Present:

Who is the Vice Chair?

Brad Simpkins – Northeast Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy

- They have $20K of seed money to do small prescribed fire grant program. If it’s successful, hope to broaden it beyond NH. This has been accepted by the State and gone through Governor’s Council. They are now trying to set up the framework for the program.
- They would be targeting town and county lands to start with
- Would like Council to help set up the process, and then potentially vet applications through the Council as well.
- They have a VFA application that they can use with towns.
- Would like feedback on what would be permissible expenses. For example, maybe not have the funds go to equipment and training. Brad suggests having the money focused on burn planning, consultant to get a burn done. Have it go towards getting fire on the ground.
- Timeline – should it be a rolling application? The funding is constrained to three years, which should cover at-least two burning years, but probably three.
- There are a lot of towns and counties that probably don’t know what they have, in terms of places that might need fire. There needs to be an assessment done first. Could NH Coop Extension and the Forest Ranger do this.
- Should we have a limit on the amount of funding any one town can apply for? For VFA it’s $2,000.
- In MA the average award was in the $5,000 - $15,000 range.
- This would require a 50-50 match, but it can be in-kind.
- Should grant recipients be required to follow Council standards for burn plans?
- 6 towns with 50 acres is the target
- Start broader with the funding, and then narrow it if needed. All kinds of burning would be good – silviculture (oak regeneration), agriculture (blueberries), wildlife habitat (openings), pine barrens, etc.
- Brad would like to develop a statewide map at some point showing the areas that need fire, and that could be used to target the funding if the program grew in the future.
- Town of Benton is updating their CWRP and John Neely helped them to use Landfire tools to look at sensitive areas in their town. Perhaps Landfire data could be used to get at statewide map that Brad is interested in.
- Landfire could be the tool to use for the towns that may not understand what they have. John will send this out to the Council.
- Brad and Sabrina area helping to support a Landfire update that’s including the incorporation of Lidar data and occurrences of exemplary natural communities.
- What are the standards that should be used? Should there be a letter of support from the town’s fire chiefs, which could block it if they’re not comfortable.
- Some feel like the Council’s standards or NWGC should be followed for program
- Could we do a field day sponsored by Extension to get forestry credits?
• Should we develop a list of town forests that we could target and encourage them to apply for funding, like the Albany Town Forest and the Freedom Town Forest.
• Develop a list of consultants that towns could work with (Joel Carlson, Bob Bale (Wildland Restoration Institute), Nort Phillips), and also other organizations in NH – like WMNF, TNC, etc.
• There may be mechanisms that will enable USFS to support this. John will follow up with Brad on scheduling a call with Brian Schaeffer, USFS Regional Fuels Specialist, to discuss ways to potentially collaborate.

Rx Council MOU

• Should we just extend the current agreement with no changes?
• Members will review the current agreement to see if they feel like any changes are needed, and communicate this via the listserv.
• Federal partners will talk with their agreements staff to see if the current mechanism (Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement) will still work for them.
• Alliance of Prescribed Fire Councils may be able to provide support on the type of agreement to use.
• Jeff will send out Word version of the document to the Council for review and comment

Updates – Should we create a calendar that we share?

- UNH Coop Extension – Guilford
- NH Army National Guard -
- Ralph Perron, USFS Air Quality Specialist – has two portable smoke monitors that he’s responsible for. They could be available for burns in NH if anyone is interested in look at potential smoke sensitive areas. They can be set up a week ahead of time; run off solar panels.
- WMNF – 22 units identified for a total of 320 acres. They have Refresher planned on April 5th; planning to do pack test on the same day. Doing a squad boss academy with the State. Going to be putting on a resource advisor course, and the use the Lost River fire for the course (this will be in early June).
- State - Have Refreshers happening in early May. For folks they are maintaining records for, the pack test has to be done through them, or an administrator that they are familiar with. Agency needs to be an NWCG signatory. Looking at some burning at Blue Jobe and Pine River SF.
- Side note: could be good to develop a written document laying out the different training options: 130/190 online, 130/190 classroom based, etc.
- UNH – Going to do some burning with students and looking at buckthorn response (a big problem on UNH lands). They are also talking about scaling up a bit.
- USAF – grassland, and probably some understory burns in the fall (oak). If you want to go to New Boston, there’s a fed. Form that needs to be completed beforehand.

Other Business

- Proposal to have a town fire chief on the Council. Would be good to find a chief that’s also the warden.
- Wendy Scribner did a CWPP for Conway. Document suggested a wildland urban interface training for this area. Could the state or WMNF help the town to do this.
- What are the specific goals that we want to pursue this year? Do we want to keep the prescribed fire data collection project going? This layer has been shared on GRANIT.
- A lot of towns burn without permits; they don’t file one if the Warden is there. So it’s hard to keep track of what they are doing.
- Who is going to keep the data? UNH, Forest and Lands. Can we have a voluntary reporting form?
- There’s a new fire reporting app that’s in development that could be a way to collect some of this data.
- Consider sending out a prescribed fire reporting form through the fire weather list. This would go out at the start of the season.
- Need to think through what the Council is legally, and to what extend we can lobby (given that we have federally agency and non-profit staff around the table). Also, what can the Officers of the Council do on their own (what authority do they have).
- For letters of support, perhaps each member can just do this on their own, and then reference the Rx Council as something that exists that they support. This is probably much easier than trying to figure out how to do this as a Council.
- There is some conversation about doing a regional prescribed fire council in the Northeast
- Does the Council need some additional task books for positions that would be analogous to Engine Boss and Crew Boss?
- Look at Task Books again, and see if we need to make any changes?