ULCT Wildfire Policy Work Group
7-6-15

- **Brian Cottam opened the meeting**
- Gave a brief explanation of what has taken place up to this point for the benefit of those who haven't been present at all the meetings.
- If a community chooses not to participate, the fire will be fought the same as before, but the cost will then be the municipalities
- The current system of how wildfires are paid for was discussed
    - Insurance Fund payment ("premium")
    - Suppression budget ("deductible")
- Currently county fire wardens are a 50/50 cost share between the county and the state (in most cases). The Utah Association of Counties likes this arrangement
- Salt Lake County does not currently have a fire warden, but it looks like they will need one in the new system, but will need to be independent of the Unified Fire Authority
- Cost sharing the warden can count toward the participation match
- Sandy is supportive of the idea, but would like to see how it looks
- The Wasatch Front FMO (Fire Management Officer) is currently acting like the Salt Lake Coutny fire warden
- Brian Cottam reviewed initial options that have been proposed for the risk assessment
- Currently there is no collected historical data on the cost of wildland fires within city/town jurisdiction (which is available for counties), thus the historical cost value in the risk assessment for cities/towns will be zero.

- **Risk Assessment (Nate)**
- West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment (WWA), a regional project that was started in Colorado. (the data structure uses geo spatial science)
- A questioned was asked on how different things in the study are weighted.
    - Nate responded that if he didn't have the answer to detailed questions like the one just asked, he would be able to get the answer in the next couple of days due to meetings he will be having with individuals who worked on the WWA
- WWA is trying to bring all previous risk assessments into one. Best study ever on this, but still has challenges like:
    - Regional projections only from WWA, so when "zooming in" on an area the data sets will need to be fine-tuned to increase the accuracy
    - The base data was given by the sates, and not all states kept the same data
- The risk assessment will include as much information on infrastructure as possible (roads, power, water, pipelines), and will also include Sage Grouse Management Areas. Some of this information might be harder to obtain, due to security concerns.
- The water for the Risk Assessment area is Hydrological Unit Code (HUC) 12
- The assessment process is meant to be scientifically based
- There will be funding sources to continue to improve/enhance the assessment on an annual basis
- Will power line corridors be included in the assessment?
    - Yes, they are generally open about their information in that regard

- How are water and sage grouse not already included in the assessment? Why do they need to be considered separately?
    - Water is already included, but it needs to be brought into a higher focus. Sage Grouse was not originally included because when the study was originally done sage grouse weren't the hot political topic they are today.
- The assessment will be updated as time goes on with new data being plugged in when available (weather, growing seasons, etc.) The assessment is a snap shot and will not be useful on a microscopic level.
- How will cities/towns be able to determine if the data is accurate and to submit changes if necessary?
    - Nate said that will be part of the discussion in the next couple of days in the meetings.
- The WWA is a great model, but not everyone will agree to every part all the time. However, it is still the best there is and there is a commitment to make it better
- Only so much change can be made at the local lever before it starts having an impact on the overall data
- There will be public and professional level access to maps, overlays, and data.
- A request for the Colorado website link (will be sent out by ULCT)
- A time frame for the risk assessment?
    - Version 1 will be done by early November and will move into an annual update schedule after that
- There is a timeline to have a policy put together by November
- The new policy will not go into effect until 2017 based on timing issues with the federal government
- That should give cities/towns plenty of time to get their budgets figured out
- By the time this goes into effect there will likely be a new version of the risk assessment (more accurate and up to date)
- Encouragement for city/town officials to look into the Colorado effort, and use the ability to sign-up as a "professional" user.
- A question by Cameron Diehl to the cities if they liked where things are going
- A question about how the data will be used to determine the money in the assessment
- Agreement with the question above, but can't imagine not wanting to move forward and use the policy suggestions that have put out
- Right now there is a High (Red)-Medium (Yellow)-Low (Green) grade given for all unincorporated county areas – will have the ability to do that same grading for any geographic location and level.
- It was pointed out that there are two things being talked about – the risk assessment, and how the risk assessment affects the participation match for cities and towns.
- Every acre in the state is accounted for
- There is a table breakdown of counties and their acres of Red land, Yellow land, and Green land in unincorporated areas.
- UAC helped to come up with dollar values for Red and Yellow areas, and determine that Green areas would have a dollar value of 0 since that is the goal for all areas
- Option #10 and #14 were used because that is what most closely resembled what is taking place
- The method can be reworked for municipalities

- A total cost in dollars is a number that is being used for legislators
- It was asked if the new idea includes paying money into a fund for the participation match
    - Brian said that in theory the participation match can be met by service projects and other items alone, and that he was okay with that. The money, if any is spent, does not go to the state, but is spent directly locally on things that count toward the participation match
- It will still need to be worked out how much various activities are worth?
- A conscious effort being made to have decisions made at as local a level as possible
- How would the map be used?
    - Identify which areas are at the greatest risk and focus efforts on those areas to try and move them into a lower risk category
- What is expected from the dollars that are spent?
    - Spend those dollars on Prevention, Preparedness, and Mitigation activities
- Would it be helpful if municipalities brought FFSL what they have spent in the past and what activities they are/have engaged in that they feel would go toward the match?
    - Yes
- It was suggested that it would be helpful to have the internal list that FFSL has on what they speculate will be qualifying activities to help the cities have a starting point in putting their numbers together
- A question on the accuracy of the example maps being shown
    - It was pointed out that the maps were meant for showing how the method works, and that the data that was used to put the maps together is being updated and fine tuned
    - Areas outside of a geographic area will also have some bearing on what the areas inside the area get categorized (political boundaries don't create a vacuum in actual geography)
- A discussion about the transition period from old system to the new one.
    - $8 million with a state match, and the ability to spend unappropriated dollars if needed
    - The current state suppression fund is based on a 10 years average, and appropriations are based on that
    - The new program will be phased in
- What about phasing out county dollars?
    - An idea about returning the money to the counties and letting them use that for their first year's match was discussed, but not decision yet
- The policy bill and the financing bill will be separate bills during the legislative session
- A question on whether or not the legislature is really going to buy off on this idea
    - Yes. Brian explained Sen. Vickers has been working hard on that and laying the necessary ground work