

## Agricultural Burning Practices & Research Task Force #71 Meeting Summary

DATE: November 8, 2007

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

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

### **Introductions, Announcements**

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The 71<sup>st</sup> 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 letter to the Dept. of Ecology, and Ecology's response, was shared with the Task Force members. The letter, from Save Our Summers, a clean air activist group, requested that Ecology take a lead role in the transition from burning of agricultural straw to using it for commercial products and energy. Ecology's response letter highlighted the research Ecology has sponsored while emphasizing that Ecology cannot directly engage in promotion of market alternatives. The Task Force members had several comments:

1. Market forces will influence more than anything else the uses to which straw is put
2. Any incentives would need to be at the level of the pulp-mills- Farmers will give the straw away

3. The issue is bigger than the Ag Burn Task force can handle. Economics is not a Task Force Strength

### **Fall Burn Season 2007 Recap**

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Kary Peterson, Department of Ecology, (Ecology), Eastern Regional Office presented the fall, 2007 recap. He mentioned that the outdoor burn unit continues to spend a great deal of time and resources in the past year to implementing the 2007 Urban Growth Area Burn Ban. The Outdoor burn unit also participated in a US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-sponsored smoke management conference which included Idaho DEQ, and the tribes. In the future, Mr. Peterson suggested it would be important to include Oregon in any regional smoke management meetings, due to potential impacts in the Walla Walla area.

The fall burn season went well, starting earlier than last year in Walla Walla County due to changes in the Burn Zones. Those changes present challenges for Ecology, but work well with the growers. With burning not permitted in most of Idaho this year, Washington's agricultural burning program was very much in the spotlight. We received more inquiries about burning (usually about smoke along the Washington-Idaho Border) than complaints, with the total number of complaints for the year again very low.

Mr. Peterson informed the Task Force Members that the Mobile particulate monitor was up and running in the Touchet area this fall and winter, to monitor smoke impacts in that area.

Holly Myers gave the Task Force a recap of the burn season in Ecology's Central Region. One highlight was the many storm and flood debris permits issued in and around Wenatchee as the result of wind storms in December 2006.

### **Fees, Research, and BMP's**

Frank Lane, with the Walla Walla County Conservation District, had several BMP related issues on which he wanted the opinion of the Task Force.

After significant and thorough consideration, the Task Force found that:

- Residue requirements for burning are to remain flexible, allowing for different minimums in different districts to allow for different local practices
- Burning is allowed after chem. fallow, if residue thresholds are met
- Baling and burning is allowable, if residue requirements are still met after the baling operation

Karen Wood suggested that with large amounts of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage soon coming to the end of contract periods, there was the possibility of significant CRP acreage being put back into production. Some farmers might request to burn that acreage before planting. The non-cereal grain Best Management Practices don't specifically address this type of burning. The Task Force requested a draft BMP for burning CRP being put back into production be submitted by Ecology for Task Force consideration at the next meeting.

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Karen Wood informed the Task Force members that the Grass Seed Commission is in favor of using grass seed money to fund a hydromulching study. Ecology will email the new proposal to Task Force members when it is received from Dr. Johnston.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40PM.