

**FIRESAFE MONTANA  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Columbia Falls, Montana  
November 13, 2009**

*Minutes*

The meeting was called to order at 9:52 a.m. by Jake Kreilick, president. Others attending were: Carol Daly, Rocky Infanger, Don Lorenzen, Pat McKelvey, Dick Rath, and Sonny Stiger, directors; Crystal Hagerman, executive director; and Bill Swope, guest.

**Executive Director's Report:** Crystal provided an update on her activities since the last board meeting. She attended the Fire Chiefs' Association meeting, staffing a FireSafe Montana (FSM) exhibit. She also attended the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group meeting, and made a presentation at the Northern Rocky Mountain Contractors' Association meeting.

The BLM announced that funding is available for groups that do not already have existing agreements with the agency. Crystal asked BLM if local FireSafe Councils (FSCs) could apply through FSM for BLM funds (even though we have an existing agreement), and found that would be possible if the local FSCs themselves did not have existing BLM agreements. She is requesting AmeriCorps planning funds to use in developing a proposal for providing AmeriCorps service to local FSCs statewide. FSM's Western States/DNRC grant application for \$151,000 has reached the second round of the regional review process. Carol said DNRC officials she talked with said they usually see grants going for "on-the-ground" work, not just preparedness education. Bill said DNRC is now looking for mitigation work on a landscape level, which is a positive step.

New FSM members include the Butte Fire Protection District, three individuals, and an Oklahoma-based Native American company that does fuels reduction in multiple states. The Kreilick Foundation gave us a \$1,000 grant, and a thank-you letter is being sent in response. Copies of the DVD, new notepads, and other promotional and educational materials are now available.

**Committee Reports:**

1. **Executive Committee** – Jake and Dick met with Don in Missoula. Carol was unable to attend. The Committee discussed recruitment of a permanent executive director. Dick said one hurdle is having long-term funding for the position. Jake said Crystal's contract will expire in June 2010, and we need to start advertising soon if we hope to have the position filled by then. Don is working on the wording of the job description. The Executive Committee also authorized Crystal to purchase a display board (\$209) and external hard drive (\$139) for FSM.
2. **Education and Materials** - Crystal passed out samples of the new "post-it" notes and notepads. The DVDs will go to all new FSCs and to FSM board members to use in outreach work. A total of 500 are available under our Right Angle contract. Tri-folds, bumper stickers, and other previously printed materials are also available. A contract for a little under \$5,000 has been signed with Pyron Technologies of Missoula for FSM website development, help desk services, and user training. The new site should be up by January 1. Updating should now be easier to accomplish. Jake asked if other educational materials were needed. Crystal said that per the discussion at the Fairmont FSM planning meeting, that is not a priority at this time.

Pat said we need more information to use in reaching out to builders, architects, etc. with regard to home construction. Perhaps we could have guidance and photographs regarding vents and other appropriate building materials on our website. Carol suggested some “how-to” guides, such as installing screening or using other methods to prevent ember-ignited fires under porches and decks. Dick suggested having more information on suitable landscape materials and plantings, as well as on what ecological types of vegetation should be brought back in after trees are bug-killed. Carol said restoration to previous conditions may not be appropriate, and people should take into account adaptation to changing climate conditions. Jake suggested a series of fact sheets on such topics. Pat said people now are reluctant to cut a green tree, even if it’s hanging over their chimney or growing up through their deck. Bill said sometimes you have to cut what you must to protect what you value about your forest. Don said maybe we can collaborate with local nurseries in getting some before/after pictures – pre- and post-fire or bug-kill – and maybe a short video to put on our website. Crystal said some of the items being discussed – construction, plantings, venting, etc. –integrate well with the upcoming Communities and Wildfire conference.

3. **Membership and Outreach** - Jake said we need to continue work on getting new FSCs formed, and he would like to see each board member take on an outreach event. We met our 2009 goal of six new councils. Crystal said BLM will provide trainers for home ignition zone training programs. Don reported that he made a presentation to his Seattle office on FSM, and State Farm is receptive to accepting information from FSC-performed home inspections if FSM substantiates the training of the people doing the inspections. Pat said he thought we were going to provide training to insurance agency personnel. Don said he sees this as an opportunity to get FSM and its value out in front of the insurance industry. Pat said if fire departments do training, it’s also an opportunity for them to gather additional site information – driveway lengths, clearances, etc. Bill said that Realtors™ may be good allies in this also. Don said he would like to see a collaboration among them all to promote FSM and insurance availability to homeowners.
4. **2010 Conference** – The conference will be February 25-27, 2010, at Fairmont Hot Springs. Thursday’s sessions will be focused on fire professionals, and Friday’s on local FSCs and forestry people. Saturday will be for breakout sessions. The committee wants to recognize the key role of rural and volunteer fire departments, and is organizing a panel of fire department personnel from both eastern and western Montana, inviting panelists to discuss the mitigation work they are doing. Pat suggested it might be easier to get volunteer firefighters to attend sessions on Friday or Saturday. Dick said the group needs to be as diverse as possible. Bob discussed the Painted Rocks area, which now has many FireSafe homes. Fire departments don’t just have to do mitigation, but also can motivate homeowners. Rocky said we should include departments with past completed efforts, not just those with programs currently on-going. Jake said we can profile more departments with a panel presentation.

There was a general discussion of the various potential target audiences and topics for different conference days and sessions. Crystal said the committee has had three conference calls so far. Peter Kolb has been confirmed as one speaker, as has someone from Project Wildfire in Bend, OR. Dick will check with Dave Thomas, a retired Forest Service official who now does presentations on “how to think differently” to see if he is available as the conference opening speaker. Carol will see if Jim Hubbard from the Forest Service/State and Private Forestry can be the speaker at Friday’s lunch. Other

ideas for individual speakers or panels were: a homeowner whose home had survived a wildfire as a result of previous mitigation work; someone from the insurance industry; someone from the Ten-Mile collaborative project speaking from an environmental perspective; Bret Butler from the fire lab; Glenda Scott on reforestation; Mike McMeekin on prepare and leave early; etc. Carol said the emphasis now being put on individual responsibility must be presented and discussed. Pat asked what was in the program on Thursday for contractors. Crystal said there were Saturday “Ask an expert” sessions for contractors. Don suggested Craig Rawlings and Mark Vandermeer as speakers who would be interesting for contractors. Crystal said the conference needed a tag line to more clearly define its focus. After discussion, the board decided on “*Wildfire preparedness: it’s your responsibility*”.

Rocky suggested that FSM offer free memberships to all fire department chiefs in the state for one year. During the discussion, Carol said she assumed these would be non-voting memberships unless a department paid the additional amount for a voting membership. Don suggested that departments get the newsletter via email, if possible, to conserve costs. We also need to consider fire department boards. Don made and Bob seconded a motion to investigate the costs and make a decision prior to January 1, 2010, as to whether to give free memberships to fire departments. The motion passed unanimously.

Pat asked if a voting membership for individuals would be included in the conference registration fee. Crystal said it would be. The proposed conference budget was reviewed. After discussion, Dick made and Don seconded a motion to accept the conference budget as modified to include three lunches. The motion passed unanimously. The conference registration fees will be \$125 for “early bird” registration and \$150 after January 31, 2010. Single day registrations will be \$45/day and will not include a membership. Exhibitor fees will be \$225 for early birds, and \$275 after January 31. Continental breakfasts will be provided. Lunches will be served buffet style. Pat suggested asking the University of Montana to bring their working model of a biomass unit to be part of the exhibits.

**New FSCs:** Crystal presented drafts of two documents – an *Invitation to FireSafe Council Affiliation* and an *Application for FireSafe Council Assistance*. The latter makes it clear that not all individual members of each FSC have to be members of FSM. One of the benefits of organizing as an FSC is that each new council may request up to \$250 in funds from FSM to use for specific outreach- and education-related items: printing, postage, mail box rental, room rentals, meeting refreshments, and other costs associated with FSC meetings and community events. Bob made and Pat seconded a motion that there be a \$50 FSM membership fee for an FSC. That would give the FSC one voting membership in FSM. Individual members of an FSC could also become individual members of FSM by paying a voting or non-voting membership fee. The motion passed unanimously.

**Strategic Plan:** The board discussed the “Target Planning” focus for the next two years (outlined in the minutes of the September 11-12, 2009, board meeting. Carol made and Jake seconded a motion to eliminate Item 7 for Year One (converting FSM’s accounting to a Quicken system). The motion passed unanimously. Pat was added to the “Policy, Legislation & Positions Committee”, along with Don, Bruce & Carol. The conference planning committee is chaired by Crystal, with Bruce, Pat, Dick, Bob Fry, and Bob Mutch as members. Depending upon funding availability, the board will have the option of providing small (\$250) outreach and education grants to individual

FSCs. In the long term, FSM could put together consolidated grants for mitigation covering a number of FSCs. Bob made and Sonny seconded a motion to adopt the plan as modified. The motion passed.

**D&O Insurance:** Don & Crystal will get quotes from State Farm and the Montana Non-profit Association for directors' and officers' liability insurance and will report back to the board.

**Financial Report:** Carol presented the FSM financial statement as of October 31, 2009. After several clarifying questions were answered, Dick made and Jake seconded a motion to accept the financial report. The motion passed unanimously.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting:** Dick made and Don seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the September 11-12, 2009, planning meeting. The motion passed.

**Recruitment Committee:** Dick said he feels FSM needs to have a couple of years' salary in place before advertising the executive director position. If we do go forward, the advertisement for applicants should be sent out in January. A screening panel would pare down the number of finalists, who would then be interviewed by the full board. Hiring would be done in the spring so that the executive director could be in place before our administrative services contract with Gallatin County Extension expires. Sonny had Crystal outline the current funding situation – grants and agreements applied for and in-hand. Don said the longer we wait, the more our fund balance will diminish, and the longer it will take to get someone new up to speed. We need to pursue the process. After a brief discussion of possible salary and benefit figures, Jake said he felt we needed our own employee, rather than continuing with contracting services, and asked if the board would agree to have Dick, Don, and himself run the recruiting process. Don made and Sonny seconded a motion to continue the recruitment process to completion by the end of April or early May. The motion passed unanimously.

**Debit Card:** Jake asked if everyone was okay with Crystal being issued a VISA debit card to use when traveling on FSM business. There was general agreement.

**Conference Budget and Lodging Arrangements:** Crystal said that Fairmont agreed to make a block of rooms available for the conference at \$84/night for a single room. They will hold the block until at least the end of the Early Bird registration period, and hopefully longer. She has reserved 60 rooms for Wednesday night, 130 for Thursday, and 100 on Friday. Carol said hopefully we will have more than 130 attendees, and suggested that we also let people know about room availability at other lodging places in the area. Crystal said she would do that. We will have some money available for scholarships for people who cannot attend unless they receive help with their expenses.

**Webinar:** FSM's first Webinar will be January 26

**Next Board Meeting:** The next board meeting will be January 18, 2010, in Helena.

The meeting was adjourned.