



NWCG Organization Update

The purpose of this update is to provide timely information about the progress of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) restructuring activities and decisions. March 2009

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group includes interagency wildland fire programs beyond wildland fire operations standards and guidelines. Other wildland fire programs such as Fuels Management, and operational groups like Predictive Services and the National Incident Coordination Center (NICC) are now part of the new NWCG.

NWCG Branch Coordinator Positions Filled: For the last few months, three Branch Coordinator positions were filled temporarily by “actings”. Lou Ballard, Al Borup, and Paul Schlobohm had been working in these positions until they could be permanently filled. Their experience in wildland fire management was a great asset as they provided the groundwork needed to establish the positions and develop this new dimension to the NWCG organization.

The new permanent full-time Branch Coordinators selected are:



Tim Blake
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Branch Coordinator
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Paul Schlobohm
Equipment, and
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Elaine Waterbury
Policy, Planning,
and Management
Branch Coordinator
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The Branch Coordinators are advocates for the current NWCG Working Teams and groups. Their mission is to improve the connections and coordination between NWCG’s groups and the NWCG Executive Board.

Their goal is to streamline the development and implementation of standards and policies across the wildland fire community. They are also the people that will support your group’s transition into the new NWCG Committee structure.



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104th Meeting of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group held January 24-26, 2009

The three-day meeting featured presentations and interactive breakout sessions covering:

- Managing Change
- Understanding the evolving budget process
- Fiscal year 09 and fiscal year 10 budget and direction
- Improving communications
- Initiating charters for each Committee
- Encourage current Working Teams and groups to transition into their new organizations

Change and Transition:

Mr. King, a managing systematic organizational change consultant delivered an interactive keynote presentation describing change processes. He showed that with any type of change there are key stages everyone will take. According to Mr. King, everyone moves from one stage to the next and individual experiences affect the speed of movement to the next stage.



The audience was intrigued and related their experience relative to proposed changes within wildland fire management. Mr. King responded by showing the audience how to apply the change models to any given situation. The models help identify and validate which stage of change they are in and which is next.

Budget:

On January 29, 2009, the FY 2009 NWCG budget was presented. The NWCG budget will be collaboratively managed by NWCG's participating agencies through an interagency group called the NWCG Budget Advisory Unit (BAU). The Budget Advisory Unit, Branch Coordinators, and other NWCG staff are jointly developing a new FY 2010-2012 budget process.

Thanks go to Lou Ballard, former Interim Policy, Planning, and Management Branch Coordinator, and the new Budget Advisory Unit for their assistance in developing the 2009 budget.



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Breakout Sessions - Plowing Fertile Ground: Breakout sessions were organized along Branch affiliations. Each group used the time to share concerns and suggestions about future NWCG Support Services, Business Function Stewardship, and individual Branch organizations.

Breakout Summaries:

- **A Support Services Breakout Session** was conducted with each of the Branch groups to brainstorm and identify support service needs specifically for the new NWCG Committees and other sub groups. These sessions built on work that started in January 2008, and continued throughout the year, by individuals and small subject matter expert group sessions.

All three Branch groups identified administrative meeting support services as their “highest priority” in terms of greatest potential benefit to their groups. Other high priority services included various communication and Web/Internet support.

The results of the sessions will be used in developing an NWCG Support Services strategy to guide the development and delivery of support to the NWCG Executive Board and Committee subgroups.

- **Business Function Stewardship Breakout sessions helped each new Committee:**
 - claim the areas of business that they have stewardship over
 - understand their boundaries
 - show where they have interaction with other functional areas

Al Borup described and presented the current Wildland Fire Business Reference Model. An exercise followed asking each group to:

- mark all functional boxes on the model that a particular Committee could claim as their stewardship area
- mark all boxes that a particular Committee has a strong "interaction" with
- Results were captured, resulting in a good validation and update of the model
- Al will collate all results and report out to the groups



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- **Equipment and Technology Branch**

The Working Team and group Chairs discussed Charters to identify the scope of and boundaries between new Committees. The Fire Environment Committee (FENC) charter is approved. The Equipment Technology Committee, Information Technology Committee, and National Interagency Aviation Committee charters are close to completion.



Proposed 2009 budget allocations contained no showstoppers for the Branch. Committees with unfunded 2009 projects or activities should prepare these projects for the possibility of year-end funding.

The Equipment and Technology Branch is considering the concept and purpose for a Branch Board. The Branch Board's purpose might be to set priorities for the Branch, especially for funding, and may advise the Branch Coordinator in other matters such as, Subcommittee alignment. Proposed composition would be the Branch Coordinator, Committee Chairs, and an Executive Board liaison.

- **The Policy, Planning, and Management Branch**

Both Lou Ballard (Interim Branch Coordinator) and Elaine Waterbury (new Branch



Coordinator) attended the meeting in addition to eight Chairs representing newly proposed Committees and existing Working Groups.

The Branch group had great interaction during breakout sessions proving that there are many "planners" in the group. The Branch group went through every line in the charter template, rewording and making editorial changes to the document. Correct verbiage and tone is very important. Towards the end of the meeting they did a quick check to determine the interest of the interim Chairs to take on the actual Chair responsibilities; five of the Branch's six Committees had someone step up to take on the Chair responsibilities (Congratulations!) These folks will become the "official" Chairs of the Committees once the charters have been signed.



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- **Preparedness Branch**

This group spent considerable time answering the question “How do we do our work (structure ourselves) so the Branch Coordinator doesn’t become the go between?”



The idea of having a “Branch Board” was discussed so that issues are acted on with all the players in the room.

The Board would address Branch business such as:

- Leveling the budget
- Strategic thinking
- Policy development
- Task specific assignments to the appropriate subcommittees

Meeting routines were discussed using the Branch Board concept with the possibility of meeting once or twice a year as a Branch. Branch business would be conducted as a group the first day followed by Committees break-out sessions for a day or possibly two. This would be followed by a close out as a Branch to discuss any issues/actions. (All three NWCG Branches have adopted the Branch Board concept.)

The group also worked on structuring and defining the Workforce Management Committee. This Committee was rated as the most complex to “stand up.” The group did not simply want to have the Incident Operations Standard Working Team (IOSWT) and Training Working Team (TWT) move under Workforce Management and change names. The group opted to change the name of the Workforce Management Committee to Operations and Workforce Development Committee. This simple change helped define the scope of the Committee and provided an avenue to address operational issues. Merging the two teams leads to gaining many possible efficiencies but the makeup still needs to be determined. Most IOSWT and TWT issues are related so having both perspectives in the same room is much more efficient than working separately and then kicking solutions back and forth.

Although restructuring will be challenging and complex, the group felt very positive and see this as a tremendous opportunity to change and improve business processes.



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NWCG Staff News

- **Trailer Park Springs Up at NIFC:** The NWCG staff is located behind the Jack Wilson Building in the triple-wide trailer. Stop in and see us!



- **Judy Crosby** who previously led the NWCG staff retired in January 2009, but not before establishing a strategy and structure to develop the NWCG staff concept. Thanks Judy, and enjoy!
- **Shari Shetler** is “acting” as the NWCG Manager until the position is filled.
- **The NWCG Manager** position closed March 5, 2009.