

## COMMISSIONERS MINUTES

AUGUST 15, 2013

The Elmore County Commissioners met in an Emergency Session on the above date in the Commissioners Room, basement of the Elmore County Courthouse, 150 South 4<sup>th</sup> East, Mountain Home, Idaho.

Present at the meeting were Chairman Al Hofer, Commissioners Bud Corbus and Wes Wootan, Clerk Barbara Steele and Deputy Clerk Shelley Hooper.

The purpose of this Emergency Session was to discuss the devastation of ranchers and farmers due to the Elk Complex and Pony Complex Fires.

In the audience were Senator Bert Brackett, Dale Nalder of the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security, Connie Tharp, of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mayor Tom Rist, Mountain Home Fire Chief Al Bermensolo, Carol Killian, Disaster Services Coordinator and Mir Seyedbagheri of the Extension Office.

Commissioner Corbus stated that due to the devastation from the wildfires, critical steps for recovery need to be taken immediately. Mr. Nalder explained that the primary role of the Bureau of Homeland Security is to “make whole” the county’s roads, bridges, water supplies, etc. during a disaster emergency. The Bureau will help with needs that the county has identified that they cannot provide their citizens due to the disaster, with “life and property” being the number one concern. Mr. Nadler explained the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) that is in place for Elmore County. Mir Seyedbagheri, Extension Office, explained that Elmore County is currently in drought disaster emergency status and that maybe some of that emergency assistance can correspond with the fire disaster assistance to help the individuals in need. The Bureau of Homeland Security does not handle “individual ranchers with individual needs”, their role is in helping the county infrastructure as a whole. Individuals who have lost livestock, feed and the ability to feed their animals should contact the State Department of Agriculture for guidance. He believes that the Department of Agriculture will have programs in place for these individuals. Debbie Chandler, of the Farm Services Agency, explained the Emergency Conservation Program, which gives emergency, low interest loans to be used for rebuilding fences and clearing lands of debris after a disaster. Currently, there is no funding in place, but if there is a great need, the funding will become available. The more individuals who apply, the quicker the funding will be available. They also have an Emergency Haying and Grazing Program which can be made available as the need arises. Connie Tharp, of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, explained that as soon as it is safe to go into the disaster areas, they will assess the rangelands and things needed for livestock. They will then have the potential for two programs, the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, through the Federal Bureau of Homeland Security and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. She encouraged ranchers to contact her office with as much information as possible, such as acreage, livestock numbers, etc. Once her team is allowed to go into the affected areas and assess the damages, they will use this information as a starting

point. Ms. Tharp stated that she received an email from Idaho Fish and Game this morning and they are willing to come up with \$100,000.00 worth of seed that will be available to individual land owners in the burned out areas. Ms. Chandler explained that in the past, the Farm Services Agency has offered a Livestock Assistance Program which has paid for cattle losses. The program is currently tied up in the Farm Bill, but once the bill passes, they will make the program retroactive. She stressed the importance of good documentation by individuals of cattle losses. Taking pictures of lost cattle, documenting the number of lost cattle and third party verification of the lost cattle will all be critical information needed in the repayment to individuals once the program is activated. Waivers for early re-seeding will be available for individuals who want to start re-seeding before the programs are available. They can be reimbursed for the seeding as long as they have the waiver. Mr. Seyedbagheri will put together a list of contact phone numbers of key personnel and get them distributed. General discussion followed.

Motion by Hofer, second by Wootan, to approve Resolution No. 522-13 Corrected and Restated First Extension of Declaration of Local Disaster Emergency. The resolution was signed as an emergency as Dale Nadler, of the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security, needed the resolution immediately for the FMAG process.

**HOFER** ..... -**AYE**  
**CORBUS** ..... -**AYE**  
**WOOTAN** ..... -**AYE**

**Motion carried and so ordered.**

Motion by Hofer, second by Corbus, to adjourn.

**HOFER** ..... -**AYE**  
**CORBUS** ..... -**AYE**  
**WOOTAN** ..... -**AYE**

**Motion carried and so ordered.**

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**ALBERT HOFER, Chairman**

**ATTEST:**

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**BARBARA STEELE, Clerk**