

Agenda Item No.:	D
Work Plan:	Fire Protection Work Plan
Topic:	Ongoing Topic: Rangeland Protection Association Formation
Presentation Title:	Request to Expand Ashwood-Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association Boundary
Date of Presentation:	November 2, 2016
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SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to obtain Board approval to an expansion of the current boundary of the Ashwood-Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association that brings a specific area of Wasco County, into the Oregon protection system.

CONTEXT

Rangeland fire protection associations are non-profit, locally governed groups of landowners which have been organized to provide fire protection to rangeland in portions of eastern Oregon. These organizations are formed under the authority of the Board and with assistance from the Department.

Currently, there are 21 Rangeland Protection Associations (RPA) that have previously been approved by the Board of Forestry, and one by the Wheeler County Court, bringing the total to 22. These RPAs protect over four million acres of private land and approximately 500,000 acres of state-owned lands. These lands, including federally owned land, combine to encompass over 15 million acres.

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. 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. 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.

The Board, on June 8, 2016, authorized a public hearing on the expansion and agreed to a name change from Ash Butte to Ashwood-Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association. A hearing was held on August 24, 2016 at the Ashwood School.

Based on the hearings officer report (Attachment 1), there was strong support for the expansion of the existing association into Wasco County. Testimony presented during the

hearing indicated a need for organized fire protection, and the local landowners want to assist local wildland agencies with initial attack to prevent more large fires in the area.

These landowners want a way to protect their private property and actively take part in the protection of their lands. The increased level of protection for this area can be achieved by bringing it into the Oregon protection system by expanding the boundary of the rangeland fire protection association.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends the Board take the following action when it meets on November 2, 2016:

Approve the inclusion of rangeland in portions of Wasco County into the Ashwood-Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will work with local landowners and the Ashwood-Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association. This will include developing mutual aid agreements, providing training as requested, offering FEPP equipment as available, and any other assistance as requested and feasible.

ATTACHMENT

- (1) Hearings Officer Report and Ashwood-Antelope Rangeland Fire Protection Association Vicinity Map