



Approved

Wildfire Programs Advisory Council – Meeting

Friday, January 14, 2022
0900 – 1400

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/policy/Pages/wildfire-programs-advisory-council.aspx>

0900	Welcome	<u>Chair Bennett</u>
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Chair Bennet opened the meeting and stated that the meeting's public comment period would be at 1:00 p.m. He reviewed the agenda, who the presenters would be and encouraged anyone to bring up any additional concerns that they have. Chair Bennett outlined some working guidelines for the council and emphasized that open discussion of the issues would be important to the council's work. Chair Bennet highlighted that the council prepares a report for the legislature in the fall of 2022.

0910	House Keeping	<u>Vice-chair Browning</u>
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Vice-chair Browning conducted roll call and all council members were present except Bradley Clark who was excused. He outlined some basic etiquette for virtual meetings. Vice-chair Browning reviewed the council's website and where the resources that can be found there. He led the council to approve the November 5, 2021, meeting summary and stated that the posted video of the meeting was the official record but that a summary of each meeting would also be prepared.

0920	Council Roles / Director Report	<u>Vice-chair Browning,</u> <u>Director Gafe</u>
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Vice-chair Browning and Director Gafe gave the council a high-level overview of the director's report. Director Gafe talked about the feedback that was received and the how it will shape future reports, as well as the goals he hoped to achieve with the way the report was presented. Director Gafe pointed out the required sections of the report: SB 762 implementation status, obstacles and opportunities, and future possibilities. He also walked the council through the non-required sections of the report.

He talked about the duties of the director and the rules of the council. Director Gafe emphasized that he welcomed advice on equity and financial impacts of implementation. Vice-chair Browning reviewed the roles of the council. There is an update every 60 days on implementation status the various agency projects created in SB 762.

Questions and comments from the Council:

- Amelia Porterfield asked if a document could be posted with the highlights of the report to make it more accessible. Director Gafe responded that the plan was to post breakouts of individual sections as well.
 - Mary Kyle McCurdy commented that as the state moves forward with the various agency implementation goals from SB 762, it seems like a good goal for the committee would be to not only look at the individual progress, but also the overall synergy of the programs to work together.
 - Karna Gustafson raised a question about the impact on housing costs of new fire hardening requirements adding to the building code.
 - Dave Hunnicutt requested additional information or a presentation to the committee on the impacts of the federal infrastructure law.
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0945 **October Council Report Framework**

All – Chair Bennett

Chair Bennett expressed the goal of managing the workload for the report so that it isn't all rushed at the last minute. The council can explore topics and put together a framework to address desired topics in the report. The council will have an editorial subgroup to craft the final product. He hopes that we will come into the April 8, 2022, meeting with a framework for the report.

1010 **Agency Reports and Council Discussion**

All

Public Utility Commission (PUC) – Mike Grant, Executive Director

Director Grant outlined the wildfire related directives that PUC is implementing. This includes workshops to assist investor-owned and consumer-owned utilities for best practices on mitigation of wildfire risk. Additionally, the investor-owned utilities created a risk-based wildfire plans and submitted it to PUC at the end of 2021 and PUC is evaluating those plans.

Council Discussion:

- Allen Barreth commented that utilities put a lot of work into creating those plans and it is considered a first step by utilities.
 - Carol Whipple asked about what percent of generation and transmission lines in the state are owned by the three investor-owned utilities. Mike Grant said that he would need to look up that number, but that the three are the largest utilities in the state by customer base, though they serve a minority of the state geographically.
 - Dave Hunnicutt asked what are non-investor-owned utilities doing along these lines? Mike Grant answered that all utilities are creating plans, but the consumer-owned utilities have different governing board. Ultimately, all plans will be filed with PUC for access purposes.
 - Mary Kyle McCurdy asked if anyone takes a holistic view of all the plans together to make sure they are collectively covering everything that needs to be covered. Mike Grant stated that that wasn't a role defined in SB 762, but that the groups are talking to each other during the process. Director Gafe further stated that Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and Office of Emergency Management (OEM) will both be reviewing these reports as well.
 - Chair Bennett commented that smaller utilities may not have the capacity to hire independent evaluators and the council should maintain a focus on implementation beyond just planning.
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Oregon Office of Emergency Management – Andrew Phelps, Director

Director Phelps outlined updates to the statewide emergency response plan. He highlighted work to make OEM's GIS tool more readily available to local partners. OEM is focusing on risk reduction and hazard mitigation and is able to use federal grants to help with this.

Council Discussion:

- Alessandra de la Torre commented that there were problems with emergency alerts in Phoenix for the Almeda fire, she asked what the plans were for language accessible community communication. Director Phelps emphasized that language access should not be a barrier for emergency communications and that communication needs to happen over a spectrum of communication channels to avoid holes. Also, OEM has a language access coordinator that is available to local partners.
- Director Gafe asked if ORalert is the primary tool that can be adapted to local jurisdictions. Director Phelps confirmed this.

Oregon Department of Forestry and Oregon State University

Mike Shaw, Tim Holschbach, and Chris Dunn reviewed the various items in SB 762 that are being implemented by the Department of Forestry and Oregon State university. They discussed the adoption of a definition of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and the process of mapping the state and categorizing risk classes. Chris Dunn from OSU stated that their goal is to have the mapping and risk assessment available within the next few months.

Council Discussion:

- Samantha Bayer asked how the map and risk classification information will be shared with the public and how can property owners challenge that classification? Tim Holschbach answered that notice is required to anyone in a high or extreme risk class. Letters will be sent out to property owners informing them of the classification.
- Chair Bennet echoed the concern about the classification and encouraged keeping local partners involved to increase buy-in.
- Tamarah Cline commented that whatever the communication strategy is it should be sure to account for people that are less technologically capable and owners of in-state property that live out of state. Tim Holschbach responded that the notification will go to whoever is on record with the assessor's office, even if their contact address is out of state.
- Karna Gustafson asked whether there was an appeal process for the classifications. Tim Holschbach responded that there would be an appeal's process and information about the process will be included in the notification.
- Mary Kyle McCurdy commented that the overall communication strategy should not be limited to owners, communication should also be targeted at non-owner occupants like renters and the classifications should be communicated to the broader public for awareness.
- Chris Dunn walked the council through two flowcharts determining whether a property is in the WUI and if so, what risk class and what actions are required.
- Samantha Bayer asked what qualifies as a "structure?" Chris Dunn stated that anything over 400 square feet qualifies for these purposes.
- Samantha Bayer asked to what level of detail the maps will go. Chris Dunn and Tim Holshbach responded that it hasn't totally been decided yet, currently, they are planning on the tax lot level.
- Dave Hunnicutt suggested that the proposed rules should lead the agenda for the April 8, 2022, meeting.
- Karna Gustafson asked who has standing to appeal the classifications. Tim Holshbach responded that only the owner of the classified property has standing to appeal. Several council members expressed concern that the WUI classifications could have unintended interactions with land use law.

- Amelia Porterfield asked about the role of the council, relative to the various Rules Advisory Committee's (RAC), how deep into the detail should the council be going. Director Grafe clarified that the council serves in an advisory role providing a broad perspective to the Director, with many council members serving on individual agency RACs. The council's report in October is a critical product of the council to offer assessments on overall SB 762 implementation and advancement of fire protection in Oregon. The council does not have oversight on any individual agency's RAC process.

1200 Lunch

1300 Public Comment All

The meeting was opened for public comment and no public comment were received. Future requests for public comment can be sent to Jacque.Carlisle@oregon.gov.

**1315 Agency Reports and Council Discussion -
 Continued** All

Oregon Department of Forestry Prescribed Burn Program

Tim Holschbach talked about the Department of Forestry's implementation of the Prescribed Burn Program. ODF is clarifying the rules around cross boundary prescribed burning and is starting a Certified Burn Manager Program. A Prescribed Fire Coordinator has been hired.

Council Discussion:

- John O'Keeffe commented that the big fires that are happening are in places where fire has been expected. Opportunities for prescribed fires should be taken advantage of particularly in safe windows provided by favorable conditions
 - Steve Rondeau commented that the impact of prescribed fire and thinning in the bootleg fire was a great proof of concept.

Oregon Department of Forestry Mitigation Programs

Derek Gasperini gave an overview on the ODF's required report on mitigation programs. The programs prioritize high-risk classes. ODF received 20 project proposals and 19 met the necessary criteria and are currently being evaluated. The next interim report will be in October 2022.

1330 Council Report Framework

Chair Bennet returned to the topic of the framework for the council report. He said that Director Gafe, the Vice-chair and himself are planning on developing ideas for work groups and he encouraged the council members to identify topic areas that they would like to serve on a work group.

Alessandra de la Torre suggested that the council have a specific focus on engagement and outreach, either through a work group or through a broad focus across all the various topic areas.

Mary Kyle McCurdy reiterated her belief that the council should be sure that it is keeping an eye on both implementation of the various projects and looking at everything with a broad enough lens to make sure that the whole system is working together to best serve Oregonians.

1345

Wrap Up

Chair Bennett

Director Gafe and Chair Bennet delivered closing remarks thanking everyone for the great participation and looking forward to working with everyone.
