

National Wildfire Coordinating Group
88th Meeting Minutes
September 2003

The 88th meeting of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group was held in Sydney, Australia, September 29 – 30, 2003.

Members attending:

- Jim Stires, Chair, Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Phil Street, Fish and Wildlife Service
- Edy Rhodes, National Park Service
- Buck Latapie, U. S. Forest Service
- Kirk Rowdabaugh, NASF, Arizona State Forester
- Jim Hubbard, NASF, Colorado State Forester
- Larry Hamilton, Bureau of Land Management
- Jim Smalley, National Fire Protection Association
- Jim Erickson, Intertribal Timber Council

Guests Attending:

- Murray Dudfield, National Rural Fire Officer, New Zealand
- Paul McBain, Regional Fire Management Officer, New South Wales
- Janet Anderson Tyler
- Damien Dubrowin

1. Subject: Processes and protocols to resolve firefighter safety standard violations identified before occurrence of an incident or accident. (Agenda item 4.)

Discussion: As a result of discussions during the update on the 30 mile hazard abatement plan actions at the 87th meeting, the Safety and Health Working Team was asked to consider the merit of developing interagency protocols to address firefighter safety standard violations. After consideration, the working team advised the parent group that they believe adequate means to address such violations already exist (performance appraisals, modifying red card qualifications, etc.).

The parent group agreed with the recommendation not to develop additional protocols for the reasons expressed by the Safety and Health Working Team and because it could reduce the flexibility that Agency Administrators and organizations have to deal with such situations.

2. Subject: Sponsoring translation of some NWCG firefighter courses into Spanish (Agenda Item 8.)

Discussion: Because of operational safety concerns related to the increasingly large number of Spanish speaking firefighters, and The IOS and S&HWT requested that the parent group consider translating NWCG basic firefighter courses into Spanish. All parent group members believe that doing so is necessary and will promote safety of operations. Buck Latapie stated that

some work on translating fire courses into Spanish has already been completed by the US Forest Service and that the TWT should contact Billy Terry, US Forest Service National Fire Training Specialist, to determine what has been done. In spite of this work, additional work to modify the courses to the NWCG format and put them in the NWCG PMS likely remains.

The parent group agreed to pursue this initiative and requested that the training working team research work that has already been done and provide the parent group with recommendations on specific courses that should be translated. The parent group also requests a budget estimate and time line for accomplishing the work. Larry Hamilton agreed to coordinate with the TWT to ensure that this work is presented at the January NWCG Meeting.

3. Subject: Appointment of a new NWCG Parent Group Liaison to the Fire Danger Working Team (Agenda Item 14.)

Discussion: The parent group agreed that Mike Hilbrunner, Dave Cleaves replacement on NWCG, should be the liaison to the Fire Danger Working Team. Jim Stires agreed to advise Mike Hilbrunner of this decision.

4. Subject: Consider updating the NWCG MOU (Agenda Item 11.)

Discussion: The parent group acknowledged that the current MOU needs updating to reflect the many changes that have occurred since the current 1976 MOU was crafted and signed. The group discussed the need to develop an updated MOU in the context of the current fire program management structure which includes the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, Office of Wildland Fire Coordination, National Fire Plan Office, Fire and Aviation Executive Board and NWCG. All members felt it was important to preserve the NWCG core mission in developing interagency standards and operational products and processes. Edy Rhodes, Phil Street, Don Artley (on behalf of NASF) and Alice Forbes agreed to develop a draft updated MOU and present it at the January 2004 NWCG meeting.

5. Subject: Update on the NWCG-sponsored NIMO Report (Agenda Item 7.)

Discussion: The members were concerned that the NIMO Report was not looking at all options. The draft reports circulated to date have focused on conducting business through various sizes of national incident management organizations. When chartered, NWCG envisioned that the whole range of options for providing incident management services from the current militia approach along with combinations of a NIMO and militia or NIMO alone would be considered. The members want the entire range of options to be evaluated and requested that Jim Stires contact the NIMO Report group and arrange a conference call to discuss the status.

Since the NWCG Meeting, the NIMO Report group (aka NIMO MOT) contacted Jim Stires and requested modification of the report charter to include full agency participation so that the current situation could be evaluated. This is in line with the members desires as expressed at the 88th meeting so will be agreed to. The NIMO MOT also requests time at the January, 2004 NWCG meeting to provide members an update on the report. Time will be made on the January agenda for their briefing.

6. Subject: Proposal to establish an NWCG Aviation Working Team (Agenda Item 16.)

Discussion: The parent group agrees that strong coordination between the aviation community and NWCG is required but believe that the current linkage between NWCG working teams and the aviation community are adequate for the Federal agencies. Strengthening the linkage to state programs, however, is needed. Issues driving the proposal to create an NWCG Aviation Working Team mostly arise from state concerns over technical aviation standards that impact state level aviation operations supporting fire programs. The members agreed that, before chartering another entity, NASF should correspond with Lynn Scarlett, DOI Assistant Secretary for Policy management and Budget and Dale Bosworth, Chief of the Forest Service and request representation on the Aviation Management Council. The members believe this alternative approach may be the better way for the states to directly engage in aviation policy discussions that influence their programs.

Kirk Rowdabaugh and Jim Hubbard agreed to work with the President of NASF to initiate the required correspondence.

7. Subject: Develop an action plan to complete action items in the “Strategic Direction to Implement the Federal Fire Policy” (Agenda Item 2.)

Discussion: The members discussed working team tasking that will be required to complete work laid out in the Interagency Direction for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. Tasks considered for NWCG work can be found in the implementation section of the document on pages 8–10. The members agreed to develop an action plan with time line to complete the NWCG action items that can be provided to WFLC at its January 2004 meeting.

Task 1. Establish common terms and definitions where inconsistencies exist. Edy Rhodes agreed to check with the IOSWT to determine when their current effort to up date the NWCG glossary of Wildland terminology will be completed. Buck Latapie stated that Mark Beigly and Wally Josephson were working on a project to establish common terminology. If that is true, their work should be coordinated with that of the IOSWT. Edy agreed to report on IOSWT progress and their schedule on the project to update the NWCG glossary at the January, 2004 NWCG Meeting.

Task 2. Develop consistent interagency language that describes how to implement each of the Wildland fire policy statements. NWCG believes this task would be best accomplished by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board.

Task 3. Revise department level and agency specific manuals, handbooks, guidebooks and other documentation as appropriate. NWCG believes this task would be best accomplished by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board.

Task 4. Revise interagency fire management handbooks, guidebooks and other interagency documents as appropriate. NWCG believes this task would be best accomplished by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board.

Task 5. Revise NWCG and other agency fire and fuel management training courses. NWCG believes its courses and task books should be revised in conjunction with the normal NWCG revision process/cycle. Larry Hamilton agreed to coordinate with the TWT to develop a schedule illustrating when the required course and task book revisions would be accomplished. Kirk Rowdabaugh agreed to coordinate with the FUWT to provide information on when the required fire use/prescribed fire course and task book revisions would be accomplished.

Task 6. Revise federal Wildland fire management agency and interagency national and field level agreements to reflect fire policy and implementation language changes. NWCG believes this task would be best accomplished by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board.

Task 7. Develop a periodic, internal review process(es) that will identify how well the federal Wildland fire management agencies are implementing the 17 fire policy statements, objectives and management intent. NWCG believes this task would be best accomplished by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board.

Task 8. Develop a communications plan that will aid and assist internal and external understanding of the terminology and the implementation process. NWCG believes this task would be best accomplished by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board.

8. Subject: NWCG Prescribed Fire Complexity Analysis, Prescribed Fire Implementation Risk Analysis and Go/No-Go Checklist (Agenda Item 6.)

Discussion: The members were pleased that the Go/No-go checklist (PMS-421) and prescribed fire complexity rating system (PMS-424) requested by the parent group at the 81st meeting were developed by the FUWT and are in use. However, the parent group would like additional information on the draft prescribed fire risk assessment tool developed by the FUWT. Specifically, members would like information on why the FUWT's draft product was not well received by the field and what interagency effort the FUWT has deferred to for further development (re: 6/26/03 FUWT memo to the NWCG Chair). The members believe that the risk assessment tool is an important component to prescribed fire operations and must be assured that development of an interagency tool is proceeding.

Kirk Rowdabaugh stated he would follow up with the FUWT and get the required additional information and provide it to other members at the January, 2004 meeting.

9. Subject: Fire Occurrence Reporting Project (Agenda Item 10.)

Discussion: The members felt that work completed by the IRMWT on the fire occurrence reporting project was good and commend them for their effort. The parent group conceptually agreed with the IRMWT recommended alternative 5. However, there is concern that the PMO is concerned about the report and has questions that must be answered before proceeding. The

parent group would like the IRMWT and PMO to come to consensus on a recommendation and would like the IRMWT to develop estimates on the amount of time required to complete the recommended course of action, project staffing needs and cost estimates.

The parent group would like the requested information presented by the IRMWT at the January NWCG meeting.

10. Subject: Youth Employment in Fire Operations (Added Agenda Item.)

Discussion: The members discussed the issues regarding use of firefighters under 18 years of age that surfaced during the 2003 fire season and decided that, even though current NWCG policy on this issue exists in the Interagency Business Practices Handbook, the issue must be researched again to determine if current policy is correct. The parent group requests that the IBPWT and S&HWT research the issue and report findings and recommendations to the parent group at the January 2004 NWCG meeting.

Larry Hamilton agreed to draft a tasking letter to the working teams responsible for the work.

11. Subject: NWCG Executive Secretary (Added Agenda Item.)

Discussion: Initially, Allen Deitz's appointment as NWCG Executive Secretary was considered an "interim" appointment until a long term appointment could be made. Options for the long term were discussed. The members all agreed that Allen's work is excellent and that he should continue as NWCG Executive Secretary unless it prevents him from performing the full range of his duties in the NWCG PMO.

12. Subject: Thirty Mile Lessons Learned Project (Agenda Item 5.)

Discussion: The members discussed the proposal for NWCG to "endorse" and provide funding for the 30 mile lessons learned project. The members agreed that important information from the 30 mile project should be incorporated into the NWCG curriculum and Lessons Learned Center knowledge base but did not agree to formally endorse the project as an NWCG project or product or to provide funding for the project. Further discussion by the members centered on the importance of developing an "institutional process" to assure that important lessons learned information is incorporated into the NWCG training curriculum. Some felt there may be merit in having a Center for Lessons Learned member on the TWT.

Larry Hamilton agreed to communicate with Logan Lee, TWT Chair, and to make sure that the Center for Lessons Learned meets with the TWT to identify a process to assure Lessons Learned Center knowledge is incorporated into the NWCG curriculum as appropriate. The parent group thought it would be a good idea for the Center for Lessons Learned Manager to brief the TWT on its operations and mission at an upcoming TWT meeting and discuss the merit of having a Center for Lessons Learned representative on the TWT.

13. Subject: Standards and processes for "standing down" and reinstatement of firefighters or organizations following a major incident or fireline accident (Agenda Item 3.)

Discussion: The S&HWT researched and discussed this issue and believes that sufficient management authority to stand down and reinstate firefighters or organizations exists and that additional standards and processes are not required. NWCG members agree with the findings of the S&HWT. In their discussion, the members emphasized the importance of the performance evaluation system and Geographic Area Coordinating Group Boards and Line Officers taking action when required to make the system work under existing authorities.

14. Subject: Appointment of new Chairs for the IBPWT and FEWT (Agenda Item 15.)

Discussion: Tory Majors was nominated and accepted to Chair the FEWT. Larry Hamilton agreed to contact the IBPWT and request a nomination for a new Chair for the IBPWT to appoint at the January, 2004 NWCG meeting.

15. Subject: Incident Business Advisor Course (Added Agenda Item.)

Discussion: The IBPWT requested that the NWCG TWT review the Incident Business Advisor Training Course and formally adopt it into the NWCG curriculum. In light of current and foreseeable large fire cost concerns from many fronts, the parent group believes review, approval and introduction of the Incident Business Advisor course into PMS is a priority. The parent group also believes that incorporating appropriate parts of the course in other courses of the NWCG curriculum should be a goal of the TWT. Cost containment is and will continue to be a major issue.

Larry Hamilton agreed to develop a formal tasking letter to the TWT and coordinate with the TWT to assure that the review and approval process is given priority. The parent group believes the IOSWT has already approved the IBA position, but Edy Rhodes agreed to contact the IOSWT to ensure that there are no problems with task books, etc.

16. Subject: Finalize the FY 2004 NWCG Budget (Agenda Item 1.)

Discussion: The NWCG budget target for FY 2004 is \$900,000. Budget work at the 87th meeting reduced the FY 2004 budget to \$1,062,000 before deferring further reductions to the 88th meeting. The members decided to reduce the Executive Secretary budget to \$5,000 (to cover Allen Deitz's travel only) and implement an across-the-board 8% reduction to achieve the NWCG budget target for FY 2004. *[See attached budget; 13% reduction was required to achieve the target.]*

17. Subject: Review and approve the updated S&HWT Charter (Agenda Item 17.)

Discussion: The charter was approved as submitted contingent on making one change. Language in the charter should explicitly state that state travel will be paid through the NWCG budget.

18. Subject: Discussion on establishing strategic direction for NWCG IRM project sponsorship & strategic selection of IT projects (Agenda Item 9.)

Discussion: The parent group discussed the need for a strategic plan to help set priorities for IT capital investment. The fact that the IRMWT has developed a draft strategic IRM or IT plan was discussed. To pursue this matter, the parent group requests that the IRMWT attend the January 2004 NWCG meeting and make a presentation on:

- the draft Strategic NWCG IRM Plan
- the status of the initiative to develop an interagency capital investment planning process
- the inventory of existing interagency fire and aviation IT systems and applications

Jim Stires agreed to advise the IRMWT of the requested presentation.

19. Subject: NWCG Action to Promote ROSS for 2004 (Added Agenda Item.)

Discussion: As a result of issues and discussion within the NAMC during 2003, the members felt that it could benefit future improvements in the implementation of ROSS by developing a memorandum from NWCG to member agencies emphasizing the need to take actions needed to improve ROSS implementation in the upcoming fire season. The memo should touch upon developing effective strategies to train all those who may be called upon to use the system (including retirees and seasonals) and emphasize that ROSS is here to stay. It is and will be a vital part of the inter-agency dispatch and coordination system.

Jim Stires agreed to consult with the ROSS project Team and draft the memorandum.

20. Subject: Consideration of new members for the IRMWT (Agenda Item 19.)

Discussion: At the 87th meeting, the members decided to change the composition of the IRMWT from its present structure where all voting members are IT Specialists to a working team with some members from mid or upper level fire program management and some members from the IT community. Very few members were prepared to make new nominations at the 88th meeting so the action was deferred to the January 2004 NWCG Meeting.

Each member agreed to come to the January 2004 meeting with two nominations; one from their organization's IT community and one from the fire program management community. The members will select IRMWT members from the nominations at the January, 2004 meeting. Existing IRMWT members may be one of the nominations for a given agency. There is no intent to increase the size of the IRMWT as a result of the upcoming composition change.

21. Subject: Appointment of a Search Committee to appoint new NWCG officers Agenda Item 13.)

Discussion: Current Officers are:

- Jim Stires, Chair, 2 year term expires after the May 2004 meeting
- Kirk Rowdabaugh, Vice Chair, accepted appointment in May, 2003
- Allen Deitz, Executive Secretary, accepted appointment in May, 2003

Kirk Rowdabaugh and Jim Stires agreed to coordinate and contact all voting members and solicit their recommendations on nominations for the NWCG Chair and Vice Chair positions prior to the January meeting. The decision has been made to retain Allen Deitz as NWCG Executive Secretary into the foreseeable future. The objective is to be ready to make formal nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair positions to be effective after the May 2004 meeting at the January 2004 meeting.

Agenda items not covered:

Aviation Management Council participation with the IRMWT and access to the IRMWT-PMO – Deferred until the January 2004 NWCG Meeting. Rick Mills contacted the NWCG Chair and requested additional time to prepare for the meeting.

Upcoming Meetings:

- January 27 – 29, 2004, Tucson, AZ
- May 11 – 13, 2004, Fond du Lac Reservation, Carlton, MN

Follow-up Actions

Action	Meeting Reference	Date Due	Responsible Member
Task TWT to research work already done and recommend specific courses to be translated. Recommendation should include a budget estimate and time-line.	88 th , #1	NWCG meeting, January 2004	Larry Hamilton
Advise Mike Hilbrunner and Fire Danger Working Team that Hilbrunner replaces Cleaves as NWCG Liaison.	88 th , #3		Jim Stires
Draft updated NWCG MOU.	88 th , #4	NWCG Meeting, January 2004	Rhodes, Street, Artley, Forbes
Initiate correspondence requesting NASF representation on the Aviation Management Council.	88 th , #6		Kirk Rowdabaugh
Check with IOSWT to determine progress and schedule for NWCG glossary update.	88 th , #7 (Task 1)	NWCG Meeting, January 2004	Edy Rhodes
Coordinate with TWT to develop schedule for course and taskbook revisions.	88 th , #7 (Task 5)		Larry Hamilton
Coordinate with FUWT to develop schedule for fire use/prescribed fire course and taskbook revisions.	88 th , #7 (Task 5)		Kirk Rowdabaugh
Follow up with the FUWT for additional information on the draft prescribed fire risk assessment tool.	88 th , #8	NWCG Meeting, January 2004	Kirk Rowdabaugh
Task IRMWT & PMO to come to consensus on Fire Occurrence Reporting Project recommendation and develop staffing, time and cost estimates.	88 th , #9	NWCG Meeting, January 2004	Jim Stires
Task IBPWT and SHWT to research issues regarding use of firefighters under 18 years.	88 th , #10		Larry Hamilton
Coordinate meeting between TWT and Center for Lessons Learned to develop process to incorporate lessons learned into NWCG curriculum.	88 th , #12		Larry Hamilton
Request nomination for IBPWT chair	88 th , #14	NWCG Meeting, January 2004	Larry Hamilton
Task TWT to review the Incident Business Advisor training course.	88 th , #15		Larry Hamilton
Coordinate with IOSWT to ensure no problems with taskbooks, etc.			Edy Rhodes
Advise IRMWT of requested presentation at next NWCG meeting.	88 th , #18		Jim Stires

Action	Meeting Reference	Date Due	Responsible Member
Draft NWCG memorandum promoting ROSS for 2004.	88 th , #19		Jim Stires
Identify nominations for IRMWT membership.	88 th , #20	NWCG Meeting, January 2004	All members
Solicit recommendations on nominations for NWCG Chair and Vice-Chair	88 th , #21	NWCG Meeting, January 2004	Stires & Rowdabaugh