

Agricultural Burning Practices and Research Task Force No. 116

Meeting Summary

Date: June 5, 2025

Location: Hybrid Meeting at Spokane Dept of Ecology, also held on Teams

Members Present, Affiliation, Representing

Rob Dengel (Chair, alternate for Karin Baldwin), Air Quality Program, Department of Ecology

Larry Cochran, Washington Assoc. of Conservation Districts, Conservation Districts

Scott Windsor, Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency, E. Wash. Local Air Authorities

Scott Steinbacher, WA Dept of Agriculture, WA Dept of Agriculture

Jay Penner, Washington Association of Wheat Growers, Agricultural Community

Mike Buckley, Alfalfa Seed Industry, Agricultural Community

Aaron Esser, WSU Agronomy, Academia

Members Absent, Affiliation, Representing

Dan McCarthy, Okanogan Horticultural Association, Agricultural Community

Chris Skidmore, Whitman County Public Health Dept, Public Health

Karen Lewis, WSU Extension, Academia (Tree Fruit)

Introductions, Announcements

The 116th Agricultural Burning Practices and Research Task Force (Task Force) meeting was held on June 5, 2024 in person at the Ecology Office in Spokane and via Teams online. The Task Force meeting began with the introduction of Task Force members and guests.

The June meeting of the Task Force is normally reserved for hearing a Spring burning summary and approving any changes to the Best Management Practices (BMPs), and hearing updates on research funded upon recommendation of the Task Force.

Research Presentations

The Task Force heard a presentation from researchers with an interim report on research conducted so far using funds awarded by Ecology, and a proposal to conduct research responding to Ecology's Request for Research Proposals of up to \$100,000 in research proposals.

The project,

Vermi-Treatment Solutions: Enhancing Air Quality and Toxic Chemical Removal Through Sustainable Orchard Wood Utilization and Vermi-Treatment Filtration Systems

is available at [Department of Ecology - Committees, Boards, and Workgroups \(wa.gov\)](https://www.wa.gov/department-of-ecology/committees-boards-and-workgroups)

The progress made so far on this project has been mostly to design, purchase and test equipment with which to conduct the study. The next progress report will be given at the next task force meeting in November.

Summer Weather Forecast

Jeremy Wolf, from the National Weather Service, delivered a presentation on the summer weather forecast. Hot and dry weather is forecast, with potential impacts on wildfires and smoke. Much remains dependent on the timing of lightning and wind events.

Washington Agricultural Burn Program News and Updates

Daniel Matsche of the Washington Department of Ecology delivered a presentation on the Spring season burning in Eastern Washington. He shared that the number of acres burned has reverted to average after a very high number of acres in 2023. He also stated that there have been no burn complaints so far this year related to agricultural burning, with 20 complaints related to outdoor (residential) burning. Also highlighted were several new air monitoring locations in Eastern Washington.

BMP's

One of the required activities at the June meeting of the Agricultural Burning Task Force is either to modify or reconfirm the existing Best Management Practices (BMP's), and to institute new BMP's.

There were no changes to the BMPs this year, other than to revise the expiration date to June 30, 2025. These changes were accepted by the Task Force unanimously. The BMP's are available at [Agricultural burning - Washington State Department of Ecology](https://www.wa.gov/department-of-ecology/agricultural-burning)

Round Table Discussion

Several topics were discussed by the Task Force Members.

- Scott Windsor shared that the Spokane Clean Air Agency no longer has a registration program for marijuana growers. They can still investigate complaints and enforce violations, but the registration program was no longer useful and was costly to the Agency.

- Mike Buckley shared that Alfalfa seed markets appear to be recovering to some extent, so we can expect more burning from that sector in the future.
- Jay Penner shared that between the use of herbicides, no-till or low-tillage farming, the tool of burning, and innovations in the agricultural industry, the erosion problems which were so prevalent in the Columbia Basin and on the Palouse have become much less in the past few decades. He feels this is a story which needs to be broadcast as a success story.
- Aaron Esser shared that in his opinion, the biggest threat to the success of cereal grain farming in Eastern Washington over the next 15 years will be the spread of herbicide-resistant weeds.

Next Meeting

The next meeting (Meeting No. 117) of the Agricultural Burning Practices and Research Task Force will be on Wednesday, November 6, 2024.