

INFORMAL SESSION MINUTES

March 16, 2015

2:00 p.m.

Commissioners' Office Conference Room

PRESENT: Commissioners Allen Springer, Mary Starrett, and Stan Primozich.

Staff: Chuck Vesper, Christian Boenisch, Sherrie Mathison, and Sue Lamb.

Guests: Nicole Montesano, News-Register; Mike Cafferta, ODF; Eric Perkins, ODF; Mike Totey, ODF; and Jeff Classen, ODF.

* indicates item forwarded to formal agenda

Allen called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Oregon Dept. of Forestry - Mike Cafferta and his team introduced themselves and provided a briefing regarding the upcoming fire season and the preventive measures that they have in place. They also stated the liabilities and challenges that they face regarding Yamhill County. See Exhibit A for detailed statistics and information.

Emergency Management - Sue Lamb provided an update on recent and upcoming activities that Emergency Management is involved in. The county most recently participated in the Calamity in the Valley exercise along with 14 other agencies. There were over 75 participants altogether. The full scale exercise was a very good exercise and a success overall.

Solid Waste - Sherrie Mathison presented to the board the Solid Waste Advisory Committee appointments and reappointments and explained the guidelines as to who can serve on the committee.

* Contracts/Grants - see agenda for details.

* Refund - Authorize a \$998 refund from the Planning Department to Roy Vineyard, LLC.

* Committees - Approve the appointment of Adam Zabinski to the Road Improvement Advisory Committee to serve a three-year term to expire March 19, 2018.

Approve the following changes to the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC):

- a. Reappoint Tex Rhodes for a 3-year term to expire March 2018;
- b. Appoint David Adler to serve a 3-year term to expire March 2018;
- c. Remove Bill Carr, retroactive to March 15, 2015.

Following commissioner updates the meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

Lucy Flores Mendez
Secretary



2014: Endless season of fire

With large wildfires still burning across the state in mid-September, Oregonians began to wonder if the fire season would ever end. The season started early and extended well into fall, at its peak making the Pacific Northwest the nation's top wildfire priority.

For the second year in a row, the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) task of protecting 16 million acres of private and public forest and rangeland from fire proved particularly challenging. Continuing drought, prolonged hot weather and an onslaught of dry lightning produced hundreds of fires with high potential to grow large. ODF was able to extinguish 94 percent of them at under 10 acres. But several did grow large, more than doubling the average number of acres burned. Even so, fire managers can point to remarkable "saves" such as the Ferguson Fire outside of Klamath Falls, in which coordinated, aggressive response prevented large-scale damage.

Large human-caused fires start off season

Lightning-caused fires typically dominate the early season. Not so in 2014. The Two Bulls Fire set the stage June 7, breaking out 10 miles west of Bend. Wind spread the fire rapidly, prompting residential evacuations. This first in a series of large human-caused fires was followed by the Bryant, Moccasin Hill and White River fires.

Lightning rakes the region in mid-July

On July 13, dry lightning sparked fires across multiple jurisdictions. In a few hours the situation quickly escalated, requiring full activation of the complete and coordinated fire protection system, with U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, forest landowners and other ODF partners engaged.

Dry lightning spawns megafires

Intense thunderstorms in mid-July ignited dozens of fires, including the 396,000-acre Buzzard Complex on rangeland near Burns.

Strategic decision pays off on Rowena Fire

On July 30, nature threw yet another fireball at Oregon, igniting the Haystack Complex near John Day and the Salt Creek Fire near Medford. A few days later as ODF's Fire Team 1 prepared to turn command of Haystack back to the local district, fire managers in Salem made a pivotal decision. Instead of sending the team home, they held it in place. The wait was brief: On Aug. 6 the team was redeployed to the Rowena Fire west of The Dalles. The quick response helped minimize damage to both the forest and developed areas.



A torching tree on the Moccasin Hill Fire in mid-July. Extreme fire behavior driven by severe weather and fuel conditions challenged firefighters in 2014. (Photo by John Pellissier, ODF)

Endless season, cont.

As resources run out, partners step up

A shortage of firefighting resources hit ODF on Aug. 6. All of the agency's incident management teams had been deployed to fires and the cupboard was essentially bare. The scarcity followed a 20-day period beginning July 13, in which 30 team deployments occurred and 1 million acres burned across Oregon and Washington. The Pacific Northwest emerged as the wildfire hot spot of the nation.

No one wants to be No. 1 in that category, but the designation carried a benefit: Firefighters and equipment poured in from across the U.S. and Canada, shoring up Oregon and Washington's depleted resources.

The ones that didn't get away . . .

When the Ferguson Fire broke out east of Klamath Falls July 25, fire managers knew it could quickly become the next major incident. Burning in a rural subdivision, the torching and spotting blaze destroyed a home within the first hour. ODF and its federal, local and private landowner partners responded with heavy ground and air attack. The coordinated effort caught the fire at 200



The Ferguson Fire had all the makings of a major incident when it broke out in the Klamath-Lake District in late July. But a rapid, coordinated response by landowners and fire agencies caught it at 200 acres. (Photo by Roland Glade, USFS)

acres. This scenario played out many times across the state in 2014, as aggressive initial attack stopped high-potential fires before they could inflict large-scale cost and damage.



Bringing needed resources to bear

Oregon's "complete and coordinated forest protection system" is more than just a slogan. When the Clarks Branch fires broke out in southwestern Oregon in mid-September, the Douglas Forest Protective Association (DFPA) and several local fire departments responded as one. Afterward, Douglas County Fire Chief Bill Stearns thanked DFPA manager Melvin Thornton for providing the extra resources—particularly helicopters—that helped contain the blazes quickly and avert destruction.

"I know they cost a tremendous amount of money to have and to use. If it were not for the helicopters, 10 or 12 residences would have been lost to the blazes," Stearns said.

Large fire statistics - ODF

- 1,119 fires consume 52,882 acres on ODF protection, more than double the 10-year average acres burned.
- 705 human-caused fires burn 19,629 acres, nearly six times the 10-year avg. acres burned.
- ODF's three fire teams record 107 days of deployment, five times the average of 21 days.
- ODF's large-fire suppression costs hit \$75.6 million.
- 128,513 lightning strikes blast the Pacific Northwest region; 21,094 strikes in one day.
- The PNW records 43 days as No. 1 priority region in the U.S. for firefighting resources.



For more information:

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DATE: March 16, 2015
TO: Board of Commissioners
FROM: Sue Lamb
RE: Informal Briefing

TRAINING & EXERCISES:

“Calamity in the Valley” Full Scale Exercise: conducted Thursday March 12, 2015

Upcoming: City Council/Admin tabletop
City of Dayton (3/16/15)
City of Yamhill (4/11/15)

OTHER:

Partners in Preparedness Workshop: Tuesday, March 24th 0800-1145 DPSST