



**Minutes FOR A MEETING OF THE
ASHLAND FOREST LANDS COMMISSION
Tuesday, July 13th, 2010
5:30PM to 7:30PM
Siskiyou Room, Community Development Building
51 Winburn Way**

I. CALL TO ORDER: 5:36 PM

Present: Dan Maymar, Marty Main, Chris Chambers, Melody Noraas, Gary Pool, John Williams, Dominic DiPaolo, John Karns, Craig Gorson, Don Boucher, Greg Lemhouse

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Dominic DiPaolo from the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 8th meeting

Motion to approve minutes made by Williams, seconded by Noraas. Approved as submitted.

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

None

V. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Vice Chair discussion

Douglas-fir mortality paper by Marty Main

City Lands Trails Issue

VI. BUSINESS

A. Vice Chair

Motion to elect Maymar as vice-chair made by Williams, seconded by Pool and passed with all ayes.

B. Douglas-fir mortality issue

Main spoke about dead Douglas-fir resulting from drought conditions and insect (flat headed borer) activity. Main surveyed the lower City ownership most likely at risk to insect attack. There are 39 permanent plots in the most susceptible block of City ownership. The plots were revisited and showed a loss of 5.5 percent of Douglas-fir among those plots. The amount of dead now is about 25 percent of what it was in 2004. Pool asked about the size of trees attacked. Main explained that the larger trees on City land right now have been faring better than the smaller ones, which is different from the normal pattern of large trees being killed previously. Main stressed that each species of tree has its own cadre of insects that affect it. Numbers included in the report show what the levels of mortality have been in the past and how dramatic the numbers of dead trees can be. The numbers and distribution of dead trees don't warrant any management action at the

current time. This could change in the near future if more trees die leading to an accumulation of excess dead material resulting in high fire danger. Main cut dead trees around the heavily used recreational trails on City lands. The historic composition of the same area was close to 75% pines and the current composition is more like 16% pine. Douglas-fir isn't as well suited for low elevation, low quality sites that have been altered by management since settlement of Ashland. The flat-headed borers seem to be expanding in elevation over time. Maymar asked if the mortality is concentrated in particular areas. Main said that there are dead trees in thinned areas, but also areas of concentrated mortality in unthinned areas, one in particular where the most mortality has occurred. Maymar asked what the strategy is for the steep ground where the largest pocket of mortality has occurred. The City contracted engineering geologist had stressed the importance of no thinning in this one area. Main said they have heeded that advice and only dropped dead trees in that area. Noraas asked what the benefit is for leaving dead trees on the ground and how much to leave. Main explained the approach they use, which is governed by plant associations. The targets were met during the 2004 helicopter thinning project so there is still ample downed wood to meet targets. Main explained that small diameter material is the driver behind wildfire behavior, but that large diameter materials can hold fire for long periods of time. The area where the mortality is right now is also a highly managed area for wildfire protection so there's a balance to be struck between downed woody debris and wildfire management. Williams asked if the City has planted pines to replace some of the dead firs. Main said that pine has been planted in various areas in the lower City ownership and following up next spring with more planting would be a good idea because the opened areas where trees have died will be filled in by something and that vegetation may not be in line with our goals for City lands. Madrone is particularly aggressive and invades and occupies sites for long periods. Madrone sprouts have been cut in the past but prescribed burning is the preferred method of maintenance in the future. The wet spring this year has been helpful and may limit the extent and numbers of dead trees. More dead trees could create a need to remove them by helicopter, but we have to wait and see.

C. City Lands Trails Issue

Trails are being built (by trail users) that cross City lands, but are not part of any plan. Main explained that in the past the City discouraged new trails by dropping trees across them. It's becoming harder to discourage use. Noraas asked if it's hikers or bikers that are creating trails. Main said that trails are created and used by both groups. Many trails go onto Forest Service land so we need a coordinated approach. If a trail was closed it would have to be coordinated across boundaries. Williams asked if there have been homeless camps on City lands this year. Main hadn't seen any camps this year. Chambers said that a patrol will begin this week of that area and they will assess camping issues. Noraas had heard that more people are camping in Lithia Park, possibly as a result of enforcement in the watershed. Main has seen a big increase in use over the last 10 years, primarily by bikers. Main said the last time that trails were blocked was about 6 years ago. Boucher explained that the Forest Service had recently mapped trails in the

watershed. They hired a group to assess the trails and come up with a plan to manage the trail system through a user coalition. The Forest Service will follow up on this study with an effort to bring groups together later this year. Main said there have been conflicts between users and the work to thin the forest will only amplify the use. DiPaolo has worked with Parks to create a hiker only option off the White Rabbit trail. Main felt this issue is important for the Forest Lands Commission to be involved in. More users on the trails also means increased chances for fires. Maymar is concerned about erosion. Williams sees the value of some mountain bike trails but doesn't advocate "pirate" trails. Many of the users in the watershed can be allies in the work happening to control trail use/construction. Jeff McFarland is the key contact for Parks land, and Marty's business has been maintaining City managed trails. There are private owners adjacent to the watershed that are impacted as well. The Forest Service's trails team will be coming back with recommendations for trails planning and they have worked with Parks and others on the coalition. How it will transpire is still unknown. The AFR community engagement effort will reach out to the trails user community but doesn't encompass a trails solution. Main suggested the FLC help coordinate some of this work. Pool wondered what the Forest Service team (Trails Unlimited) set out to do. Boucher explained that the team is from out of the area and came in to assess the trail system and make suggestions for a plan. Boucher will ask Steve Johnson (USFS Recreation) to come and present to the FLC. Noraas suggested the Jeff McFarland be involved as well. Main suggested Rob Cain of the Wilderness Trails Association be invited as well. Boucher will check with Johnson about coming to the next meeting.

D. AFR Project Update including Community Engagement

Main explained that 47 acres have been completed (thinning and piling of slash) on the ground, which isn't much but the process is being created that will guide much more work in the near future. This work will translate into a smoother process moving forward. Boucher is happy with the relationships that have developed between the partners, especially given that the project is derived largely from the Community Alternative. The 47 acres was on particularly difficult land. This summer preparations are being made to work on 500 to 800 acres this coming fall. Layout of units is happening along with areas of special consideration like landslide hazard zones and wildlife habitat. The partners will meet this week to re-budget 2 million dollars that was lost when a lawsuit was filed. Community engagement is ramping up and the City has hired a half-time assistant to help with AFR work.

E. Ashland Forest Plan Process Update

No one spoke on this.

F. Public Outreach Plan—Watershed Map Project

The group discussed the details of payments to the artist (Pokey). The communication from Iverson clarified that 500 dollars was to be paid to Pokey for

winning the contest and the commission would discuss and vote on an additional 500 dollars for overhauling the map with changes proposed by the commission. Lemhouse asked whether or not the original 500 dollars included a final product and if an additional amount is awarded, how that decision will be explained. The discussion resulted in recollecting that the submission was the only map received and the volume of changes proposed by the commission made it feel like the 500 dollars wasn't enough compensation for what was being asked. The commissioners present didn't feel comfortable deciding on this issue so it was postponed until next meeting. Commissioners will pass on changes to Iverson before next meeting.

G. Public Outreach Plan—Watershed Engagement Plan
Tabled until Iverson is present.

H. Commission 3-Year Goals progress
This was discussed a few months ago and Chambers and Maymar remembered that Kerwin took on updating and consolidating the input. Chambers will contact him about it.

VII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

VIII. REVIEW AND SET COMMISSION CALENDAR / NEXT MEETING

A. Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting: August 10th, 2010

IX. ADJOURN: 7:20 PM

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