

NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

71st MEETING MINUTES

February 1998

The 71st meeting of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group was held in San Antonio, Texas, February 10-12, 1998.

Members Attending: Don Artley (Chair), Montana Division of Forestry
Roger Erb (Vice Chair), Fish and Wildlife Service, NIFC
Rick Gale, National Park Service
Les Rosenkrance, Bureau of Land Management, NIFC
Mary Jo Lavin, Forest Service
Bill Sommers, Forest Service Research
Steve Haglund, Bureau of Indian Affairs, NIFC
Jim Hull, NASF, Texas Forest Service
Jim Stumpf, Executive Secretary

Guests Attending: February 10, 1998:

Mark Stanford, Texas Forest Service
John Skeels, Forest Service, ROSS Project Manager
Rodger Vorce, Bureau of Land Management - NIFC, IOSWT
Andrea Wojtasek, Forest Service
Neal Hitchcock, Forest Service - NIFC, ROSS Project
Bill Leenhouts, Fish and Wildlife Service - NIFC, FUWT
Pat Entwistle, Bureau of Land Management
Training Working Team, in discussion of ICS 310-1
Paul Chamberlin, NRCG
Nelda St. Clair, NRCG

February 11, 1998:

Mark Stanford, Texas Forest Service
Andrea Wojtasek, Forest Service
Pat Entwistle, Bureau of Land Management

February 12, 1998:

Paul Broyles, National Park Service - NIFC

SUBJECT: Approval of minutes from 70th NWCG meeting.

DISCUSSION: The final 70th meeting minutes were mailed after member review and acceptance.

MOTION: Approve the 70th meeting minutes as corrected and distributed in December 1997.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: ROSS/MIRPS Project.

DISCUSSION: The project group is completing action items within time frames set. They have met in California with the California Department of Forestry, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service to determine the feasibility of combining the MIRPS System and the ROSS Project. There was support from all agencies to combine both projects in order to optimize the strong points of each. Design and testing are planned for fall and winter of 1998. This will be an important national and local dispatch tool. The estimated cost of completion is in excess of \$1,000,000, depending on project design parameters. The ROSS Team is working on all aspects of the project. Project scope includes: implementation of an automated resource status and ordering system; automation of resource order forms and supporting documents at all levels, local through geographic areas. Functions not covered include: compilation and distribution of situation reports; design of preparedness levels; decision making processes that lead to ordering and assigning resources, and action taken once a resource reaches an incident.

To date \$370,000 has been spent on the ROSS project. A project accounting system is in place to help with continuing accounting. \$120,000 has come from NWCG, with the balance of funding from the Forest Service. The estimated time line for project completion will provide the maintenance and evaluation phase during the summer of 1999. Decision point of the project is with the NWCG Fiscal Year 1999 budget proposal. No other action is needed at this time.

SUBJECT: Rural fire protection in Texas.

DISCUSSION: Jim Hull and Mark Stanford, Texas Forest Service, provided a briefing of their organization and problems. There is an increasing population growth and workload for Texas and other States within the "Sun Belt." There are seven regions in the State with diverse fuels and people; 80% of the population live within Interstate highway corridors. Interstate 35 is the dividing line between east and west Texas. Forest resources are located in the eastern fifth of the State. Other ecosystems in the

State deal with all other resource types, from tropical to grasslands. Suppression tactics in the eastern part of the State are similar to Southeastern firefighting tactics.

Texas is taking a new approach to Statewide responsibility of volunteer fire departments and prevention mitigation teams. There are 1,800 volunteer fire departments with 45,000 volunteer firefighters. Volunteers provide primary initial attack and first reinforcement, but they do not do project type fires. These are handled by Texas Forest Service.

SUBJECT: ICS training and testing material on the Internet.

DISCUSSION: There has not been much progress on this issue. We have the capability to put material on the Internet, and can password-protect tests and answers on the Internet at this time. Some funding will be needed to convert course software prior to putting ICS training on the Net. There are no final indications of costs. NWCG consensus is that there is probably no reason to attempt to password protect ICS tests. Completion of ICS training is not mandatory for the qualification system. We will follow up at the June NWCG meeting.

SUBJECT: Crew typing.

DISCUSSION: The IOSWT has canvassed the Geographic Areas and, based on responses received, recommends leaving Type 1 and 2 standards for crews as they exist. They recommend no provisions be made for a Type 3 crew.

MOTION: Accept the IOSWT recommendation, but we may ask the IOSWT to take another look at crew typing based on the Tri-Data Report.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Fire shelter specifications.

DISCUSSION: The Missoula Technology and Development Center continues to work on the issue, but is not ready to make any positive recommendation at this time. There are many variables to be considered in shelter specifications such as weight, protection factor, durability, etc. A stainless steel shelter has been reviewed and tested; it seems to work, but does not appear to hold up well in the heat.

A new shelter design (similar to the one in use now, but with expanded corners and a built-in floor) should be available for the 1999 fire season. Some case changes to make the shelter easier to remove may also be ready for 1999 fire activity. Major testing and modification will not be available until 2003. NWCG would like to have a list of minimum standards and criteria for testing shelters. Jim Hull will pass this information back to the SHWT for action.

A new MTDC publication was highly recommended for wide distribution. This publication, Vehicle Entrapment Survival - MTDC (publication 9751-2817-MTDC) examines using a shelter versus staying in a vehicle.

SUBJECT: Area Command Position Task Books.

DISCUSSION: The Area Command Task Books are completed. These documents outline the role and responsibility for each Area Command position. The draft publications will be sent to IOSWT for review and inclusion in the NWCG 310-1 document.

SUBJECT: Revision of 310-1 / 330-1 Position Task Books.

DISCUSSION: Wildland fire qualification system documents are the responsibility of IOSWT, but the Team is receiving comment and close input from both the Training Working and Fire Use Working Teams. IOSWT is currently validating and revising the Task Books to ensure job requirements are accurate. The Training Working Team continues to support a performance-based system, rather than a training-based system. They recognize that some training courses, such as aviation and safety, will continue to be mandatory.

Generally, it is felt by the TWT, FUWT, and IOSWT that there is a problem in the implementation process, not within the qualification system itself. A teleconference, "*Wildland Fire Qualification System Application*," is planned for May 13, 1998, to provide guidance and continued implementation on the system to the field. Overhead for managing the project appears to have been underestimated. There has not been development of common instruction in administration and performance use of the qualifications system. This shortcoming is being addressed, and will be completed and presented as part of the teleconference.

The revised Position Task Books are scheduled to be sent from IOSWT to agencies for review in May 1998. Comments received will be jointly adjudicated between TWT and IOSWT. The revision of the qualification documents is scheduled to be ready for field use by spring 1999. The wildland fire qualification system will remain a performance-based system with the potential to modify some course requirements. 310-1 will outline minimum qualification standards for all fire jobs, including prescribed fire. The prescribed fire task books will be included in 310-1, rather than having the prescribed fire system in a separate publication.

No NWCG action is needed at this time, except to offer support to TWT, FUWT, and IOSWT to continue their effort in revision of 310-1 and the Position Task Books. Mandatory course requirements should be studied to ensure all are covered. This may require a change from where we are today. Agencies need to make sure that

qualification approval personnel accept the responsibility to make certain persons meet the qualifications before they are qualified. The NASF Fire Committee Chair will attempt to make a consolidated report on key issues from all States. All other agency personnel need to ensure that agency comments are made to the qualifications document as they become available for field review.

SUBJECT: Name and Charter change of Prescribed Fire and Fire Effects Working Team.

DISCUSSION: Changes in agency fire policy and currently accepted fire use terminology prompted PFFEWT to review their Charter. After close review and discussion, the team feels that "Fire Use Working Team" better reflects today's terminology and policy. They have submitted a Charter modification and name change for consideration.

MOTION: That NWCG accept the Charter modification and name change from PFFEWT. The new name will be Fire Use Working Team.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Wildland fire flow chart.

DISCUSSION: A flow chart issued with NWCG memo of June 16 that explained the partial implementation of Fire Management Planning has two minor errors. The block that states "No FMP or No 'zone' or No Rx Factors..." should be modified to state, "No FMP is approved or Human Caused." The second modification needed is on the "unsuccessful" block on the right side of the page; this needs an arrow returning the reader to the "Wildland Fire Situation Analysis" block.

MOTION: Approve the modifications discussed, including titling the chart. Roger Erb, Vice Chair, will make the modifications and send to Don Artley, Chair, for dating and approval. Don will also send the new chart to the field.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Working Team information storage at NIFC.

DISCUSSION: This is a follow-up to the topic brought up at the last NWCG meeting to provide storage for Working Teams at one central location. Space is available for this purpose.

MOTION: The NWCG Executive Secretary will send a memo to Working Teams to determine their individual storage needs. Team representatives will have responsibility for storage.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Pack Testing.

DISCUSSION: The Forest Service has received concurrence for the completed Civil Rights Needs Analysis on the Pack Test.

The Forest Service's union requires a brochure and video explaining how the test should be administered. This is in progress. Forest Service regions in the East, with typically early fire seasons, will be excused from the Pack Test for their early season testing. The Forest Service asks that other agencies participate in data collection from the Pack Test. Mary Jo Lavin will provide specific information on this participation at a later date. EFF and other personnel who do not pass the Pack Test may take the Step Test or the 1-½ mile run as a measure of fitness qualification. No further NWCG action is required at this time.

SUBJECT: Prescribed Fire Training Center.

DISCUSSION: Florida and Forest Service Region 8 have established a Prescribed Fire Training Center. Two classes have been completed to give trainees hands-on experience. The training covers all aspects of prescribed fire (crews to managers). New authorities for prescribed fire expenditures will permit individual agencies to pay their own personnel.

MOTION: Pass the proposal to Fire Use Working Team for review and action by our June meeting. NWCG support may need to look to other centers providing different geographical areas. The Training Working Team needs to be involved in the training aspects of the proposal. Specific instructions for review of the proposal will be sent to Working Teams for action.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: LCES/Standards for Survival training.

DISCUSSION: Paul Chamberlin and Nelda St.Clair from Northern Rockies Geographic Area presented a proposal for an alternative to the existing *Standards For Survival* course that is required annually by all agencies. The *Standards For Survival* course is good training, but tends to be redundant after several years. Northern Rockies has developed an alternative for the standard training that should improve retention and interest. The new training provides options within the scope of the curriculum while covering the mandatory aspects of training. A web site will house scenarios for use with the program (www.mt.blm.gov/fire/lces.html). Currently, three scenarios are developed,

but they want to expand this. The TWT approved the training, and recommends adoption of an alternative to the *Standards For Survival* training package.

MOTION: Provide the completed training package in the Publications Management System for distribution to the field.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Interagency satellite teleconference.

DISCUSSION: Pat Entwistle, BLM, reviewed program requirements and expectations for the video conference titled *Managing Wildland Fire: From Policy to Implementation* program scheduled for April 8, 1998. NWCG partners need to make sure the information is transmitted to field units for participation throughout as many geographical areas as possible. The program will be the result of lessons learned, not a "re-hashing" of old information.

SUBJECT: Engine typing.

DISCUSSION: This project originated from Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council in response to the Federal Fire Policy recommendation 52d. The Fire Equipment Working Team/Engine Sub-Group was tasked to do staff work and make recommendations to NWCG.

MOTION: We accept the FEWT recommendation on a combined alternative 2 and 3. We ask FEWT to convene a small group made up of subject matter experts (including the dispatch community, FEWT, and IOSWT) to mitigate a final decision raised by Western States, the IOSWT, and dispatch community on typing. The recommendation made by FEWT for training is beyond the scope of this project and should be deleted from the final report. A report should be provided to NWCG at their June 1998 meeting.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Department of Defense and other agency participation in NWCG training.

DISCUSSION: This project carried from our previous meeting. NWCG sent review and recommendations to the Training Working Team. The recommendation is that other agencies' participation is acceptable, based on space availability. NWCG members and local government forces who are sponsored by States have first choice in training class vacancies.

MOTION: Accept the Training Working Team recommendation to agree to participation from other agencies based on space available. NWCG members and local government

forces who are sponsored by States have first choice in training class vacancies. The class coordinator should make the decision on space available.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Reduction of NWCG FY 1998 budget.

DISCUSSION: The U.S. Fire Administration is no longer able to participate financially in NWCG activities. This leaves NWCG with a \$100,000 shortfall for this fiscal year's overall budget. Budget reductions provided by Working Teams follow:

- ◆ Fire Use Working Team reduction of \$1,500 from the publication of the *Smoke Management Guide*.
- ◆ Training Working Team reduction of \$60,000 from BIA change of station and course developer salary.
- ◆ Fire Equipment Working Team reduction of \$10,000 from *Fireline Explosive Investigation* project and \$5,000 from *Fireline Publications*.
- ◆ Fire Weather Working Team reduction of \$13,500 from *MICRO REMS Maintenance*.
- ◆ Wildland Fire Education Working Team reduction of \$10,000 from *Tribal Debris Burning Ordinance Demo* project.

MOTION: NWCG accept the reductions and work assigned listed for the Working Teams above. Andrea Wojtasek, Forest Service, will provide information on budget allocations to the Executive Secretary, who will transmit the information to all Working Teams.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: State travel payments.

DISCUSSION: The Forest Service will transfer State travel monies to NIFC/FS to accomplish payments. Technical problems with the Forest Service Finance Center have been resolved and Jeanette Butler, designated travel authority at the Fire Center, will provide oversight management for payments. Instructions and processing should be resolved by March 1, 1998. Andrea Wojtasek will provide information to the Executive Secretary on new procedures. The NWCG Executive Secretary will distribute this information to NWCG and Working Teams.

SUBJECT: U.S. Fire Administration NWCG membership.

DISCUSSION: It appears the Fire Administration will have problems continuing their membership in NWCG. It is suggested that participating agencies and NWCG issue letters to USFA opposing the non-funding and participation of USFA in NWCG. The

NWCG Chair will contact USFA to make a determination on the status of their continuance in NWCG.

SUBJECT: Wildland Fire Education Working Team survey results.

DISCUSSION: Preliminary results of the survey from the University of Idaho are still in process. The Working Team will be resolving some issues in the data from the University of Idaho. We will look for a report at the June 1998 NWCG meeting.

SUBJECT: S-520/620 *Advanced Incident Management/Area Command* nomination process.

DISCUSSION: Currently, Geographic Area Boards prioritize S-520 candidates and send this list to the National Advanced Resource Technology Center (NARTC) for assembly by teams. This procedure has always created problems in finalizing S-520 selections. Geographic Areas should continue to make recommendations to NARTC, but should meet with NARTC as a group and agree on attendees. This will save countless telephone negotiations in the process. Based on recommendations from Geographic Areas, the National MAC Group will select S-620 attendees.

MOTION: NWCG concurs with the procedures outlined and recommends the NWCG Chair send a letter to the Geographic Areas outlining procedures to be used in the nomination process.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Area Command organization.

DISCUSSION: The Advanced Incident Management/Area Command Steering Committee and the four National Interagency Area Commanders propose two recommendations for the Area Command organization. First, to emphasize teamwork and equality in the Area Command organization, they would like to change the titles to reflect "Assistant Area Commander Planning" (AACP) and "Assistant Area Commander Logistics" (AACL). The second recommendation is adoption of an "Area Command Aviation Coordinator" (ACAC) position. This information, once adopted, needs to be in ICS-310-1. The NWCG Executive Secretary will send a cover letter for the proposal needs to IOSWT for inclusion in ICS 310-1.

MOTION: Accept proposal from the Advanced Incident Management/Area Command Steering Committee.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Fire Weather Working Team Charter approval and membership.

DISCUSSION: The recently formed FWWT submitted a draft of their Charter and membership for approval. The FWWT Liaison will take a few minor Charter changes back to the Team. Once these changes have been made, the Charter will be sent to the NWCG Executive Secretary, who will follow up for approval.

MOTION: Approve the Charter as amended.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Weather issues.

DISCUSSION: Weather issues in general are of critical concern to NWCG members, and should have the attention of all member agencies. We need to be able to act promptly if alerted by the FWWT of potential problems or considerations from the Weather Service. *The Cooperative Agreement for Meteorological Services in Support of Agencies with Land and Fire Management Responsibilities* is circulating in the Weather Service at this time. The FWWT Chair recommends that NWCG send a letter to National Weather Service supporting approval and working together. Gerry Day, Chair of FWWT, will send a draft of the proposed letter to the NWCG Chair for approval and mailing.

SUBJECT: Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC).

DISCUSSION: Alan Jeffrey, CIFFC, has made a written request that a member of the NWCG Research Working Team be placed on the CIFFC Research Working Team. We do not have a Research Team, but would be willing to maintain a level of contact with the Canadians. The NWCG Chair will send a memo seeking more information on meeting frequency and meeting duration. Bill Sommers agreed to act as Liaison between NWCG and this CIFFC group.

SUBJECT: Non-fire emergencies.

DISCUSSION: Currently there is no mechanism for Federal wildland agencies to respond to non-fire emergencies. Agencies receive requests for assistance, but frequently are unable to offer it. BLM is seeking legislative authority so they may participate in a more proactive manner to make resources more available to counties or local governments. Authority currently exists to provide assistance on a reimbursable basis. Reimbursement must be agreed upon and will be needed from the local agency for refurbishment of used equipment.

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 1999 budget requests.

DISCUSSION: April 15, 1998, will be the date for FY 1998 budget submissions. The Executive Secretary will write to Working Teams and Advisory Groups requesting budget submission in NWCG format.

SUBJECT: IRMWT Infrastructure.

DISCUSSION: John Gebhard joined the meeting via conference call. Alternatives were reviewed and discussed. Four positions, a Lead and three subordinates, are considered in the proposal. In the preferred alternative, the Infrastructure Lead would administratively report to the IRMWT Liaison. The position will be provided by one of the Department of the Interior NWCG representatives. Once the lead position is filled subordinate positions will be filled as needed. The Lead position will be funded by NWCG as an addition to current NWCG funding. The budgeting provided will be an increase to the NWCG fiscal cap (previously set at \$1,000,000 during our 68th meeting in October 1996) by \$108,000, up to \$1,108,000.

The IRMWT will complete position classification after NWCG review of the Position Description. NWCG members will provide Position Description comments to the IRMWT Liaison. Subordinate positions will be filled after the Lead is in place. Subordinate Position Descriptions will be developed by the Lead with input from the IRMWT.

MOTION: Accept alternative 1 proposed by the IRMWT. Add \$65,000 to the NWCG budget to cover the IRMWT Lead if the position is filled during this fiscal year.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Digital radio communication.

DISCUSSION: There are formal discussions within Federal departments for use of digital (rather than analog) radio systems. NWCG will add an ad hoc working group to determine the problems and advantages of this radio communication change. The working group will follow interagency NWCG guidelines (Federal and State representation). Steve Jenkins, FS-NIFC, will be asked to organize the group. Mary Jo Lavin and Les Rosenkrance will provide written direction to Steve for organization of the group. Les will provide liaison with the new ad hoc working team.

MOTION: Develop a Radio Communication Task Force to provide staff work and information to NWCG. Don Artley and Jim Hull (NASF) will provide Steve Jenkins the names of two State persons (East and West) to serve on this working group.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

SUBJECT: Annual interagency fire meeting.

DISCUSSION: It was proposed that it may be advantageous for NWCG to sponsor an interagency fire meeting to provide a forum for fire personnel to meet and review similar concerns. The purpose of the meeting would be to discuss national level fire policy. States provide individual policies within themselves. It may be difficult to establish a national interagency fire meeting under the umbrella of NWCG. NWCG provides national policy decisions, and may not be the appropriate forum for such a broad group that would include all agency fire directors.

Federal Fire Policy implementation, safety, general training, equipment issues, research issues, system effects: Rather than holding a separate meeting, it may be more advantageous to coordinate existing agency fire meetings at the same time and location. If there were interagency issues or agenda issues, the interagency community could come together to satisfy interagency questions. There may be an interagency need, but NWCG should not provide the umbrella to do this.

MOTION: There is no need for an interagency meeting in 1998, but we will address this topic at the fall NWCG meeting. At that time we will determine if there is a need for an interagency meeting or GACC meeting in spring 1999.

SECONDED AND CARRIED.

FUTURE MEETINGS: June 16-17, 1998, East Coast (0800 to 1700 June 16 and 0800 to 1700 June 17) - FWS training facility in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Lodging would be off site in the local area. Roger Erb will make arrangements. September 22-23, 1998 - Missoula, Montana. Don Artley will provide arrangements.

71st NWCG MEETING SUMMARY AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

| Issue | Action | Responsibility | Accomplishment Date | Status |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| Continue combination of MIRPS and ROSS Projects | Work with the Projects to ensure budget proposals and work plans are submitted | John Gebhard | 4/15/98 | |
| IRM Infrastructure | Recruit for Lead and subordinate support positions | John Gebhard | 6/98 | |
| ICS training and testing materials on the Internet | Continue to determine work on installing ICS training courses on the Internet | PMS - Roger Erb | 6/98 | |
| Update ICS 310-1 | Status on update process of ICS 310-1 | IOSWT - Rick Gale | 6/98 | |
| Fire shelter specifications | Follow up and complete shelter specifications | Jim Hull/ SHWT | 6/98 | |
| Working Team files at NIFC | Determine Working Team and Advisory Group needs for file storage at NIFC | Executive Secretary | 6/98 | |
| Distribute FY98 budget | FY98 distribution with explanatory letter on fund transfer | Andrea Wojtasek, FS, NWCG Exec. Sec. | 3/98 | |
| State travel | Develop and distribute letter to WT/AG Chairs outlining State travel requirements | Andrea Wojtasek, FS, NWCG Exec. Sec. | 3/98 | |

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| Priorities for resource distribution for wildland and prescribed fire | Review committee recommendations | Jerry Williams, Rick Gale | 6/98 | |
| Area Command organization | Forward Area Command organizational changes to IOSWT for inclusion into ICS-310-1 | Executive Secretary | 3/98 | |
| Wildland fire flow chart | Make changes in chart and forward to Artley for approval and distribution | Roger Erb/Don Artley | 4/98 | |
| Prescribed Fire Training Center | Send memo to FUWT outlining procedures and evaluation information needed; FUWT provide follow-up | Executive Secretary/ FUWT | 6/98 | |
| WFEWT survey results | Provide results of U of I survey to member agencies | WFEWT/ Rick Gale | 6/98 | |
| S520/620 nomination process | Send memo to GACG outlining procedures for nominations for attendance at S-520/620 | Don Artley | 6/98 | |
| Weather issues | Send letter to Weather Service outlining importance of cooperative agreement and weather services | FWWT Chair/ Don Artley | 6/98 | |
| U.S. Fire Administration | Follow up with USFA to determine their long-term status with NWCG | Don Artley | 6/98 | |
| Digital radio communications | Outline ad hoc working group requirements and direction, select group and develop charter | Steve Jenkins/ Les Rosenkrance | 6/98 | |

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|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|------|--|
| Interagency annual fire meeting | Discuss and determine if a need exists for interagency or GAGC meeting | Don Artley | 9/98 | |
| Fire Weather Working Team | Complete Charter and submit for approval | Mary Jo Lavin/ Executive Secretary | 3/98 | |
| FEWT engine typing | Complete report on consolidated actions | FEWT - Roger Erb | 6/98 | |