



Rogue Regional Resiliency Collaboration – Starting the Conversation, Meeting #1 2019 Report from February 20th meeting

On February 20, 2019, 84 leaders representing business owners, schools, higher education, health care, elected city and county officials as well as government staff from Jackson and Josephine Counties gathered in Ashland at Southern Oregon University on a snowy day to discuss regional solutions for smoke events in the Rogue Valley and to discuss solutions for unpredictable wildfire smoke. In 2017 and 2018, our Valley experienced smoky summers both with over 40 days of poor air quality at moderate levels or above, with 20 of those days at high or worse. We are all aware that everyone in the Rogue Valley experienced some level of negative impact from the smoke and fires of last summer. Others have told our story of the impacts to our businesses, communities and quality of life. We felt that it was time for us to define our own story and work collectively towards regional solutions. The Rogue Valley is blessed with strong and resilient community members who choose to live here for the quality of life and recreational opportunities that are minutes from any doorstep.

In 2017, Ashland created the SmokeWise program to assist their citizens with coping with wildfire smoke intrusions. It was a way for people to understand smoke and how to create clean air spaces to reduce the negative impacts of being in bad air for prolonged periods of time. This program was successful for citizens, and through sponsorship from the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, Ashland Fire & Rescue, Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network and Southern Oregon University, the Ashland Chamber's Fire Prevention Task Force (Task Force) wanted to share their story with the rest of the region and bring together leaders for a discussion. Most recently, there were a handful of forum style presentations on wildfires but nothing with intimate conversations and small round table discussions to discuss communication strategies and tools to implement going forward. The Task Force changed their strategy and wanted to invite leaders from both counties to learn from each other instead of just talking to an audience. We created a format to identify what we have learned, determine what gaps still exist, share solutions and brainstorm new ideas. Our report emphasizes the importance of crafting our own message of the Rogue Valley, community solutions with tactical tools among the impacts of smoke and fire to our region while recognizing this is still a great place to visit, raise your family, get an education, grow your business and live your life. This was not a meeting to discuss the politics of smoke and fire. City and county leaders in Jackson and Josephine County were invited along with business, education and community leaders. There were round table discussions with a facilitator and moderator at each table.

The Task Force asked the following questions to regional participants:

1. In your role and in your locale, what lessons did you learn in terms of wildfire smoke?
2. What was missing in terms of communication or other resources?
3. What are some possible solutions to the issues raised previously?
4. What should be the elements of a new message?
5. Are there certain components or phrases that should be included?
6. How do we “get that message out”?



The powerful part of the forum rested on the fact although people have their own views on how to change the forest or fight wildfires, what we all had in common was the air we breathe. Some of the smoke that hit the Rogue Valley was from wildfires outside of our region. Attendees expressed their vulnerabilities, were open to sharing, and willing to say that they needed help and solutions.

Overall, the group agreed that we need to have a cohesive regional message that eliminates the theory that smoky summers are the new norm and that this is not a place to visit in the summer. This type of messaging is detrimental to tourism and to residents. Since there is a chance that wildfire smoke can be in the Rogue Valley, businesses and community members need to plan for these events, and continue promoting the shoulder seasons. Many visitors are going to be making last-minute travel decisions based on whether or not our area is smoky. If the summer is not smoky, businesses should plan to have a robust marketing plan to market to last-minute travelers who may think that the region inundated with smoke. A recent study of visitors who traveled to southern Oregon during the smoke of last summer validated the perceptions above.

The group also identified the need for additional smoke monitors and better lines of communication between regional leaders. Smoke can travel throughout the day and having smoke monitors in every town in Jackson and Josephine Counties would help identify less smoky areas. One idea is to create a regional conference call or communication group online to share the true picture of the air quality conditions throughout the region. Some mentioned that they did not have a central website to go to for information, like smokewiseashland.org. This is an excellent opportunity to create SmokeWise Rogue Valley or to encourage the county health organizations to create a robust program.

This issue cannot be placed on individual municipalities and organizations. Smoke is a regional issue and we all need to learn to live with wildfire together. Attendees felt vulnerable when smoke was in the air and needed a central avenue for getting information out. There is fear of the unknown, and that there are not many answers. This meeting created a sense of community and hope that we can work together through this tough topic.

Overall, the Task Force recognizes that this is a complex challenge and the solutions will take commitment both on a local and regional scale. The following pages are a guideline of tactics and solutions that were brought up during the forum organized in general categories. There are more ideas than we can all achieve, however there are numerous solutions that we can all achieve together, in regional partnership.

We look forward to continued conversations,

*Ashland Chamber of Commerce
Ashland Fire & Rescue
Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network
Ashland Chamber's Fire Prevention Task Force*



CATEGORIZED SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS

Rogue Regional Resiliency Collaboration – Starting the Conversation (2/20/19)

Attendance: 84 guests

Infrastructure: Buildings/Facilities/Clean Air/Indoor Options

- **Buildings/Indoor Options**
 - Where is actually SAFE to go?
 - Tools to know your indoor air quality
 - Nephelometer
 - Thermo Scientific Personal DataRAM pDR-1500 Monitor
 - Purchase them at \$6,000 est.
 - Rental information - \$500 (2-month, estimated cost, business out of Northern California, OSF rented during the Summer of 2018)
 - Database of largest safe spaces that are open to the community at large
 - CREATE A LOGO which identifies safe spaces
 - “SmokeSmart” – a product of the “SmokeWise” program - shows that businesses are being smart about their building, the equipment, etc.
 - “Smoke-free businesses and locations across the region” for safe places to go
 - Passed a standard list of equipment in that building
 - Part of the Rogue Valley SmokeWise program
If you see this logo, this is what it means - never a guarantee 100%, but a helpful tool
 - Checklist with the asterisks on Rogue Valley SmokeWise program
 - Complete the checklist and send it back in order to be featured
 - This would include the larger community spaces too (Schools/Gymnasiums, Libraries, Jackson County Expo, YMCA's, Community Centers, Recreation Centers, Indoor Theatres/Auditoriums, Movie Theatres, Science Centers, Children and Family locations, Hotels & Conference Centers)
 - Sign on to be a relief center during Smoke Events or in emergencies
 - On the website, businesses could sign-up and list their hours which they would like to invite the public as a SmokeSafe location (self-identification)
- Long-term Goal: More safe spaces - incorporating SmokeSafe improvements in your buildings and facilities
- Concern over vulnerable populations (elderly, homeless, youth, pregnant women, those with no access to internet) - gathering information and how they may find relief



Equipment / Smoke Monitoring

- List of equipment/resources all on one page
- HVAC
 - Filters
 - Where to purchase these items
- AQI - clearer information on those readings and what they mean (suggested information for the SmokeWise Rogue Valley)
 - Education on the website on how to read these charts
 - AQI is a 24-hour reading / shows the average over the past 24 hours
 - DEQ site you can see the 1-hour AQI readings
 - Smoke Maps will predict out 36 hours ahead / weather patterns / location of fires
 - **Suggested Entity:** Forest Service populate a general report and share predicted smoke patterns that can be shared as part of the SmokeWise Rogue Valley website
 - Would also help tourists as their reports would be predictive on where smoke may be
 - OR link to the Forest Service page for updates
 - Post links to the fires which the Rogue Valley is being impacted by
 - Facebook Pages for the fires are often generated - link to those for live updates
 - InciWeb - <https://inciweb.nwcc.gov/>
- Invest in additional smoke monitors throughout the Rogue Valley and identify where these can be used as data points to collaborate and communicate information
 - One example is Purple Air – <https://www.purpleair.com/>
 - Share instructions on how to read the site
 - \$150 Smoke Monitor
 - Mt. Ashland is getting a Purple Air monitor
 - Strategic placement of additional Purple Air Monitors throughout the Valley that are needed (some suggested locations or ideas):
 - Ashland: High School or SOU / Emigrant Lake or Oak Knoll / Mt. Ashland / Ashland Community Hospital or Lithia Springs Resort
 - Talent: _____
 - Phoenix: _____
 - Medford: _____
 - White City: _____
 - Central Point: Jackson County Expo
 - Jacksonville: Britt Festival, Chamber of Commerce or City offices
 - Applegate Valley: Valley View Winery / Troon
 - Eagle Point: _____
 - Shady Cove: _____
 - Rogue River: _____
 - Grants Pass: _____
 - Cave Junction: _____
 - Another company is in Grants Pass called APIS - <https://www.apis-aq.com/>
 - Long-term goal: Support from the State or other entities for purchasing equipment or have local areas consider it to reduced costs on systems



Health

- Masks
 - Where to get them
 - Have more masks available
 - Need masks for kids – they do exist but are hard to find
 - Businesses ran out of masks – couldn't get them in rural Jackson County
 - How effective or ineffective are Masks? What kind to use/how to properly wear them
 - Share video with other cities/counties (<https://vimeo.com/257185210>)
- More detailed information from the Health Professionals on smoke impacts to health, long-term effects, impact for employees, tools for business owners to make safe and educated decisions
 - <https://vimeo.com/257174563>

Communication: Marketing/Messaging

- SmokeWise Rogue Valley
 - One-stop shop for information and links to other SmokeWise pages
 - Press Communication (press page)
 - Suggested Entity to house SmokeWise Rogue Valley: Rogue Valley Council of Governments
 - Accessibility / Evacuation Registry
 - Connect with your City - list of SmokeWise pages (examples below)
 - SmokeWise Ashland
 - SmokeWise Medford
 - SmokeWise Central Point
 - SmokeWise Grants Pass
 - SmokeWise Cave Junction
 - Link to county pages - as applicable and available
 - This page would house general information applicable to all cities / the general population
 - Smoke impacts to health
 - How to wear a Mask
 - Link to Maps / AQI readings
 - Things you can implement at home / businesses / etc. (Equipment/Retrofitting)

Example: www.smokewiseashland.org

- Regional TripCheck Solution
 - Connect with Travel Southern Oregon to host live updates
- Regional Conference Call / Message Board
 - Facebook Group (Message Board) with live updates
 - Select stakeholders and key representatives who report from their area to this page, large organizations
- Quality of Life
- Consistent messaging with the press/media/social media
- SMART Coordinators
- Use of Community Alert Systems that are already in place (see below under preparedness)
- Share real, honest health information out in a timely way, without exaggeration and inflated perceptions



Communication: Collaboration

- We need specific “representatives” to speak for the collective group, and that are specific to target audiences
 - Industry specific representatives
 - Designate individuals at the city, state, business, community, and stakeholder levels
- Define the audience and coordinate that with the messaging. Audiences are residents, students, visitors, employees
 - One message doesn’t resonate with everyone. Need tailored messages to different audiences
 - There needs to be 3 Communication Channels:
 - Tourist
 - Residential
 - Students / Retirees

Government / Prevention / Preparedness / Evacuation

- Homeowners
 - Have your property evaluated for FireWise
 - Bring homeowners together / Community training events
 - Know the points of resiliency. Know your neighbor. Know the evacuation plan.
 - Long-term goal: more funding for private landowners to do fuel reduction work
- Fire
 - Messaging that can be shared around “Good Smoke”
- Jackson County
 - Weed abatement
- Evacuation / Preparedness
 - All Residents / Travelers Accommodations (on-site Managers, Innkeepers) / Retirement Communities / Business Owners should all be signed up in local Community Alert Systems. Examples:
 - Ashland uses NIXLE for Community Alerts -
<https://local.nixle.com/city/or/ashland/>
 - Jackson County Alerts -
<https://jacksoncountyor.org/emergency/Resources/Citizen-Alert>

Tourism specific

- Steering Committee to discuss Travel Insurance
- Clear communication and coordinated messaging from key tourism entities such as OSF, Britt, Hellgate, etc.
- Have money reserved for promotion during fire season to have robust marketing campaigns ready to go, especially if no fires are present to target last-minute travelers
- Tourism industry needs to work together to identify alternate locations to visit, so that visitors can still have a positive experience. We have to recover gracefully.
- Continue to promote Fall and Spring travel and enhance messaging/promotion around those times
 - Focus on the benefits and positive attributes of spring and fall visitation that emphasize the beauty and events during “shoulder seasons.”
- Better define refund policies and have a clear message which front-line staff can share



Goals / Tasks / Solutions

- SmokeWise Rogue Valley Strategy
 - Partnerships with Travel Southern Oregon (TripCheck page / Facebook Group for key Tourism Representatives like a Message Board)
- Regional Meeting / Regional Task Force
 - Create a two county TASK FORCE with a website, social media, information, technology and messaging
 - Create clear roles and lines of communication
 - Forest Service
 - DEQ
 - Jackson County Health
 - Oregon Health Authority
 - Hospitals
- Additional Smoke Monitors around the Region
- Bridging gaps between Jackson and Josephine counties to create a two-county wide emergency management system
- New position: Rogue Valley Integrated Fire Plan Coordinator
 - Establish a county-wide Fire Marshal's office
- Create a Smoke Management & Action Response Team – SMART
- Legislative Workgroup
 - Multi-agency contracts in place ahead of time
 - Jackson and Josephine County currently have an integrated fire plan, but smoke is not included in the plan
- Media/Press Meeting (with the decision makers at those outlets)
 - TOOL KIT FOR MEDIA
 - Outlets:
 - Travel Southern Oregon
 - Cities
 - Chambers
 - News Stations
 - Local Papers
 - Editorial Board
 - The Oregonian
 - TV & Radio - JPR / OPB / PBS / RVT
 - Travel Oregon
 - Updates in local community groups on Facebook – find those best platforms
 - What to do in Southern Oregon
 - Central Point Community Page
 - Jackson County Scanner
 - Ashland Peeps
 - City & Chamber pages
 - Elements of negative messaging
 - Stop showing maps of Air Quality, as there are often pockets with good air quality.
 - Fear / Perception reported heavily



- Education for Businesses
 - Checklist - SmokeSmart / FireSmart
 - On their websites - SmokeWise Rogue Valley or SmokeWise Ashland
 - Create a Workshop for businesses
 - “SmokeSmart” initiative
 - How to prepare financially and resourcefully for an emergency
 - Steps to make educated and safe decisions for employees during a time of crisis, smoke event or emergency
 - Evacuation plans
- Create a program discussing innovative “Smoke Specials” for events or restaurants and/or “Locals Specials”
 - Predetermined ‘Smoke Deals’ / ‘Smoke Menus’
- Marketing tools in place
 - Videos that are done in advance which advertise where to find information
 - Social Media content strategies
 - Coordinated messages prepared and ready to share
 - Coordinate and cross-promote through e-newsletter channels
- Business tools in place
- LONG-TERM GOAL: Smoke Institute or Wildfire and Smoke Academy
 - Take advantage of the need to adapt by becoming a destination for training and education about adapting to wildfire and smoke here in the Rogue Valley



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