

**NWCG/GACG Meeting
St. Louis, MO
May 15, 2003**

NWCG Members: Jim Stires, Chair, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Phil Street, Fish and Wildlife Service
Sue Vap, National Park Service
Robert Krepps, NASF, Missouri Department of Conservation
Kirk Rowdabaugh, NASF, Arizona State Land Department
Alice Forbes for Tom Harbour, Forest Service
Jim Erickson, Intertribal Timber Council
Hugh Wood, U.S. Fire Administration
Tim Murphy for Larry Hamilton, Bureau of Land Management
Jim Stumpf, Executive Secretary

GACG Members: Brian Shiplett, Rocky Mountain, Chair GACG
Charlie Keller, Eastern
Sue Husari, California
Sheldon Wimmer, Eastern Great Basin
Scott Billing, Alaska
Pam Ensley, Pacific Northwest
Tony Recker, Southern Area

Guests: Tory Majors, IBPWT
Allan Jeffrey, CIFFC
Barry Mathias, NWCG IRM-PMO
Allen Deitz, NWCG IRM-PMO

This meeting marks the third joint meeting with the Geographic Area Groups and NWCG. The meeting is designed to share information and enhance communication between NWCG, Geographic Areas and the field. The GACG members present developed a list of issues/subjects to be used as an agenda for the meeting. Following are brief minutes and resolutions of issues where applicable.

1. SUBJECT: Non-fire activity management

DISCUSSION: Presidential declarations are specific to each emergency. The payments and billing are articulated by FEMA and the Stafford Act. The Incident Business Handbook re-write will include a chapter on non-fire activity. Areas of non-emergency (APHIS/Shuttle recovery) will also be covered in the new handbook as well. Currently, we have not entered into an agreement with Homeland Security. State participants may continue to have problems if their State does not have legislation for approval and participation of this type of activity.

The only mobilization and business management standards that we currently have are the fire standards. There is a strong thought that these standards be used for non-fire mobilizations. No other standards exist and we have agreed to use fire qualifications (*310-1 Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide*) until alternative written guidelines are established.

2. SUBJECT: Application of ICS to Homeland Security

DISCUSSION: We need to try use only one ICS system to ensure compatibility for an organizational structure and standards for personnel and equipment. Criterion are also being worked on that would assure equipment and personnel standards remain consistent with what currently exists. Until we have directions or standards to the contrary, we will continue to use 310-1, fitness standards, work/rest guidelines, 14 day assignment limits, etc.

The understanding needs to be that when fire resources are tapped, fire resources will be dispatched and fire-related policies will apply.

3. SUBJECT: Airline baggage restrictions

DISCUSSION: Airline restrictions on baggage are not consistent with NWCG guidance. The Red Bag meets baggage restriction but the tent addition makes it outside of the current size standard. This project is being worked on by the Forest Service in discussion with TSA and the FAA. The standard Red Bag meets the size limits without the tent, but separating the tent as a second piece of baggage does work. The military has received exemption for duffle bags.

4. SUBJECT: Cost of leadership training

DISCUSSION: The current contract training is in the neighborhood of \$1,000 per person and is too expensive to have much agency participation. The Leadership sub-group is working on identifying leadership needs in each area and assessing if existing training materials can be adapted to serve the need.

The 310-1 currently does not include these management courses but some addition may be added with 310-1 update scheduled for 2004. The IOSWT will be seeking input from all GACGs, States, and agencies in their update of the standards.

5. SUBJECT: National weather Spot Forecasts

DISCUSSION: States cannot get spot forecasts for prescribed fire use unless they work through the federal agencies to obtain these forecasts. Kirk Rowdabaugh agreed to try to provide assistance to the GACGs through the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) Fire Committee.

6. SUBJECT: Annual Fire Refresher training issues

DISCUSSION: The list of emphasis items and suggested Annual Fire Refresher training topics was published on the NIFC website in February or March. Refresher training schedules for the Eastern and Southern Areas start from December to January and does not allow for the incorporation of new required material into their training. The Annual refresher training needs to be published by mid-January so all areas can use the recommended refresher updates. We will pass this request on to the SHWT to see if all geographical areas can be accommodated.

7. SUBJECT: National MOU for fuels

DISCUSSION: Some agencies are continuing to bill for resources requested by other agencies on fuels projects. This is probably not an NWCG issue; it is mostly, but not exclusively, a Forest Service issue.

8. SUBJECT: Hot Shot Crew rules

DISCUSSION: The GACGs need clarification of new dispatch and reassignment rules for hot shots. Basically, there is no new policy or operating guideline for the use of this type crew. Basic direction has been provided by the Forest Service but it should be applicable to all other agencies. Hot Shot crews should not be held on fires for mop up when there are outstanding crew orders. This is a management decision, not a crew superintendent decision.

9. SUBJECT: National caterers not always quickly available or as cost effective as state kitchens

DISCUSSION: We hope to be able to resolve this issue with some of the cost containment studies. The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) is working on another study. This study will look at different ways of doing business and may include contract uses versus agency owned/used. The caterers will be included on this list of survey/study to determine if local catering might be more cost efficient. Tory Majors will list some information on the IBPWT website so all people can review use of national contract versus local use. Alice Forbes will ensure this is linked to the NIFC website contracting page.

10. SUBJECT: Type I ICs on NWCG working teams.

DISCUSSION: Agencies desire to approve their employees' membership on NWCG Working Teams. It is the current NWCG policy to have agencies nominate candidates to serve on WTs. NWCG does not make direct appointments without concurrence and nomination by agencies.

11. SUBJECT: Quarter turn connection confusion

DISCUSSION: There is continued confusion over the FEWT/NWCG pursuit of the quarter turn couplings. The Forest Service has chartered a group to continue working with testing protocols in California that was originally done on fittings, pumps and hose using the quarter turn. This group will keep FEWT and NWCG current with their findings. NWCG did leave the door open for future re-evaluation but none is underway at this time.

12. SUBJECT: R and R Policy

DISCUSSION: Last summer changes in the R&R policy were made in mid-season, causing a great deal of concern and confusion at the GACGs and in the field. The consensus was that they (National MAC) and NWCG would not make changes until they review field input in October 2003.

13. SUBJECT: Possible outsourcing of primary job, particularly in logistics and finance.

DISCUSSION: There is considerable concern that outsourcing (contract) of logistics and finance positions will circumvent agency personnel from doing these jobs. This is a continuing problem for all agencies but it appears that each agency is looking at results in a different way. Fire positions in the Forest Service will not be reviewed until 2004 and 2005 BLM is still in the inventory stage for fire positions. This is probably not a NWCG issue at this time.

14. SUBJECT: Thirtymile implementation actions adopted only by the Forest Service cause interagency confusion.

DISCUSSION: During the last three meetings, NWCG has interacted with Jim Payne, Thirtymile Hazard Abatement Coordinator. It was suggested that Jim Payne could provide the action item matrix to the GACGs for their information. The matrix needs to be updated and a cover letter explaining the matrix and which agency is responsible for implementation should be attached. This matrix and cover letter should then be distributed by the Fire Directors for further distribution to their agencies and the GACGs.

15. SUBJECT: Contract issues

DISCUSSION: The IBPWT has done considerable staff work on multiple contracting issues. The Pacific Northwest has made many additions and corrections to the contract. Three PNWCG WTs have focused on the issues of contracting. The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) has currently contracted 340 hand crews. This year ODF will collect \$60 administrative overhead fees charged per crew day; fees will go to help cover contract administration. ODF will be contracting with a third party to do the administration. The charging mechanism is worked through the Forest Service. Engine and tender contracts (400 contracts and 1000 pieces of equipment in 2003) are administered by the Forest Service. Administrative expenses still need to be addressed and they are looking at a similar sort of administrative overhead charge as done by ODF.

IACRs (Interagency Contract Representatives) have been trained and are available for dispatch to incidents with contracted crews. The PNWCG plans to use IACRs to administer contracts in the field this season.

We probably need a PNWCG and NWCG assessment on the amount of contract resources needed. The northwest has one need for equipment but the larger picture is for other Geographical Areas and national needs.

Pam Ensley, PNWCG, will send Tory Major, IBPWT, copies of their contract additions for review with proposed task group wording.

16. SUBJECT: Communications with GACGs somewhat lacking from NWCG

DISCUSSION: GACCs don't always get timely, accurate information from NWCG when information goes out through the agencies; it is inconsistent and delayed, at best.

NWCG currently sends decision information electronically to the GACG Chair and all other members and WT Chairs. Allen Deitz, NWCG Webmaster, will also post decision information on the web site and within the IBPWT site.

17. SUBJECT: Confusion exists between NWCG and Agency standards for national mobilization

DISCUSSION: NWCG standards are the common denominator. 310-1 sets personnel qualification standards for national mobilization. There is also an issue with aviation and equipment from other areas. The agreement is to accept resources that meet NWCG standards. If a state standard is less than the NWCG standard, the resource would be unacceptable for national mobilization; if a state standard is more stringent, the resources coming into the state that meet NWCG standards should be acceptable.

Standardization is a goal but we are not there yet. An example of work in progress is the effort to establish the contracting standards. Many of the problems arise from the inconsistent personal interpretations of the standards.

18. SUBJECT: AD pay plans

DISCUSSION: There are different interpretations between agencies in the AD Pay Plan. IBPWT works with this pay schedule. Rates can be negotiated by a GACC with approval at the appropriate level. AD Pay Plan was not intended for use beyond emergency fire suppression. There is variation between the FS and the DOI interpretations of the plan. Tory Majors, IBPWT, will provide some information (Q & A) for the IBPWT website on this pay plan.

19. SUBJECT: Washington State has refused to process payments for rural fire departments.

DISCUSSION: Rural fire departments usually bill through the states to the federal agencies (FEMA or Forest Service). Because of the added paper work (administrative work) from rural fire departments, the State of Washington has refused to do processing of rural fire departments for reimbursement. Federal agencies cannot pay rural fire departments because the agreements for reimbursement are with states. The NASF Fire Committee will do some follow up with this activity at their annual fire management meeting in June.