



Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

November 15, 2023

12:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Meeting Venue: Rm 175, Natural Resources Building

I. Attendance

- a. Quorum met see attached for meeting attendance.

II. Call to Order

- a. Committee Chair Loren Torgerson called meeting to order at 12:33 pm on November 15, 2023.

III. Meeting Minutes Approval & Introductions

- a. Committee chair Loren Torgerson entertains motion to review and approve minutes from August 16, 2023. Jim Smith motions to approve August minutes, Brett Conrad seconds. Ronda Strauch abstains, all other members vote yeah.

IV. Previous Utility Task Force Business – Communications Plan

- a. Loren Torgerson, Committee Chair, DNR – This is the last remaining due out from the previous task force. Plan is to focus on the next two committee meetings.
- b. Elizabeth King, Management Director Emergency Resilience and Emergency, DOC – Commerce is working on its own communication plan with utilities and can provide the work already done to assist with this task.
- c. Jim Smith – Want to emphasize that this is focused on DNR’s response to fires and the inter-communication between DNR and the utilities.

V. Mitigation Plan Template Draft Presentation

- a. Andrew Dressel, Director Risk, Compliance, and Security; Guidehouse – We have been working in this space after many of the fires in California and Oregon, such as the Camp fire. This draft is based on our experience there and existing examples in WA. Timeline is that by December we’ll take and incorporate stakeholder feedback into the final draft. January 15th the draft is presented to utilities for review, March 15th is the final publish due date. Goal is to not produce an overly proscriptive inflexible template, small operators have different resources and needs than larger ones.
- b. Draft Template – Utility Overview; These documents will be publicly available, it’s important that the plan include necessary context. Include where to find WMP information on the utility websites.

Objectives of the WMP; Minimizing sources of ignition, resiliency of the grid.



Roles and Responsibilities; Utility R&R, coordination with local utilities & departments, coordination with communication infrastructure providers, standardized emergency management system.

Wildfire Risks and Drivers; Risk and risk drivers associated with topographic and climatological risk factors, enterprise-wide safety risks.

Wildfire Prevention Strategies; Weather monitoring, design and construction standards, fuel and vegetation management, inspections, workforce training, recloser policy, de-energization.

Community Outreach & Public Awareness; Detail the utility's outreach and public awareness efforts and how they are evaluated for effectiveness. Can include Fire adapted communities learning network as an example.

Restoration of Service; Detail process for restoring service. Should include: high wind, extreme weather, low fuel moisture, Wildland fire event, de-energization event.

Evaluation of the Plan; Metrics and assumptions for measuring performance, impact of metrics on plan, reviewing and updating the plan, identifying & correcting deficiencies, monitoring the effectiveness of inspections.

Independent Review/Audit; best practice to obtain third-party input to minimize internal blind spots.

- c. Presentation attached.
- d. Template attached.

VI. Committee Members Mitigation Plan Feedback

- Normally I'm doing what percentage is in a high fire risk area why is that not included? Can have a section for utilities to provide any additional metrics not mentioned. A: WA is not as far along as other states, that data is being worked on with fire service and we want that to be including that when it becomes available.
- I did not see a place to place widgets in section 3, are these intended to be left off? A: We felt that would be part of their implementation plans.
- Recloser could be relay & recloser section. Where would be put operational practices? Would that be under workforce training? Inspection section does not include making changes if something is found. A: There should be a section that includes this.
- Flow of section 6, has current state, lessons learned, future state. Don't really like lessons learned would like to understand the reason for it. A: We view this as a living document with the mandatory 3 year review and update in the statute. Acknowledge can work on the title.



- I was thinking I would discuss restoration in other sections, see the need for mutual assistance though. A: In regards to some of the duplicative nature, can always reference previous sections. Intent that it is flexible and this section would be more helpful for smaller utilities that have less experience.
- The wording of deficiencies implies something was wrong with the plan vs making improvements to the plan as a living document. Going to be a lot of pushback on that word.
- There is an opportunity to add some of what is covered in section 10 under section 9.3.
- Appreciate all the work that went into this understand how much it can be. One of the things that jumps out is the period of time that plan covers, it's to be reviewed every three years so is that how far in the future it should go? A: That is something we have been thinking about and will provide more guidance on.
- Maybe need section 3.0 to be broader, allow the utilities have more room to separate things out in their plan.
- Comment on the de-energization, important to spell out difference between a PSPS (proactive) vs a shutoff for protecting wildfire fighters (reactive).
- How proscriptive is the vegetation and fuel management section going to be? It can have major impact on utilities? There are no standards for rights of way in the state so vegetation management will vary. A: this is meant for you to include as much information as you want to make available to the public, nothing will be prescribed beyond what is required in statute. Federal lands have requirements that the State does not.
- Section 6 mentions industry standards, but there really aren't any that exist, should reword the section to reflect that. A: Most of these are coming from CA, they have had theirs for 5 years.
- Is the intent to publish the results of third party reviews? A: No the intent is not for this to mandate publishing results.
- Curious to know the feedback process between now and January. A: We will be working with Guidehouse incorporating this feedback priory to the next draft to be published for Utility feedback in January.
- It talks about risks, does terrain mapping etc. live here and how detailed is this intended to be? A: The template is going to be fairly high level, we expect the utilities to have granularity in their plans. Want to have the output and the methodology here.



- Under 2.4 it feels duplicative and the layout can feel like it is jumping to the end, the wording can be leading. Would like more consideration and make sure the document walks through it step by step.
- We already have easements, we may like them to be wider, but they are what they are. Can include ideal rights of way for future implementation. We may need to impart information back to the legislature that what they are asking for is not feasible as part of our role as an advisory committee and the facts on the ground in the State.
- What kind of things does this cover under community outreach? A: The bill specifically mentions this in relation to planned outages. It is also an opportunity to reassure the public that you are doing work to harden your systems and do mitigation work.
- Where it says identifying and correcting deficiencies, change the words to reflect identifying improvement and opportunities. When we do an inspection and find issues, it is not a deficiency if we find a broken cross arm and fix it for example.
- I don't see section 10 going over well especially since this is not a state requirement.
- We are not recommending that utilities put together a PSPS or De-energization mandate, but we have a workgroup to assist implementation if utilities decide to do so. Want section to reflect that we are not mandating PSPS.
- Will have to figure out how to delineate between improving the plan and that process vs correcting faults and deficiencies in actions.
- May be worth dropping section 10 as something to look at adding in the future as we gain more support from utilities.
- Guidehouse mentioned the 5 year history in CA, has these helped? Do the utilities that have these plans have less liability? A: We are seeing less ignitions as a result of these plans and implementations. Because of the hardening efforts, the frequency and size of PSPS has decreased. Notification practices have gotten a lot better and have helped. Most of the liability that we see is years old fires, have not seen major litigation coming from recent fires in CA.
- What is the timeline for final publishing? A: April 1st is when we are required to publish it, want 2 weeks for internal review prior to publish. This means need to have feedback received and integrated by mid-march, the utilities have their 3 month review starting in January.

VII. Committee Work Plan

- a. Loren Torgerson, Committee Chair, DNR – We have our next meeting on February 21st, it seems we should dedicate a portion of that to further reviewing the mitigation plan



template. What areas that we should be discussing to provide advice to the commissioner? What other topics should be included on the agenda?

- b. Ronda Strauch – 2023 state of WA wildfire season review, with all data not just DNR land.
- c. Elizabeth King – We should discuss the communications plan. National Wildland fire commission report is available, there are handful of recommendations for utilities; coordination with federal agencies, ways to adopt things regarding rights of way access.

VIII. Closing Comments

- a. Committee Members –
 - i. Jim Smith – Felt the focus was right.
- b. Committee Chair – Thank you Andrew and your team for the great work you have done so far. Thanks to the committee members for all the relevant feedback and participation.

IX. Public Comment

- a. Justin Dibble – I think something useful in 2024 would be to attempt regional coordination meetings between local fire management and utility operations.
- b. Dave Warren – Think this is exactly the things we need to be working on.
- c. Jacob Gear – We have talked about de-energization. We have the PNW Wildfire Coordination group that can be included. There are requirements on the FED side under FLPMA.

X. Adjourned

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 3:32 pm

XI. Appendices

- a. Attendance
- b. Mitigation Plan Template Draft
- c. Guidehouse Presentation

Draft minutes submitted by Bryan Perrenod, approved by Chairman Loren Torgerson. Formal action to be taken to approve the minutes at the next general meeting.