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(Neb.)-Community Brainstorms Ways To Move Forward Post-Fires [Listen](#)

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 10/02/2012 03:50 PM

Photo: Panhandle Public Health District director Kim Engel records peoples' thoughts during the fire recovery planning session Monday night. (Photo by KCSR-Roxie Graham-Marski)

(CHADRON)-Approximately 100 government officials, firefighters, landowners, and other interested individuals from Dawes, Sheridan, and Sioux Counties met Monday evening for a fire recovery planning session at Chadron State College. The main objective of the evening was to identify areas in need of action and steps toward improving situations of concern with the overarching idea to create a plan for the next three months. Commissioners from the three counties decided to hold the meeting with hopes of gaining more insight into what the community is needing post-fire. That way when Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman visits the area later this month, the commissioners will be able to discuss the area's needs with him face-to-face. Dawes County commissioner Stacy Swinney thought the meeting was successful in helping to hammer out some issues of concern.

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Kim Engel and Sara Sulzbach with the Panhandle Public Health District facilitated the discussion, asking those in attendance to share areas of current reality post-fire and what it might take to turn the current situation into a victory. They encouraged participants to envision a window and to describe what they saw out the window on the day after everything had successfully been returned to its ideal state. People mentioned green grass and trees, roads and fences repaired, organized well-funded reforestation, proper management of remaining resources, and enough enthusiasm to keep people working together for the common good. The main need that kept continuously surfacing during the discussion was the need for moisture, whether rain or snow. Swinney said nearly everything hinges on that variable.

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Doak Nickerson with the Nebraska Forest Service said moisture would help in a variety of ways, and now is the perfect time for replanting efforts in particular.

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Nickerson says he really hopes we do get that three feet of snow anytime in the near future. Swinney says aerial seeding is one of the items on his list to ask the governor about.

Various entities are working to provide assistance to those impacted by the fires and wishing to learn more on various post-fire topics. There will be a Today's Forest Workshop involving information on best management practices on Saturday, October 20th from 2:00-5:30 p.m. at Chadron State Park's Central Building. For more information, call Doak Nickerson at 432-3255.

There will also be a Fire and Drought Recovery Session on October 23rd at the Hay Springs Fire Hall. Information will include winter supplementation, grazing deferment and stocking rates, tax implications, and FSA/NRCS possible programs. Two more sessions are tentatively being planned for October 9th on the Rosebud Indian Reservation and October 24th or 25th on the the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in conjunction with South Dakota State University. For more information, call Cindy Tusler at 327-2312.

(Questions? Comments? E-mail news@chadrad.com.)

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