

Agricultural Burning Practices & Research Task Force #68 Meeting Summary

DATE: November 8, 2006

LOCATION: Washington State Dept. of Ecology, Eastern Regional Office, Spokane WA.

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

Introductions, Announcements

The 68th Task force meeting was held at the Washington State Department of Ecology Eastern Regional Office in Spokane, Washington. The Agricultural Burning Practices and Research Task Force (Task Force) meeting began at 10:05AM with the introduction of Task Force members and guests.

The November meeting is reserved for a yearly agricultural burning program recap and a discussion about the previous year's burn season. The November meeting is also scheduled for scoping changes and discussion about Best Management Practices, (BMP's).

Before the recap and BMP discussion, a couple of items were distributed. A matrix of burn days by year, county and type of burn showed how many acres were permitted to be burned in the many counties of Washington state for 2003-2006. A graph portraying much of this information was also presented to the members.

Fall Burn Season 2006 Recap

Kary Peterson, Department of Ecology, (Ecology), Eastern Regional Office presented the fall, 2006 recap. Mr. Peterson began by summarizing work being accomplished by Ecology's Outdoor Burn Unit in addition to the role of making agricultural burn decisions and conducting enforcement tasks. He informed the Task Force members of a new database for agricultural burn permits which is under development. This new database, when implemented, should allow for easier access to information for Ecology burn unit personnel for burn decision and enforcement purposes. He also briefly mentioned the change to the agricultural burning rule, which became effective in the Summer of 2006. He mentioned that the outdoor burn unit has devoted a great deal of time and resources in the past year to implementing the 2007 Urban Growth Area Burn Ban, accomplishing all of the above while being challenged by staffing shortages and the training of new staff. The Outdoor burn unit also had meetings regarding the agricultural burning program with representatives of both the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the environmental group Save Our Summers (SOS) in the fall.

For the Winter-Spring burn season of 2006, Mr. Peterson reported no particular problems. Smoke impacts from wildfires and burn bans once again limited the number of days when burning was allowed in the Fall of 2006. The total permitted acreage went up appreciably in 2006, much of the increase coming from Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land which the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) required to be burned at this point in the contracting cycle.

The record of complaints was similar to the last few years in Eastern Washington, with Ecology having received few complaints about agricultural burning in 2006. A complaint report of similar format to previous years was not available at the time of the meeting due to personnel issues, Mr. Peterson explained. Mike Ingham asked for a complaint report. Mr. Peterson indicated that Ecology would provide one before the next meeting.

Fees, Research, and BMP's

Jay Penner asked about the possibility of adding the following practice to the Best Management Practice (BMP) for cereal grains: Fertilizing in the Fall after burning, followed by seeding in the Spring with Spring wheat to control goat grass.

After several Task Force members discussed this issue, it was decided to instruct Ecology staff to draft some changes to the Cereal Grain BMP which would allow for Goat Grass Control and fertilizer application thru heavy fall-residue followed by spring wheat seeding. They wanted this to be addressed through modification of the residue management section and the pest management section.

Ecology was also asked to modify the Bale-Burn BMP to allow for the bales to continue to burn after designated burn hours, as with the orchard burn BMP and permits.

All suggested changes to BMP's are to be distributed to Task Force members before the next meeting.

Sarah Rees, Section Manager of Ecology's Air Quality Program Development section, discussed the newly instituted Agricultural Burning Rule and potential legal problems with it. Most of the representatives on the Agricultural Burning Task Force were also on the Agricultural Burn Rule Advisory Committee. The Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority (YRCAA) expressed concern with the fee portion of the rule. Part of YRCAA's complaint was that the Agricultural Burning Task Force did not have adequate representation by orchard interests, specifically Yakima orchard interests. An agreement had been reached between Ecology and the YRCAA, but Ms. Rees explained that there were still small portions of the rule which might be vulnerable to legal challenge as written. She also explained that the rule-making process was long and involved and that Ecology did not feel that the potential benefits to re-opening the rule-making process were justified.

Karen Wood then suggested that the Task Force consider adjusting the membership to include an orchard representative, perhaps replacing the grass-seed grower representative. John Cornwall, the current grass seed representative, said that he was ready to give up his seat as soon as the money in the grass seed research account was fully spent. Ecology was directed to ascertain whether a special appropriation of research money can be accomplished in the next budget cycle in order to zero the account.

Task Force members expressed an interest in having progress reports from the current Task Force-supported researchers available at the next Task Force meeting (February, 2007) especially if the researchers plan on submitting grant applications at the June, 2007 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10PM.