgroups, if needed. Goal this year is to have as much shared information to the larger group before delving into subgroups. There will likely be a September meeting scheduled, so that November's meeting doesn't necessitate rushing at the end of the year.

Public Comment

Chair Bayer, Vice Chair Browne

Bob Hart, retired land use planner: Encouraged with progress occurring in southern Oregon as well as multiple agencies at work together. One concern is over-regulation in reference to mandatory vs. voluntary fire programs and private property rights. Dave Hunnicutt and Chair Bayer thank Bob for following WPAC and the comments pertaining to Josephine County.

Returned at 10am but there was no further comment.

Question regarding written comment being given to the council. Dissemination is determined from when the public comment is received.

Prior to moving to next agenda item, Chair Bayer acknowledged Utilities, Public Health, mitigation/implementation, suppression/resources, communications & educations as focuses for this cycle. Chair welcomes other members to add their ideas on cycle focuses later in the meeting as well. Members, Ty and Terry joined the meeting at this time as well. Members expressed support for chosen topics listed by Chair Bayer.

Director Grafe updated the council about member onboarding efforts. Director Grafe updated the council on closing out the 2025 wildfire programs and WPAC chair and vice-chair debuts at the legislative day meeting. Director Grafe federal update on transition to new federal organization: US Wildland Fire Service and highlighted its importance for WPAC to understand and collaborate with. Senate Bill 83 has changed the cadence of director reports from 2 months to quarterly.

Director Grafe highlighted the 2025 executive summary (page 4) and spoke on the high amount of fires that occurred last year and his conflicting feelings on the tough season and how to evaluate the severity of them. Director Grafe also reflected on the costs stemming from fires last year. The legislature was very proactive in funding due to the work completed by Fire 35 workgroup, and because of that work there is 75 million set aside for 2026 year. Members and Director acknowledging the importance of education as well as potential upcoming general review for WPAC on evaluating the immense fire data to determine who causes fires and where they are historically. Members discussion on WPAC's presence in the senate and lesser presence in the house, and a desire to start a relationship with legislators and representatives in the house. The goal of this year's report is to be more digestible and written for the perspective of the general public and end-users because the information is robust and crafted with intention. Members also discussed how to disseminate information outside online pathways, and a desire to distribute the report in proactive ways that meet the public where they are.

Director Grafe updated the council with his Legislative Update and summary of the LCIS meeting he attended. Director Grafe highlighted four bills passed in 2025: **HB 3940** (creating Fire 35 and restructure finance in Oregon – complete overhaul, a massive effort. OSFM updated the council on the rainy day fund and when the batches of funding will come to agencies. ODF updated the council on the rainy day and general fund as well. Director Grafe highlighted that this is an iterative process and also highlighted how and when money is received.); **HB 3349** (investment across the range, throughout the rangeland fire protective association – a boost to advance their equipment by creating a fund starting with \$1M); **SB 85** (directs insurance commission in conjunction with OSFM and ODF requiring a report on community risk reduction and how to use programs to influence insurance. There will be an iterative report on insurance for the April meeting. Insurance Commissioner, TK updated the council on the process and cautioned council it will take some time for the group to walk through this process of mitigation together. SB 85 is the anchor point for insurance legislation); **SB 83** (foundational piece repealing state's wildfire hazard map, moving it to local adoption. The council wants to figure out how to support local jurisdictions in this defensible space code effort.)

Director Grafe updated the council on the Chair and Vice-Chair participating in legislature and highlighting that the chair and vice-chair are very explicit when they are testifying about who they are testifying for. Director Grafe also highlighted the importance of this work and how there was a foundational shift when the new US Wildland Fire Service (led by Chief Fennessey) was established. This is the beginning of a new unified era of wildland fire managements. Oregon will have time with the Chief and Director Grafe looks forward to the unification of the interior, especially from the response and readiness perspective.

Chair Bayer updated the council that agency reports are coming out, HECC report has been distributed already. The rest of the reports are not due yet, but reports will soon be coming in for review prior to the April meeting. Agencies also mentioned that they may want to present some items through conversation and presentation if it could not effectively be captured in the written report. Director Grafe highlighting

the HEC report, specifically what metrics are important for this report from the insurer's perspective. Director Grafe asks for assistance and ideas on how to best present information and collaborate with agencies in an effective way. ODF, OSFM, DEQ, PUC, HECC reports are required by SB 83 and are due by end of January. These reports will be discussed by the WPAC in April. Chair Bayer discussed that larger ideas and thoughts on these reports should be saved for April's meeting, but short discussion on HECC report's metrics was had about Page 6. There is a desire for some more data from HECC and the council will discuss with the agencies at the next meeting, all plan on attending April's meeting.

Vice-Chair led the discussion on potential individual issues that WPAC members wanted to bring up for the council and future reports. Discussion on mitigation/implementation as well as education of the public health. Additionally, response and readiness are important areas for the WPAC to focus on as well. Specifically, the council is looking for areas of focus for the WPAC annual report.

John O'Keefe, brought up the issue of funding RFPAs

Bill Messner, brought up how the report is framed: moment in time vs. future looking

Chad Washington, brought up digging into utilities and also offered support to all previous comments

Dave Hunnicutt, brought up insurance issues and types of solutions to address it, additionally offered that the council should focus on the new federal organizational structure and how it will interact with WPAC. Additionally, Dave highlighted the work of HECC and spending time with WPAC and HECC.

Director Grafe noted that HECC's funding is distinct from the other agencies.

Chair Bayer, brought up public health and called upon Sarah Worthington to discuss the public health angle for WPAC. Education for public, agencies, and organizations is important at all levels. Sarah expressed a desire to increase work with schools.

Pat Skrip, brought up ODF funds and mobilization funds, as well as items brought up at Fire 35.

Mary Kyle McCurdy, brought up the WPAC's scope and ability to flag things for the appropriate legislative group and ways to focus the legislature to topics of need

Chair Bayer, summarized some of the overall themes that were recurring in discussion: emphasis on education, methods of communication, efficacy of communications and efforts. The decision making will occur in April, so this discussion is an effort of pre-planning prior to the establishment of sub groups.

Nick Snead, brought up the potential for universities to get involved through including research happening at the university level.

Director Grafe updated the council on the connection with OSU, embedded with WPAC by law.

Josh Barnard updated the council on ODF's processes and next steps with the interagency dashboard.

Chair Byer asks any WPAC council members to reach out with any questions. Director Grafe and Tabitha Neely will complete onboarding and emailing members following the meeting.

Wrap Up

Chair Bayer, Vice Chair Browne

Chair Bayer wrapped up the meeting announcing that the next meeting will occur in April and in-person.