

**NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP
OCTOBER 1997 MEETING MINUTES
NWCG 70TH MEETING**

The 70th meeting of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group was held in Portland, Oregon, October 7 to 8, 1997.

Members attending: Rick Gale, National Park Service
Roger Erb, Fish and Wildlife Service
Les Rosencranse, Bureau of Land Management
Mary Jo Lavin, Forest Service
Steve Haglund, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Tim Murphy, Montana Division of Forestry,
representing Don Artley
Jim Hull, NASF, Texas Forest Service
Jim Stumpf, Executive Secretary

Guests Attending: October 7, 1997

Terry Hueth, BLM State FMO/Deputy Director of Operations
Mike Lowry, Center Manager,
NWCG-welcome to the center
Clark Seely, Oregon Department of Forestry,
Director of Fire Protection
John Skeels, USFS
John Gebhard, IRMWT
Gerry Day, BLM
Jim Smalley, NFPA
George Martin, TWT
Andrea Wojtasek, USFS
Neal Hitchcock, USFS-NIFC
Mike Edrington, USFS

October 8, 1997:

Dennis McCumber, FWS-OR
Clark Seely, Oregon Department of Forestry,
Director of Fire Protection
Mike Edrington, USFS

SUBJECT: Approval of the minutes from the 69th NWCG meeting.

DISCUSSION: The final minutes were mailed after the 69th NWCG meeting after member review and acceptance. No changes or concerns were expressed over the minutes.

MOTION: Approve the NWCG 69th meeting minutes as sent out July 1997.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Resource Ordering Status (ROSS) project update.

DISCUSSION: The project team has reviewed existing products from California, Washington, FEMA, etc. to attempt to take advantage of existing government Software that would accomplish similar tasks identified by ROSS. The Multi Agency Incident Resource Processing System (MIRPS) used in California will provide resource status and accomplish some additional dispatching activities. The ROSS Project Team recommends combining the MIRPS and ROSS efforts during FY 1998. The team feels this will be the best course of action to capitalize on work and investment already completed. It will also expedite delivery of the system to the field.

The proposal will make the project an NWCG effort in collaboration with the California agencies currently involved.

A transition team (ROSS and MIRPS) will work to combine both systems and recommended the best way to proceed in combining the work that needs to be done. Once implemented, the program will standardize the way that all wildland fire dispatchers will do business.

A NWCG letter expressing concerns about the combining of systems needs to be sent to California and should be a guide to the transition team. John Gebhard will draft a letter for NWCG to be sent to MIRPS management. We will also need to identify who will be accountable for the combining and implementation of the systems.

MOTION: Combine MIRPS and ROSS projects in FY 98; establish a transition team, and send a letter to the MIRPS Project Management Board from NWCG expressing NWCG issues and concerns. NWCG members need to send concerns or questions regarding the combination of the two systems to John Gebhard by November 7, 1997.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Messaging project update.

DISCUSSION: John Gebhard, Information Resources Management Working Team (IRMWT) provided an update on the Messaging Project. The Messaging problem (E-mail) needs to be resolved between agencies before proceeding with ROSS. E-mail is a critical need to move information electronically to all agencies. Lotus has offered a solution for Interior

Agencies. The Forest Service will not have the same capabilities as the Interior agencies but there will be ways to work the system. States will also be able to connect thru the Internet. Cost of the Messaging for Fiscal Year 1998 is estimated at \$20,000. The \$20,000 for the project is included in the budget for the IRMWT. It is probably too early to come up with a final project cost.

SUBJECT: IRMWT Strategy Project update.

DISCUSSION: The original presentation of the Strategy Project was made in Emmitsburg, Maryland at the 66th NWCG meeting. The information has also been published in the PMS document, *Information Resource Management Strategy Project: Wildland Fire Business Model*, PMS 909. This project was initiated to provide greater efficiency between various systems. It is estimated that about 115 duplicate systems have been built to do jobs; the IRMWT will try to combine these through their Strategy Project. About fifty percent of the original projects proposed have been started or are completed.

SUBJECT: Infrastructure proposal.

DISCUSSION: This is a IRMWT follow up item from the 69th NWCG meeting to develop alternatives to the proposals. Four alternatives were discussed, these are:

- 1) Develop and implement Infrastructure/Framework for each project, basically the current process. This option provides little to no commitment of staff or funding to any one project once it is completed. One of the missing elements in this approach is the difficulty and time needed to build on any work done on previous automation projects without a detailed review of the previous project.
- 2) Identify a permanent staff with Infrastructure/Framework responsibilities. This is the IRMWT preferred alternative. This alternative will focus resources for the creation of national interagency infrastructure goals, objectives and priorities.
- 3) Assign the Infrastructure/Framework responsibility to existing staff. This alternative would identify an IRM lead and provide other positions by assigning NWCG responsibilities to existing staff.
- 4) Contract for core activities for Infrastructure/Framework staff and functions. The framework, policy, oversight guidance and standards are the responsibilities of the government. It is possible to contract for a portion of the duties but will require a continuation of contract commitment in subsequent years.

MOTION: Adopt alternative 2 proposed by IRMWT as presented . The IRMWT needs to put together a report on staffing, reporting channels, and cost with alternatives. The position should be funded by NWCG with supervision and direction from the agency of the employees in the lead. Written documentation will be available for distribution to NWCG second week of Jan 1998.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: National Interagency Fire Statistics Information Project (NIFSIP).

DISCUSSION: John Skeels, Forest Service, Project Manager provided an update on the status of the project to date. There are several issues facing the NIFSIP group, such as terminology, financial systems, coding structures, fire numbering and the reporting process and definition of a fire. Approximately \$100,000 has been spent on NIFSIP to date. The program is planned for full implementation between October 1 and December 30, 1998.

SUBJECT: Wildland Fire Qualification Subsystem Guide, ICS 310-1

DISCUSSION: John Roberts, Forest Service, National Advanced Resource Technology Center is leading the group effort to complete this project. The final date for completion of the project has not been designated and will depend on the amount of field comments on 310-1.

SUBJECT: OSHA Fire Standards.

DISCUSSION: The OSHA Fire Brigade Standards Committee has not been formed as of this time. Rick Gale, NPS, will continue to follow up on this activity.

SUBJECT: Chair change on the IRMWT.

DISCUSSION: A Chair change on the IRMWT is planned for their next meeting. We need to look at an Agency Administrator as a member of this team and other working teams.

MOTION: Approve Mike Funston, Forest Service, to replace John Gebhard as Chair of IRMWT.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Pack Test update

DISCUSSION: The Forest Service has run into opposition from the Union for use of the proposed Pack Test. The Union intends to attempt to block the implementation date of January 1, 1998. The Union considers this test as a condition of employment. discriminatory by gender and age. They intend to ask the Forest Service to do a Civil Rights Impact Analysis Assessment on the Pack Test. Their premise is that the Pack Test is work related. The work relationship of the Pack Test has been verified by Brian Sharkey, Missoula Technology and Development Center. The Forest Service is looking at alternatives but may have to back off on the start-up date for the Pack Test. A change in Forest Service start up dates should not preclude other agencies from meeting the current change of physical fitness standards. This is only a Forest Service issue at this time and no NWCG action is required. Mary Jo Lavin, Forest Service, feels that the issue will be resolved prior to the current implementation date.

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 1998 budget.

DISCUSSION: NWCG worked on finalizing the preliminary budget presented at the 69th NWCG meeting. Working Team Liaisons or Chairs had the opportunity to respond to questions or changes from the preliminary budget proposal.

George Martin, Training Working Team, discussed their position in falling behind a little on projects primarily because of vacancies at the NIFC training center. S/J-400 is moved up to FY 98 but S/J-440 will be delayed until FY 99. \$40,000 in TWT budget for Interface Courses is for needed assessment work. Propose increase in the preliminary budget for S-320 from \$105,000 to \$114,500 and delete S/J 440, reducing the cost by \$9,500.

It was agreed to maintain the NWCG budget level agreed to in June 1995 at \$1,158,300. Fiscal Year 1997 was low at a \$989,500 level. The preliminary budget level for FY 98 is at \$1,014,300. One concern expressed was the share provided by the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA, the parent agency, may be undergoing some financial constraints that would limit participation, but a telephone call to Tom Minnich confirmed the U. S. Fire Administration's continued support .

MOTION: Approve the budget as submitted.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Fire Shelter Specifications, Safety and Health Working Team

DISCUSSION: No report was available from the SHWT. This topic will be carried over to February 1998 meeting.

SUBJECT: Prescribed Fire and Fire Effects Working Team (PFFEWT) air quality issues

DISCUSSION: The work proposed by the PFFEWT will coincide with the work being carried out by the Forest Service in its Air Quality endeavors. The PFFEWT has the funding in its FY 98 budget for \$30,000 for an interagency Air Quality Express Workshop. The workshop should produce some detailed information where wildland fire agencies and groups like the Environmental Protection Agency and other air quality groups should be headed in the future.

MOTION: NWCG supports the Air Quality Express Workshop planned for November 1997.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Incident Demobilization Vehicle Safety Inspection Form

DISCUSSION: The Incident Operations Standards Working Team (IOSWT) recommended that NWCG adopt the Incident Demobilization Vehicle Safety Inspection Form. This form was submitted to the working team from the Firescope group in California.

MOTION: Approve the form as submitted.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Crew Study Plan and crew typing guidelines.

DISCUSSION: The IOSWT recommends that the crew study be part of the ICS 310-1 review. Typing of crews is the

responsibility of the IOSWT. The numbers of crews is the responsibility of NICC, Boise. This recommendation and process will be carried over to the February 1998 meeting.

SUBJECT: NWCG budget distribution process.

DISCUSSION: There appears to be some confusion by some of the Working Teams over how they actually receive the funding approved by NWCG. Andrea Wojtasek, Forest Service, will develop a briefing paper on how a WT will receive its funding. The paper will outline how the funds are distributed to the designated spending source from the WT.

MOTION: The information paper being prepared should include how much was approved in the budget by working team, how the Chair of the working team receives the funds, and state travel distribution. This will be sent to the working teams annually with the transmittal of the final budget document.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Establishing priorities in wildland and prescribed fire

DISCUSSION: We need to nationally be able to prioritize resource distribution for prescribed fire, wildfire, etc. States need to be involved with the final decisions on resource distribution. The National Multi-Agency Coordination group does not make priority decisions on individual fires. The national MAC sets priorities within specific geographical areas. The Geographical Area Coordinating Groups (GACG) set specific priorities within their identified geographical areas. It appears that there is confusion between the roles of NICC, GACG, etc.

MOTION: Identify a group to define the rules of engagement for NICC, and GACG in fire and mobilization of resource decisions. The group will develop a proposal for the February 1998 NWCG meeting. The proposed group, listed below will be Multi-Agency including state representation:

Jerry Williams, Forest Service, Chair
Clark Seely, Oregon
Ron Dunton, BLM
Mike Long, Florida

Rick Gale, Park Service
Steve Haglund, Indian Affairs
Charles Denton, Forest Service
Candice Gregory, California.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: National Weather Service Modernization.

DISCUSSION: Roger Erb discussed a letter recently sent to retired General Jack Kelly, Assistant Administrator for Weather Services outlining fire weather needs for wildland and prescribed fires. The modernization and potential down-sizing of the Weather Service continues to be a concern that we need to provide follow-up on. It was suggested the Fire Weather Working Team be the group assigned to provide this follow up.

SUBJECT: Pacific Northwest Coordinating Groups action on weather service problems

DISCUSSION: Gerry Day provided a briefing on the activities of the PNWCG Weather Assessment Team. The group was formed to accomplish a local study on potential service deficiencies in the Weather Service Modernization, loss of dedicated fire weather forecasters and increased user needs of fire weather services. The group will continue working on the results of improving weather services.

SUBJECT: Weather Service follow up

DISCUSSION: NWCG needs to continue to be informed and take a proactive lead in the weather service modernization process. At this time there is no work group within NWCG designated to accomplish this activity.

MOTION: Sunset the existing Fire Weather Advisory Group (FWAG) and reconstitute a Fire Weather Working Team (FWWT). The new group will develop a charter and identify ways to complement the National Weather Service and what needs to be delivered to the fire fighter. It was suggested that Gerry Day, BLM-OR, be appointed as Chair. Other considerations for the Working Team may include:

Bill Boyes, WA DNR

Chris Fontana, CA-FS

Roger Tucker, FS

Bill Clark, BLM, ID

Deborah Holle, Balcones Canyonlands Miles Knight, SC (Current member of NFWAG)

NWR (Texas)

MaryJo Lavin will be the Liaison to new WT. The Chair will send formal letter to existing FWAG thanking them for the job well done on the advisory group.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: DoD and other agency participation in NWCG training

DISCUSSION: The Training Working Team (TWT) has questioned the prioritization of non-NWCG members for training vacancies in National courses. No problem exists when vacancies are available but when competition exists there is a reluctance to admit non-NWCG members. The issue applies only to the National Advanced Resource Technology Center (NARTC), not the geographical area training. The question involves tuition vs. non-tuition and commitment of cadre time. No recommendation has been made from the TWT.

MOTION: TWT needs to provide a recommendation and accomplish the staff work for the recommendation. This should be presented to NWCG at the February 1998 meeting.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: U. S. Coast Guard participation on IOSWT

DISCUSSION: The U. S. Coast Guard Marine Safety program has recently adopted the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Incident Command System (ICS). They are requesting to be a participant of the IOSWT to better enable them to stay current and learn more about ICS application. They have not requested NWCG membership.

MOTION: The IOSWT should make the decision to accept or deny the Coast Guard request. NWCG has no objections to the either decision. Rick Gale, IOSWT Liaison, will discuss this with the Coast Guard and the IOSWT.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Northern Rockies Coordinating Group concerns

DISCUSSION: The Northern Rockies Group was concerned about NWCG not adhering to our July 1, 1997 on communication with GACG. The letter in question was sent by the National MAC Group and was not an NWCG decision or correspondence. The MAC Group deals with operational activities rather than the policy/decision making from NWCG. Using retirees as Incident or Area Commanders and for the Command and General Staff is not appropriate. NWCG is not responsible for the decision; the National MAC group issued the original direction.

MOTION: The NWCG Chair will write a memo to the Northern Rockies Group to make certain that all is understood and agreed.

SECONDED AND CARRIED

SUBJECT: Working Team files at the National Interagency Fire Center, Boise.

DISCUSSION: It was suggested that if there was a location at the fire center to establish permanent files it would provide for greater consistency in records and save expense in transferring files when a Chair was changed. Currently, the teams ship files and historical records to the incoming chair. Roger Erb will follow up on available space to store files at the fire center and report accomplishments at the next meeting.

SUBJECT: IRMWT Strategy Project approval

DISCUSSION: The Strategy Project was completed by the IRMWT for the NWCG 66th meeting. NWCG has approved several parts of the three findings and multiple recommendations but has never agreed or rejected the recommendations of the WT.

MOTION: IRMWT findings 1-3 in the NWCG IRM Strategy Project document should be approved as submitted.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Prescribed Fire and Fire Effects Working Team role in air quality, smoke management, EPA, and other related activities.

DISCUSSION: Is the direction to the PFFEWT clear as they continue their actions and interactions with non-NWCG groups? It would be desirable that NWCG receive a letter of request from the smoke management, Grand Canyon Visibility Group, Fire Policy, and EPA groups to formally request NWCG/PFFEWT involvement with the air quality work groups outside of NWCG. Roger Erb will discuss this with Jim Douglas, Department of the Interior, to see if he will make the request of air quality groups to formalize the requests for NWCG assistance. NWCG may want to write a letter to these exterior groups and become proactive in offering NWCG assistance. Roger Erb will draft a letter for NWCG Chairs approval.

SUBJECT: National Multihazard Mitigation Council

DISCUSSION: NWCG received correspondence inviting us to participate with the subject group. This is not within NWCG's scope of work. A letter was sent back to the Multihazard Council rejecting their offer.

SUBJECT: Engine Typing status

DISCUSSION: The Fire Equipment Working Team is soliciting field input to the typing status. FEWT is carrying out assignment from Federal Fire Policy Review. A report will be submitted in February 1998.

SUBJECT: ICS Training and testing materials

DISCUSSION: Carryover from previous mtg. Test questions password protected. This has not been completed and will be carried to February 1998.

SUBJECT: Roles of Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council (FFALC) and NWCG

DISCUSSION: Council of State Foresters is requesting NWCG to identify the specific role of the FFLAC and the actions each is responsible for. MaryJo Lavin, Chair of the FFLAC, sent a response to Larry Kotchman, Chair of the Council of Western State Foresters. Additionally, the NWCG Chair will send specific clarification documents showing the difference in roles to Larry Kotchman.

SUBJECT: Wildland/Urban Interface Advisory Group

DISCUSSION: Jim Smalley discussed some of the current concerns of the Advisory Group. Getting information produced by the group out to the people who need it is a major concern. All future and some past publications are available on the Internet (<http://www.firewise.org>). There is limited printed material available through U.S. Fire Administration and NFPA. *Protecting your Home Against Wildfire* is out of stock but may be printed by the insurance industry for distribution. In addition, the Wildland/Urban Interface Advisory Group may print a limited supply in 1998.

Working agreements are a set of guidelines from the group that outlines how meetings are conducted and the decision making process. NASF has designated two new representatives to the group: Joe Stam,- Western

Representative, and Don Smith, Connecticut, Eastern Representative.

SUBJECT: State Travel Reimbursement

DISCUSSION: The Forest Service is converting to an electronic system at its National Finance Center (NFC). They are having considerable difficulties making payments to state travelers. Travel vouchers must be written identically to the travel authorization and submitted promptly. Within 30 days after authorization is approved the authorization expires. It is important that travelers submit current, accurate Travel Authorizations. Following are other items State travelers can do to make the system work better:

- 1) State Travel must go through Forest Service travel people for airline tickets.
- 2) State travelers who procure ticket will be required to obtain approval by the Department of Agriculture.
- 3) Authorization for private owned vehicle (POV) must be known in advance.
- 4) FAX travel Vouchers into NFC for processing.

The Department of the Interior travel system seems to be working much better than the Forest Service is experiencing. There may be a possibility that State travel processing could work through NIFC Interior agencies (specifically, NPS). The Park Service and other Interior agencies will do a some follow up on this possibility. Andrea Wojtasek, Forest Service, will document the state traveler requirements for reimbursement and this will be sent to the Working Team Chairs with the final budget advise.

Future meeting schedule:

February 10-12, 1998 starting at 1300 on the 10th, ending no later than noon on the 12th - San Antonio

June 9-11, 1998 - East Coast (0800 6/9 to 1700 6/10)

October 6 to 8, (0800 10/6 to 1700 10/7) - west coast

70th NWCG MEETING SUMMARY AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Accomplishment Date	Status
Combine MIRPS and ROSS Projects	Develop a letter for MIRPS expressing NWCG concerns in combining these programs.	John Gebhard	11/7/97	
Infrastructure for IRM	Develop a report on staffing, reporting channels, and cost including alternatives	John Gebhard	1/14/98	
ICS Training and testing materials in the Internet	Need to determine if or how password protection needs to be provided on Internet training examinations.	PMS - Roger Erb	2/98	
Update ICS 310-1	Status on the update process of ICS 310-1	IOSWT/NART C - Rick Gale, John Roberts	2/98	
OSHA Fire Brigade Standard Committee.	1. Provide Federal Registry information to NWCG on formation of the committee. 2. Nominate agency and NWCG member to the OSHA Committee.	Rick Gale NWCG Members	Current Current	
Fire Shelter Specifications	Follow-up and complete Shelter specifications.	SHWT	2/98	

Crew Study Plan and Crew Typing	Provide an update on the status of typing crews	IOSWT-Rick Gale	2/98	
Working Team files at NIFC	Provide file storage for master documents from all Working Teams and Advisory Groups	Roger Erb	2/98	
Distribute FY 1998 Budget	FY 98 distribution with explanatory letter on fund transfer.	Andrea Wojtasek, Forest Service	12/97	
State travel	Develop and distribute a letter to WT/AG Chairs outlining State Travel requirements	Andrea Wojtasek, Forest Service	12/97	
Priorities for resource distribution for wildland and prescribed fire	Review committee recommendations	Jerry Williams, Rick Gale	2/98	
DoD and other agency participation in NWCG Training.	Provide complete information on problem and recommended solutions.	Mary Jo Lavin, TWT	2/98	
Fire Weather Working Team	Complete the charter and submit for approval.	Gerry Day/MaryJo Lavin	2/98	
FEWT Engine Typing	Solicit agency comment on proposal and modify recommendation if necessary	FEWT - Roger Erb	2/98	