

Tri-County FireSafe Working Group Monthly Meeting Agenda

June 13, 2024 Time: 0900 Mt City Fire Station #1

1. Welcome and Introductions-Lois Olsen

2. TCFSWG Programs/Projects Reports

Lois Olsen, TCFSWG Board President and volunteer interim executive director gave an overview of TCFSWG projects and current funding. Funding is currently low, as most of the grants have been spent. She is currently closing out the BLM agreement in an effort to expedite the award of a new BLM funding agreement. Will be applying for a third quarter DNRC Haz Fuels Grant. There are many property owners ready to move forward with implementation of their hazardous fuels plans once funding is secured.

Good winter for the garden. Vegetation is coming in strong. Work continues on the pavilion. Next step is to finish the crevice garden and pavilion signage. On-going garden maintenance.

3. Monthly Hot Topic

Chiara Cipriano (PAO of Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest) and Ellie Fitzpatrick (Ex. Director of the Montana Discovery Foundation) gave a presentation about the history and planned events for the upcoming Mann Gulch 75th Anniversary Commemoration to be held throughout the first week of August.

4. Agency/Partner Reports- *DUE TO THE TIME OF YEAR, MANY OF THE AGENCY REPS WERE NOT IN ATTENDANCE.*

- a. USFS Report Helena/L&C – *NO REPORT*
- b. USFS-B/D – *NO REPORT*
- c. BLM –

Cody Phillips gave an update on current BLM funding and the status of the TCFSWG agreement.

- d. DNRC – *NO REPORT*
- e. NRCS- *NO REPORT*
- f. St. Peter's Hospital- *NO REPORT*
- g. Montana Veterans Administration Emergency Management Specialist- *NO REPORT*
- h. NorthWestern Energy-

Charles Tuss reported that NWE's Fire Mitigation Plan has been approved. It is posted on their webpage. He will arrange for a presentation during one of the upcoming TCFSWG meetings. The plan shows Helena Valley as a high priority focus. Overall the plan identifies risks as Public 60%, Timber 20% and Suppression Costs 20%.

PSPS- Power Safety, Power Shutoff. NWE is beginning to use cameras for smoke and heat detection to help monitor the system. A.I used to determine lat/long.

- i. FireSafe Montana

Rocky Infanger reported that they will be having a board meeting on June 18, at the Mt City Fire Hall. One of their items will be discussing the home insurance issue and how to move forward.

5. City-County Reports

a. City of Helena

Brad Langsather (City Open Lands) gave a summary of on-going work on city public lands. Grant funding is very limited and they City/DNRC was not successful in obtaining the CWDG grant.

b. L&C

Kevin Horne (Public Works) reported that the County Public Works department is available for assistance. He toured the Dearborn area with Rocky and thinks the projects turned out great. He has identified ROW projects that also help improve line of sight, snow storage, etc. in addition to reducing fire risks.

Kyle Sturgill-Simpson (DES) reported that the two FEMA grants with TCFSWG have been closed. Final tours were well received by state FEMA folks.

Kevin Wright (Sherrif's Office) reported that the department now has "office issue handguns", a new firearm system that provides consistency. They have also obtained a new command vehicle.

c. Jefferson - *NO REPORT*

d. Broadwater - *NO REPORT*

e. Rural Fire Department(s) –

Rocky Infanger reported that the fire chiefs are preparing for the inevitable fire season. There was a small fire last week near Wolf Creek that served as a valuable training opportunity. L&C County debris burning will be closed July 1 until the end of August, maybe longer depending on conditions.

6. Contractor Reports & Comments

Joel Howard (Smokey Ridge Tree Service) is wrapping up on projects, ready to work on more TCFSWG projects, depending on funding. He mentioned that landowners are concerned about the risks of having unburned piles on their property and the fear of them igniting. Craig Kockler responded by saying he tells property owners that the piles are located in "defensible space" areas; the area around the piles have been pruned, open area location and should be safe.

Carl Christianson (Big Sky Forestry) reported that property owners are pleased with project results. He has 3-4 TCFSWG projects ready to go, just waiting for the funding to be available. Working on NRCS projects. He had some questions about the "bid process" ... Lois was able to clarify the process. Frustration with perceived TCFSWG favoritism.... What is the incentive for him to send property owners to TCFSWG. Lengthy discussion regarding the effectiveness of mastication, he questions why it isn't used more often. Discussion on the high costs of cut and haul. TCFSWG is putting together a fuels treatment document

that should help with consistency and transparency. Lois would like to arrange for a contractor meeting between TCFSWG and contractors. TCFSWG would like contractors to provide input on the document and processes.

7. Other Items-Comments There will be a meeting on July 11th.