

# Roundtable Notes 7.10.25

## Forest Health/Community Wildfire Resilience Supplemental Budget Request Messaging - Dani Madrone

- Need to dial in messaging for forest health
- Anticipate a supplemental budget request – going through Commission process
- Reflect CD needs and priorities
- Challenges:
  - we need to distinguish why CDs/SCC need a dedicated program separate from DNR? We will need to be able to clearly message this distinction, how we complement but don't duplicate
  - How vulnerable communities are benefitting
  - Jenny is talking with DNR about each of our budget packages
- This will not be the only opportunity to engage on this messaging.
- WACD also working on messaging.
- Sarah Moorehead – Thurston is in process of collecting testimonials from DNR staff for messaging. Why it is critical to have both CDs and DNR and how they work together. DNR is raving about collaborating with districts. Will share with SCC. Collecting over next couple weeks.
- Mike Nordin – CD forester was able to develop plans that covered requirements for multiple agencies. Had a large workload and popular program. DNR used this work to get funding and build program. Story is that DNR needs CDs to help them succeed.
  - Need an understanding about importance of forest health
  - Need an understanding about who CDs are and what they can do as opposed to other entities
    - Example is RGP funds sent to RCO that are problematic
  - Need more CDs to participate in legislative days
- Craig Nelson – Agrees DNR needs us as much as we need them. Longer-term CD members will need to help tell that story. CDs can help get access to private lands that DNR can't always on their own. CDs can champion the skills and experience we have in the community. DNR doesn't focus as much on post-fire, CDs have a lot of experience. In E. WA it's not just forests – Shrubsteppe is a big deal for fire. DNR doesn't engage in non-forest settings and districts do.

- Encourage SCC to start developing criteria for prioritization of any supplemental funds that may be received.
- We need to keep our spreadsheet of ready to go projects up to date and share it widely.
  - Sarah Moorehead - It would be great if that could include programmatic needs and large-scale projects. (Ex. 100 homes signed up for Wildfire Ready Neighbors waiting for home hardening projects, vs. big burns or BMPs on forest lands) I think this concept of programmatic funding for CDs to offer services vs solely large-scale projects hamstrings us more often than not with WSCC funds. We can demonstrate large collective impact with both.
- Shana – forest stewardship plan is the gateway for financial assistance (cost-share). State funds, federal funds, etc.
- Sarah Moorehead - Could we build a graphic that shows CDs working on prevention in the beginning, DNR in the middle with response, and CDs at the end with recovery. Maybe it's a partnership bell curve, or... A partnership sandwich?
  - Have had prairie grassland fires in Thurston County
- Stephen Allen – fire district personnel share that its not a lack of understanding about fire prevention but there is a perception among decision makers where work may be more aesthetic as opposed to preventative which could figure into funding decisions.
- Zorah Oppenheimer - Really pushing the safety side of all of this, and the cost savings in prevention vs fighting fires.
  - Would you like me to expand out the google sheet?
    - Shana – make sure we're communicating, include Jenny, about what's in the sheet and how it would be used for communications. Apples to Apples.
- Brad Riehle – CDs can fill a gap when DNR is out working on fire response. A huge role for CDs.
  - The community wildfire resilience part of the program is critical to Districts contribution in the wildfire space. It's not all about Forest Health
- Evan Bauder – Should be a high priority for CDs and SCC to work on data collection

## FHCWR Grant Awards Update – Jenny Coe

- We did a lot of collection of feedback from CDs, accounting for CD data collection
- There wasn't a consensus about how funds should be distributed
- Know that there are not nearly enough funds available
- First filter was existing capacity/staff
- Max funding cap of \$180,000 – median of bare-ones information from spreadsheet
- Any funding requests under \$25,000 fully funded – approx. 3
- Did not want to make determination of the value of each CDs program and compare CDs to each other
- The remainder of applications were reduced equally by 49% to match available funding.
- Jenny sent out a call for information about how CDs wanted outcomes structured. She is sorry for confusion this may have caused in relation to funding awards.
- Emmett Wild – felt like goal post moved during this process. With the \$180,000 cap they took it as fitting needs within the cap and then got a reduction below that. Feels it undermined the investment they put into it.
- Zorah Oppenheimer – Figured that no one was going to be happy and that is was challenging. Thought awards would be available as soon as possible and due date was set to prevent a gap. Why can't it be backdated to July 1?
  - Shana – true we have done before in the past. Understand that its not a best practice. Moved through as quickly as we could during a busy time.
  - Zorah – 6 business days of staff time. Seems pretty minor to go back to July 1. CDs pushed so hard that needs award July 1 as people are on the line. Can't absorb many awards that come after July 1. Ecology will back date with a much bigger time gap.
    - For us, it's about \$3000.00 for FH. We REALLY appreciated the mini award from RPPP so we could continue our nursery efforts, that might be a way to support CD staff and wait on big awards.
  - Evan Bauder - This is more about the cumulation of decisions similar to this. It sometimes seems unnecessary, and we don't get good explanations as to why we can't find the way to "yes" in these situations.
  - Megan Stewart - Is there an option for an "exception" which we have been told is allowed for RPG?
    - RGP will have a limited availability for an exception.

- Craig Nelson - Best practice it may be, but that doesn't make it law or a rule. There's also a history that is often considered by auditors and others when considering what is consistent and allowable practice.
- Shana – maybe a policy exception? Something we can explore.
  - Evan Bauder - We should change the policy so we don't need exceptions moving forward.
- Paul Andersson - I feel like July 1 start date would be the best 'best practice.' Consistent with the start of the biennium, the close of previous funding, and when we need to money to spend
- Sarah Moorhead – Commission should consider making effective start date for all grant programs July 1. This is not “back dating”. Happens with most other grant sources – state and federal. This would not require exceptions which seems worse. Standard of consistency.
- Mike Nordin – agree with Sarah. This is a huge burden for districts that don’t have rates and charges because CD has to float gaps between start of biennium and funding award dates. Puts staff at risk. Eats up overhead quickly and is stressful. RCO goes back to July 1 as well as other entities. Not sure why we view as bad practice when other agencies have it standard. Needs supplemental funds to keep his forester.
- Jennifer Boie – we need to really look at better ways to address cash flow. Of course legally but we need to find better options. Regular exceptions are not a good route or best practice. We need to address this – using lines of credit or overhead to float payroll is not good.
- Alan Chapman - Sounds like a resolution for WACD to consider how to eliminate the CD cash flow situation when the SCC has the money.
- James – it is very vexing to have to worry about cash flow. State budget cycles are problematic. It is important for us to work through this.
- Brandy Reed – we seem to have this conversation frequently. Its confusing that we can ask for an exception on RGP for effective date but not forest health. Is there something different about the commission that makes it impossible to do what other agencies do when it comes to awarding funds? What is the difference. We don’t understand the why... Burdens on CDs of cash flow are real – we need to work on this issue.
  - Thanks, everyone. WSCC staff, I understand that a solution can not be attained today. Thanks for being willing to consider continuing how we can work together going forward.

- Shana – These are bigger policy issues. We need to have bigger discussions, maybe ombuds group, and talk about how we can do it differently.
- James – these are systematically and legally big questions. SCC moves funding much faster than other agencies. This is a serious matter for all of us.
- Evan Bauder – Thanks Brandy for comments. This is another example of SCC policy that is restricting money more than other agencies. Although money may move faster through SCC, other agencies will allow incurring of expenditures from July 1. We haven't gotten good answers.
- Loren Meagher - I am extremely grateful for CD staff that are providing perspective on alternative ways to handle cash flow and provide comparison to other state entities. It's wonderfully heartening to hear SCC and CDs working together on making difficult changes to benefit CDs.

## Leadership Updates -James Thompson

- Appreciates the opportunities we have had to share information and talk about needs
- SCC meeting next week
  - Programmatic guidelines
  - Decision packages
- Dealing with cuts despite revenue growth
- Now revenue forecast is showing a \$700 million+ shortfall
- Might be a need for a special session but even if not it will likely dominate the next regular session
- We have an unmet technology need that is a problem
- We are having a meeting Monday with Govs. Office and OFM to talk about budgets. Had a preliminary discussion yesterday about agency needs. They are helpful but clear to temper needs. RCO will make no requests.
- Supplemental Budget Survey showed CTA as #1, Forest health as #2 although they were very close
  - So, budget packages to be developed for those 2 as well as a technology request which is a huge need for the agency and districts where current systems are causing issues.

- Various ways to put numbers on budget packages. Believe best route is to work on relatively small asks that complete against large asks that come for human services. Legislature has indicated that they seem most focused on solving human service problems and we don't want to be overlooked due to this.
  - We prioritized Forest Health first – believe its an easier path to get funds for Forest Health than for CTA. The Forest Health request will be for \$2.5 million
  - CTA request \$2.25 million
  - We believe this puts us in our best position to win.
  - Technology package for \$3.2 million = believe it doesn't compete with first two as its for state infrastructure which is viewed differently. May phase this.
  - We understand the need is far greater for these priorities.
- Sarah Moorehead - My comments in the survey said just that. CTA will always be the preferred type of funding because it is most flexible and adaptable to our local needs. However, it isn't as heavy of a hitter in the legislature, wildfire will be a more responsive argument this session. We should absolutely be looking for the sources that will generate the most funds for CDs in the supplemental.
- Mike Nordin – Regarding strategy – would it be good to ask for more in FH and CTA with the understanding that starting high and then negotiating low might be prudent?
  - James – conversations likely point to asking big ends up in a losing situation
- Linda Lyshall – supports the strategy. Snohomish is already starting legislative outreach and will continue of next couple months about importance of Forest health funding.
- Brandy Reed - I think your strategy makes sense. Thanks for your thoughtful consideration and let us know how we can help.
- Paul Andersson - Orcas Island wildfire on Tuesday this week - 7 acres with mandatory evac for several homes nearby. Abuts a forest preserve (Turtleback) where we've done thinning and fuel break work.
- Megan Stewart – have already had numerous fires in Asotin County. Summer fires will help with communications about forest health needs. More concerned about CTA. How do we package this as an emergency when it was made clear that legislature seemed to be not interested in the last session? Is CTA a good thing to ask for in this environment? Do we have a strong enough case for a CTA package at this time?

- James – TA is a hard sell. Best strategy is to show clearly what is being bought with the funds. Our current technology makes it hard to tell CDs story. We also do not have good electronic workflow. State takes IT security seriously as well.
  - Sarah Moorehead - I agree Megan, we need to rebrand CTA and what it does and why it matters.
- Sarah Moorehead - If there are CDs that weren't able to access wildfire \$ so far this biennium and they have fires this summer - that would be a good data point for the campaign. Those areas weren't able to support at all with education, prevention or recovery efforts because of the dramatically low availability of funds.
  - Emmett Wild – On right track to be asking for smaller amounts with attractive programs. Rebranding CTA is important. SCC should look at reporting requirements and avoiding duplicative platforms and efforts to do reporting.
  - Vicki Carter - Let's rename CTA
  - Jennifer Boie – Agrees we need technology modernization and upgrades. WACD also has initiative that are inline with the requests through a supplemental dues campaign. Make sure we're not duplicating efforts.
  - Sarah Moorehead - I have heard in the past that the data agreement for CPDS with the current company was written so that the tech company owns the system and data, making it harder to extract which has been part of the reason there wasn't a shift sooner. If that's true, I think that could be a great argument for the tech package - to retain ownership of our own data within the agency.
  - Shana - What ideas do you all have as a new name for the CTA funds? Feel free to put those ideas here and we'll gather them up for the notes.
    - Stephen Allen - Natural Resource Technical Assistance Fund
    - Sarah Moorehead - A focus group around CTA would be great.
  - Mike Nordin – Thank you for addressing the technology issue. Something CDs have been asking for a long time!

## Feedback on June 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting

- We want to know thoughts around the meeting
- Want to use roundtables for more robust conversations
- What worked well or could be improved?

- Mike Nordin – Use early part of meeting to collect what needs to be discussed, then get much deeper into details on those items later in the day
- Zorah Oppenheimer – Day after WADE is tough, try a different date.
  - Evan Bauder - The month of June is not the best time for extra meetings. There is a lot of content to cover. This meeting probably could have spanned a couple of days if it were timed differently.
  - Mike Nordin - End of May.
  - Lore Meagher - Hold the meeting twice a year.
- Brandy Reed – The meeting was useful and productive. My one suggestion is to not combine that type of meeting with WADE in the future or in the month of June, especially at the end of a biennium.
- Becca Hebron – Appreciated the team building that occurred. Appreciates the opportunity to work on uniting.
- Jennifer Boie – Thanks to WACD and SCC for putting it together – is very worthwhile. Thanks to Sarah and Craig for facilitating.
- Underwood CD - We need to schedule these meetings regularly, around the year, to proactively align with key milestones around budget development timelines, key messaging times, program updates/developments, etc.

### SFF Update - Karen Hills

- **SFF Classic (\$1.27 million)**

There were 78 SFF Applications submitted in June (\$4.5 million in requests for the \$1.27 million available). These are being reviewed and award notifications can be expected in the second half of August.

- **Alternative Manure Management (\$2.8 million)**

Application expected to open week of July 28 (will send an announcement out via gov del when open). Will hold a webinar the first full week of August (date TBA). First pull Sept. 1. Additional pulls every 2 months (Nov. 1, Jan. 1, etc.) until funding is allocated.

### RGP Update - Amy Martin

- June 20<sup>th</sup> and July 7<sup>th</sup> applications are being reviewed for eligibility to understand where our funding level is
- Working through applications received
- 36 CDs applied

- Budget for awards is about \$30 million, this number is subject to change as we understand reappropriation and finalize set asides
- Received \$37 million in requests in applications
- Going through applications to review eligibility
- We are holding funds back for tiered incentives and permanent protection (this is not included in the \$30 million estimated)
- Won't know final reappropriation amount until later in the year when final vouchers have been processed
- Uncertain when awards will be made
- Policy exceptions are limited to maintenance and salaries and benefits related to TA
- Thanks for working on reports and data entry!
- Zorah Oppenheimer - If the math is all correct, what is the strategy for awarding?
  - Working on it.
- Evan Bauder - Seems like we can't afford incentives. Is there a review/scoring criteria?
  - We will be leaning on program guidelines to greatest extent possible. Whatever is decided we will be able to explain to you. We will likely be reaching out with questions.
- Mike Nordin – when looking at awards:
  - How much of the requests are land acquisition? Hope that those would be last in line.
    - Answer: Zero
  - Returned funds from last biennium from a CD should be considered in awards
    - James – returned funds will be unknown for a while. Final Vouchering closes today
      - Evan Bauder - No other agencies require this quick of final vouchering.
      - Sarah Moorehead - Counter to Mike's thoughts, we turned back funds this biennium that were planned for landowners who want to participate in TIP and want to parachute away from CREP. We were hopeful the multi biennial contract policy would be in effect so that we could honor that work we committed to.
        - Mike Nordin - Sarah, that is an easy explanation to add into your request. What I frown on is just asking

for a huge amount without the forward groundwork with landowner requests in hand.

- Sarah - I agree 100%. We spend all the pennies and have a backlog of identified work too. I just wanted that clear distinction out there for everyone.
- Sarah Moorehead - I anticipate the request would be even higher with multi-biennia contacts.
- Jennifer Boie:
  - what is the cutoff date for current application round and how does that fit with first round?
    - Letting applications come in with understanding of overall funds available
  - Keep in mind that maintenance requirements are ongoing beyond the implementation year.
- Savannah Crnick – Application timing can be very difficult during this busy time. Can application windows be opened even earlier? Early June or May?
  - Tried to back it up as much as possible this year
  - Jennifer Boie - Earlier is much better...June is a very difficult time to write grant proposals.

## Communications and other SCC program updates – mostly written updates/in the notes to save time

- Reminder! It's Biennial report season. 🌻 Get the resources you need here: <https://www.scc.wa.gov/news/biennial-report-resources>.

Thank you to the two districts who have already sent in their info! 🙏

## CTD Updates – Jan Thomas

- **CTD Updates – July**

Beta Testing Opportunity for the new CTD Online Training platform open now! Email [training@wactd.org](mailto:training@wactd.org) if you want to get a sneak peek at the platform and help provide feedback to make it even better.

FY26 Training Needs Inventory (TNI) coming soon – this is the place to request NRCS training for the upcoming fiscal year, and to let CTD know what other trainings you need. We'll send a news blast through all the channels when this is

ready for you to complete.

[WADE Conference Survey](#) – if you haven't already, please provide your feedback for this year's conference. Even if you didn't attend, we'd love to hear from you on what kept you from it, and any ideas you have for next year.

Questions, comments, training ideas? Email Jan - [jan@ucdwa.org](mailto:jan@ucdwa.org). 😊