

Agricultural Burning Practices & Research Task Force #64 Meeting Summary

DATE: June 9, 2005

LOCATION: Walla Walla Regional Airport, Walla Walla WA.

<u>Members Present</u>		<u>Representing</u>
Grant Pfeifer- Chair	Air Quality Program	Department of Ecology
Larry Cochran	Grower	Conservation Districts
Jay Penner	Washington Association of Wheat Growers	Agricultural Community
Michael Ingham	Alfalfa Seed Industry	Agricultural Community
Dave Lauer	Benton County Clean Air Authority	Eastern Washington Local Air Authorities
Michael Bush	WSU Extension	Academia, (Tree Fruit)
John Cornwall	Grass Seed Industry	Grass Seed Industry
Bill Johnston	Washington State University	Academia, (Crop & Soil)
<u>Members Absent</u>		
Bob Gore	WA. Dept of Agricultural	WA. Dept. of Agriculture
Sally Liu	University Of Washington	Public Health

Introductions, Announcements

The 64th Agricultural Burning Practices and Research Task Force (Task Force) meeting was held on June 9th, 2005 at the Walla Walla Regional Airport in Walla Walla, Washington. The Task Force meeting began with the introduction of Task Force members and guests.

The June meeting was reserved for hearing research project proposals. The Task Force recommends which projects they would like Ecology to fund and the amount of funding appropriate. Per the Task Force Governance Document, the June meeting is also scheduled for amending, voting and approving Best Management Practices, (BMP's) for the ensuing year.

Research Proposals

The Task Force received five research proposals in response to the Request for Proposals, (RFP's) issued by Ecology this spring. Three of the proposals continue research that the Task Force has funded previously.

1. [Direct Seeding into Heavy Irrigated Stubble as Alternative to Burning](#), WSU- Lind Field Station, William Schillinger (P.I.).
2. [Straw Utilization for Fiber Based Materials](#), Lewis Engineering, Mark Lewis (P.I.)
3. [Development of High Yielding Turf-type Kentucky Bluegrass Varieties for Non-burn](#), WSU- Grass Seed Cropping Systems, William Johnston (P.I.)

Two were new research proposals requesting funds from the Task Force.

1. [Alternatives to Burning and The Effects on Insect, Weed, and Disease Pests in Alfalfa Seed Fields](#), WSU Prosser Field Station, Douglas Walsh (P.I.)
2. [Mold in Straw Construction, Ashland School of Environmental Technology](#), Norton Smith (P.I.)

Presentations outlining the proposals were given and the Task Force had opportunity to ask the researchers further questions regarding their projects.

The Task Force recommended funding, from the general agricultural burn research account, the following three projects:

Direct Seeding into Heavy Irrigated Stubble as Alternative to Burning:

Fund the project initially at half of requested budget with the stipulation that the researchers show the Task Force more complete information about the on farm production costs for the first 3 year rotation. After receipt of this information, the Task Force will recommend funding the second half of the proposal.

Funded: \$22,000 with \$11,000
contingent on prior receipt of
preliminary economic information.

Straw Utilization for Fiber Based Materials:

Funded: \$80,000

Alternatives to Burning and The Effects on Insect, Weed, and Disease Pests in Alfalfa Seed Fields:

Funded: \$49,068

The Task Force recommended not funding the research proposal, Mold in Straw Construction.

The following project was funded from the grass seed field burning account:

Development of High Yielding Turf Type Kentucky Bluegrass Varieties for Non-burn.

Funded: \$14,000

The Task Force had a discussion regarding the difference between the grass seed research account and the general ag account and the allocations available for each. The '05/'07 general ag research allocation is set at \$180,000 while the grass seed amount is \$14,000. The Task Force then asked Dr. Johnston if he had additional money if he could "speed up" his research regarding non-burn Kentucky bluegrass cultivars. Dr. Johnson said that he could use an additional \$10,000 to classify and sort seeds. The Task Force requested he develop a supplemental proposal for additional funding from the general ag burn research account to further his grass seed research.

Best Management Practices

-Orchard BMPs:

The proposed addition of section 6 was approved as presented. This section was necessary to allow for burning of orchard tearout debris when no practical alternative to burning is reasonably available (and to alleviate a pest risk) when the land is going into another commercial crop that is non-orchard. Task Force member Mike Bush and Frank Wolf (Benton Co. Pest Board) both wanted to make a strong statement regarding the real necessity of burning these torn out orchards in a timely manner to prevent a pest problem. Mr. Wolf wanted to ask the Task Force to make sure to preserve the ability for pest boards, WSU extension officers, and other ag experts to order an orchard be burned when necessary to prevent pest problems, regardless of commercial aspect of orchard. In other words- if an orchard is abandoned one of the above can enforce that it be burned.

New section 6 reads as follows:

Section 6 – ORCHARD TRANSITION

Burning identified for orchard transition (in transition block only) –Orchard transition is the burning of orchard trees on land that will be changed from a commercial agricultural orchard to a non-orchard commercial agricultural crop. Burning is not generally recommended for orchard transition except where its use is shown to be reasonably necessary and alternative practices are not available, feasible, timely or economically practical. The situation must satisfy all Pre-Qualification Requirements. Growers need to document their evaluation of the need to burn. Once the trees have been removed the site must be prepared for replanting using various soil preparation steps. The removed trees must be disposed of prior to the site preparation activities. The Task Force strongly recommends that the grower verify that reasonable steps were taken to utilize alternative practices and to document why they were not available, feasible, timely or economically practical. Permit conditions must be met and the burden of proof falls upon the applicant for obtaining this documentation.

-Cereal BMPs

The addition of a condition when burning is generally not allowed was approved as written by Task Force member Mike Ingham. This condition is specific to an uncommon practice regarding burning during the fall season and leaving fields exposed prior to planting the following spring.

The new section reads:

When Burning is Generally not Allowed:

No burning is allowable under these BMPs on ground where a crop will not be planted in the same season as the burn.

The Task Force approved all three sets of BMPs as amended: Cereal, Non-Cereal, and Orchard through June 30, 2006.

The Walla Walla NRCS Conservationist stated that there may be a need in the future for the Task Force to look at a BMP regarding burning standing wheat stubble prior to planting a pea crop. It is questionable whether this is a good practice as there is likely not enough residue following the pea harvest to meet residue requirements.

Ecology's Central Regional Office requested a possible new Non-Cereal BMP having to do with weed control in hay crops. They will investigate and bring one forward in the future if deemed necessary.

Fees

Ecology brought up the question of fees. The agricultural burn rule is currently being revised and it is probably appropriate for the Task Force to review the fee structure at this time. The Clean Air Act states that the Task Force shall determine the level of fees assessed by the permitting agency for agricultural burn permits. The 1991 Act further says that the "fees shall be set by rule...but shall not exceed two dollars and fifty cents per acre to be burned. After fees are established by rule, any increases in such fees shall be limited to annual inflation adjustments as determined by the state office of the economic and revenue forecast council" (RCW 70.94.650). The fees were set by rule (WAC 173-430) in 1995 at not more than \$2.00 acre and have remained the same for the past ten years.

The program has changed and grown tremendously over the past ten years and the administrative requirements are quite extensive and expensive. Karen Wood (Ecology) stated that many permitting authorities have expressed a need for additional money for local administration of the program. Ecology estimates its annual cost for the implementation of the ag burn program at nearly \$500,000 and receives only \$43,000 from permit fees for administration of the program.

There was also discussion on what neighboring states charge for permits. These fees range from \$30/ year to \$10.00/ acre. Task Force members were asked to begin thinking of what might be appropriate. Ecology will prepare a table with actual costs and income for the Task Force's review.

Next meeting will be held on November 10, 2005.