

Date: 8/7/2017

Who: Robin Baker, Field Representative

Office: Sen. Steve Daines

Phone: 406-453-0148 Xt. 11

EMDD Manager Diane Friez and PAO Mark Jacobsen returned a call by Robin Baker. She had called earlier regarding the details of her visit with Mr. Bill Harris and his observations of the Bridge Coulee Fire (part of the Lodgepole Complex). Robin had recently spoken with Bill and was looking to clarify the situation further.

We explained the nature of the complex (made of 4 large fires) and discussed this office's August 4 visit with Bill at his residence where staff listened to his concerns and shared information regarding events that occurred on the Bridge Coulee and the other simultaneously-burning fires of the complex.

Robin asked questions regarding communications during the complex (radio, phone) and the level of reception in the area. She was looking into some of the particulars on legislation Bill is looking to pass that would improve communications statewide for local, state and federal partners dealing with emergencies.

Robin also asked questions regarding BLM-managed WSAs and we clarified the differences of those areas in the Miles City Field Office as opposed to those managed by the U.S. Forest Service in the western part of the state; as Robin had been involved with previous local outreach by the USFS related to their WSAs. Her experience with BLM-managed areas was limited.

We also shared details of the Bridge Coulee Fire and the work of the assigned firefighters, their visits with Bill (Incident Commander, Resource Advisor, other firefighters), the nature of the WSA which determined firefighting tactics (in safer areas, versus death traps) and, the fact that expending resources in dangerous topography would have made little/no difference in the outcome of the Bridge Coulee Fire. We emphasized that the land designation did not determine the fire response and in this case, that was determined by weather conditions, fire behavior, and safety concerns. The main priority was structure and property protection up and down Old Stage Road and firefighters were active all along the line with Bill's neighbors, to include a medivac of a private individual.

She seemed happy with the answers to her questions and said she'd call again if needed.