

Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

Public Meeting – East OK County

Nespelem Government Building

Wednesday, 3/27/2024 | 5pm–7pm

Agenda:

5:00 – 5:30 Welcome, Introductions, & CWPP Overview

Kathy Moses began the meeting with an opening prayer. Eli Loftis with the Okanogan Conservation District and Maurice Goodall with Okanogan County Emergency Management welcomed everyone to the third of five CWPP community meetings to take place across the county. We opened with ground rules, meeting goals, and the proposed meeting structure. There were 33 people in attendance.

The CWPP partners in attendance included various agencies such as the Okanogan Conservation District, Okanogan County Emergency Management, WADNR representatives, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation representatives, Fire District #2, Mt. Tolman Fire Center, TOSHA, Nespelem Valley Electric, Coulee Dam fire department, CCT Environmental Trust representatives, Nespelem Tribal Council, Ferry county emergency management, Tribal Fire District, Tribal EM, and Colville Tribe PD.

Eli Loftis continued with the CWPP overview, we looked at a map that showed previously burned areas from 1985-2013 and compared that to another fire map that showed burned areas in just the last 10 years. The red on the map nearly doubled, concluding that the landscape has drastically over the last 10 years and since 2013, when the CWPP was last updated. Eli emphasized the importance of the CWPP and continued the presentation.

Eli announced the participatory activity as everyone received sticky dots to map their values at risk. Maurice asked attendees how they found out about the meeting. Very few received an alert from the Okanogan County emergency notification system.

5:30 – 6:00 Mapping Activity – Community Values at Risk 6:00 –

Community members and partners all participated in a mapping activity where everyone got three dots to rank their values at risk. Pink dots represented the highest priority, green dots representing mid priority, and yellow dots were lowest. Discussions broke out around the tables where four different maps for Eastern Okanogan County were located. These maps were broken down into the NW, NE, SW, and SE quadrants. After everyone had the opportunity to place their dots, the community was asked how they determined their priorities. Going map by map, Maurice Goodall and Cindi Tonasket discussed values at risk and asked participants to share why they marked an area as one of their values at risk and how they based that priority.

A few of the values at risk were as follows:

Aeneas Valley has an ingress and egress issue. There is a high population growth in Aeneas Valley. Dugout Mountain is a unique area and has some protected species. Moses Meadows has cell service issues and jurisdictional issues, there was a fire and lots of fire departments were toned, but no one showed up because he was outside any fire jurisdictions. Moses Meadows is an avenue to many different important areas around the county. A community member talked about a house where the homeowner did defensible space actions, and how it helped save their house. There should be more of

that around the county and on the Reservation. There should be paid workers on the Reservation to assist in home hardening. Riverside is a major ingress and egress location. Communications for part time landowners are very poor if they are out of the area. We are out of both Seattle and Spokane's news coverage areas and on our own when it comes to evacuation notices. Maurice Goodall mentioned that that is another reason to sign up for emergency alerts. Sinlahekin is a very unique area. There are some important fire mitigation actions that have occurred in the Sinlahekin.

Coulee Dam - one of the larger communities on the reservation. Goose lake substation- power is key to having water available, those with medical needs may be impacted if power goes out. Every year the power goes out because of a fire at some level. Buffalo lake ceremonial/ family cabin, Rebecca Lake-homes and ancestral lands, Ingress and egress is limited at Buffalo and Rebecca Lake. The Government center is important to keep afloat when incidents occur. Columbia river road is an important access road. Convalescent Center substation affects a lot of the area if impacted. Timeliness of communication is important. Trees along power lines are an issue. Gold Lake Rd brings in jurisdictional concerns. Mt Tolman office is important for communications. Disautel pass is an important travel route. Omak Mtn communication.

In the SW quadrant, powerlines and substations were a main point of concern. Overall, the main points that were brought up multiple times include: power/substations, communications, ingress and egress, and jurisdictional issues.

6:10 Break

6:10 – 6:30 Project Actions in the CWPP

Eli Loftis discussed sample action projects and previous projects that were listed in the 2013 CWPP. The group reviewed a list of 9 action item categories to help brainstorm ideas for projects they would like to see in this CWPP update. Community members had the following project action ideas:

Added workforce initiative to category number 4 (building capacity resources). Help young people get jobs, and mow elders lawns and move gravel in. Expand the workforce capacity to help harden homes. Similar to the CCC. We need something similar for the county/reservation.

Excluding cattle from wetlands can add to a fuels problem, prescribed burns in wetlands areas could help. Wetlands are an important place for cultural plants and practices. Can also act as a natural barrier to fire.

Eli mentioned that developing Prescribed burn associations in the county is an action item. Someone asked about community burning. Cindi said they have to follow federal rules of having qualified personnel.

Someone mentioned that some colleges have programs that show forest management at different stages. Trying to get kids interested in working in the woods using these example stands. There is a good example of this on the Omak side of Disautel. Get younger generations invested in managing the lands.

Someone mentioned that air quality is an issue. Is there any solution to the air quality issues, and how prescribed burns affect them? Eli mentioned that that is an important crossroads, as the air quality standards have recently been lowered. There are multiple grants available to help people reduce smoke emissions.

How does climate change and policy updates come into play with this plan? Eli mentioned that we are looking only at a county level, so we can also add action items

that involve legislation. Climate is intermixed with everything we have talked about. Can we incorporate data into this plan to monitor PM values?

One of the issues that someone has seen, is that with a sparsely populated area, it is tough to get FEMA funding if there is a fire. Some agencies should be lobbying in Olympia to lower the threshold for FEMA funding. Showing legislators what the county is actually like. Taressa Marshand mentioned that there is a Tribal member trying to get the threshold lowered, and get more cost share for the tribe.

Replanting things that are more fire resistant. Recovery from one fire can be preparing for the next. Replanting burn areas can help to improve air quality. Someone mentioned that there aren't any trees available for replanting often times. Leaving the burnt timber helps to add nutrients for recovering forests. Balance the economic value and ecological value. Both Tonasket and Okanogan wanted more salvage logging. This can all be a double edged sword- if we plant an area, it prevents maintaining a burnt area. Is there a timeline after a fire where they need to get in to maintain an area? Within 5 years, but it is very complicated.

Why is there a distinction between a federal (BIA) and county funded roads? Federal funded roads will be fixed quickly, county funded roads take a long time. Why can't they pull from the same funding pot?

Eli mentioned that there is no single solution to all the problems we talked about today. The most healthy communities are the diverse ones.

6:30 – 6:50 Additional Comments & Questions

Education for people who may be outside of fire district jurisdictions. Requirement for people to pay a tax to be within a fire district? This would be complicated for the Tribe. BIA should pay for allottee tax to be incorporated into a fire district. Maurice

mentioned that staffing is a major issue. Insurance companies are starting to reduce coverage, we need to start being resourceful, or the state needs to step in to form a state fire insurance. A question was asked if there are emergency communication systems or services through Cell providers? Maurice mentioned that there are some available, but does not work well for our county. Starlink is a new method that seems to work well. Have railroads been impacted in the county? We should try to draw the interest of our senator to show her what we are dealing with, and get their support. It is an election year, so it could be a good year for that.

6:50 – 7:00 Next Steps

Eli Loftis concluded by thanking everyone for sharing their time, and discussed the next steps of CWPP, emphasizing to stay tuned for updates on our website at www.okanogancd.org/cwpp and public comment period coming in June. For those who have further questions or comments, these could be added to the basket at the sign-in table.

7:00 Adjournment



2024 CWPP – East County Community Meeting

Nespelem Government Building

Nespelem, WA

March 27th, 2024

Name	Location
Lori Caswell	Okanogan Co. EM
Maurice Goodall	Okanogan Co. EM
Taressa Marchand	Colville EM C
Cindi Tongskel	MTFC
Cameron Davidson	Coalee Dam Fire Department
Greg Clark	CCT Admin Building
ALAN ONEAL	CTPD
Sonny Sellars	Nespelem CCT Govt Ctr.
BEN ALLING	Coalee DAM Fire Dep.
Amanda Chiles	Chmak, Wa.
Morgan Smith	Nespelem WA
Sture & Linda Colvin	OCDs
Amanda Thiel	OSU, Corvallis OR
Chance Kruger	Nespelem WA
Dennis Montes	Nespelem, WA
Scott Hunter	Coalee Dam WA/star
Gody Decantel	Nespelem
STEVE BONNER	FERRY County EM
Darrell STANLEY	Tosha. Nespelem WA.

Name

Location

Lonnie Cawston Sr

Coulee Dam

David L. Finch

OK Fire Dist #2

Ed Hartbarger

Coulee Dam Fire NVEC

Stacy King

CTCR ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

Joseph Ezell

CTCR Environmental Trust

Kevin Black

Nespelem Valley Electric Coop / Coulee Dam Team Council

Yvette Joseph

also Spokane, WA / Nespelem, WA @ Rebecca Lulu

Andy Joseph Jr

Nespelem WA

W. Allen Moses

Omak, WA

Kathy Moses

Nespelem

Karen Condon

Omak

Will Kowhen

WA DNR