

- National Predictive Service Group (NPSG) Meeting -

Meeting Notes

Location: Desert Research Institute – Reno, Nevada

Meeting Dates: May 15-16, 2003

Members Present:

- Gerry Day – PNW - Center Manager Representation
- Bill Plough – CDF - State/NASF Representation
- Neal Hitchcock – NIFC (for Alice Forbes) – NMAC Liaison (Advisor)
- Tom Wordell – NICC - PS/Fire Analyst Representative
- Eric Jager – NICC (for Kathy Wiegard) – Intell. Working Chair Representative
- Chip Collins – Grand Teton NP – Field Level Representative
- Heath Hockenberry – NICC (for Rick Ochoa May 15) – Meteorologist Working Chair Representative
- Kim Christensen – Acting NICC Manager - NICC Liaison (Advisor)
- Rusty Billingsly – NWS - National Weather Service Representative
- Rick Ochoa – NICC - Meteorologist Working Chair Representative

Members Absent:

- Alice Forbes
- Kathy Wiegard

Guests

- Tim Brown – CEFA Review

Meeting Agenda Topics:

- 1) Welcome and Introductions
- 2) Mission and Objectives
- 3) Group Focus and Team Business
- 4) Defining the desired future condition of predictive services
- 5) Relationship and Coordination with other groups
- 6) Questionnaire findings
- 7) Short and Long Term Strategies
- 8) Miscellaneous Updates
- 9) Other Topics

Thursday Notes - 5/15/2003

Introductions

This was the first meeting of the National Predictive Services Group (NPSG) after the charter for the group was updated and signed by the National Interagency Coordination Center Manager (for the National Coordinators). The purpose of the meeting was to organize, discuss group business and protocols, determine our relationship and coordination needs with other groups, discuss the mission and strategy for the predictive service program, review a set of questionnaires that were mailed out to help evaluate the program, and have the opportunity to get updates from other on-going efforts.

Gerry Day helped to facilitate the meeting and Tom Wordell agreed to take notes. The first thing the group did was to review the Charter mission and objectives.

Agenda Item: Charter Mission and Objectives

An open discussion was held around program leadership:

- Gerry opened the discussion by stating he felt the leadership for predictive services is a shared responsibility of the following entities: National Fire Weather Program Manager at NICC, National Fire Analyst at NICC, and the National Intelligence Coordinator at NICC in conjunction with the Center Managers, the Fire Weather Program Managers and the Intelligence Coordinators at each of the GACCs. Each of these entities had its own leadership role and function to play in the predictive service arena.
- Tom brought up the fact that the situation with predictive service is different than traditional agency functions where direction flows from national to regional to unit positions within agencies. Instead, the current predictive service organization is multi-agency with no consistent lines of supervision or organization across the GACCs
- Gerry thought this might actually be an advantage and may allow us to be more successful in a true interagency program focused on the needs of the fire community.
- Neal thought displaying an organizational leadership diagram would help people understand the way the program is set up.
- Heath brought up an on-going complaint that there's no trigger or notification mechanism when there are problems or complaints. He felt this needed to be remedied.
- Gerry said the center managers recognize the need to provide organizational leadership and thought this group would help provide structure to that process.
- Bill Plough said if our group pulls together we should be able to provide horsepower, leadership and consistency but it will take a concerted effort on our part to pull this off.
- Neal stated that we all grew up with a single agency mindset and then looked for overlap and cooperative opportunities. He felt we could make the current organization work, but it would need to be clearly described and outlined so people could understand it.
- Gerry said the reason the agency meteorologists were hired to play a "predictive service" role for the entire wildland fire community in contrast to a function designed to serve a single agency function.
- Gerry wants to make sure we have a safe and honest forum to discuss problems so we can face the issues before us.
- Neal thought that program leadership is one of the primary focus areas the group will need to deal with.
- Kim brought up the analogy that Predictive Services also has national needs and is like a wheel with 11 spokes. She felt that currently there are a couple of bent spokes causing the wheel not to run smoothly.
- Gerry said one of the most powerful leverages we have is to understand and articulate customer

needs and that the customer questionnaires can be used as a general indicator of customer needs.

- Heath thought we needed to start out on a positive note and point out those positive aspects that demonstrate why the program is important.

ACTION ITEM: *Neal Hitchcock agreed to develop a draft organizational leadership diagram for the group, which will then be routed for comments/revisions prior to being accepted by the chair.*

Review of Charter – section by section

Gerry provided some background on why the charter was developed with some corrections and additions from Tom and Bill.

Section IV – Purpose

The primary focus of this section was to determine customer requirements and understand the decision environment so a suite of “standardized” products could be developed. The PS Group function was to provide a forum and some coordination during the developmental phase while encouraging innovation by the various geographic areas.

- Kim reiterated the importance of determining end user needs.
- Neal brought up one the danger of presenting menus – e.g. spiraling expectations

Section V – Membership

- Gerry provided a brief overview of what positions were established and how the members were selected.
- Bill expressed the importance of having the group advisors at each of our meetings and conference calls to keep the conduits open between the NPSG, NICC and NMAC. He felt this could help avoid some of the frustrations that some of the other working teams are feeling right now.

Section VI – Organization

- Gerry pointed out the importance of working with the Intell and Fire Weather working groups so we are all on convergent paths. Our relationship with those groups needs to be clearly delineated and conveyed to those groups.

-Note: Once an organizational leadership diagram and the vision/strategy for predictive services has been developed, then the group will define relationships and roles with the sub-working groups.

Section VII – Cooperation and Coordination

- No Comments

Section VIII – Meetings

- The Group anticipates needing to meet 3 to 4 times per year. There were concerns expressed over costs for travel and per diem so they don't become a barrier for folks like Chip and Bill.

Section IX – Responsibilities

- Gerry provided an overview of each position
- No additional comments

Section X – Charter Amendments

- No comments

Agenda Item: Group Focus and Team Business

The group agreed on the following recommendations

Meeting Logistics and Management – Needs & Considerations

- **What constitutes a quorum?**

- 5 members required - for both meetings and conference calls
- Based on topic discussed, if key member is not present, the group will make sure their concerns are known to the group ahead of time and the position/issues of the individual who has those concerns are addressed.
- If members are unable to attend the meetings or conference calls, they should attempt to identify a substitute to attend for them.

- **Meeting Facilitator:**

The group agreed a facilitator who is not a member of the group would be required. The group would prefer to have the same facilitator at all of our meetings for at least a 2-year period (with concurrence from their supervisor). The Chair (and vice chair) will investigate and the Chair will make the selection for the group. Suggestions include:

- Terersa Wright
- Rich Cabellero
- Sharon Allen-Brick
- Larry Sutton

- **Meeting Note taker**

The group agreed that protocols are needed for who will do this, what notes will be taken and how they will be formatted. The Chair and vice chair will review some example note formats and decide on what format will be used (List who attended, topics addressed, summarized discussion, recommendations, document decisions made, etc). Copies of the notes would go out to group electronically after the meeting. The group would prefer to have someone identified to attend the meetings and conference calls to take notes. The Vice Chair will make final selection on note-taker. Suggestions include:

- Stephanie Becker
- Lani Williams

Note: Stephanie Becker agreed to be group note taker for next two years.

- **Meeting Agendas:**

- Needs to be finalized and distributed two weeks prior to each meeting
- The group, prior to adjourning each meeting, will identify initial agenda items for the next meeting. Basic issues will be identified to help determine what needs further development and who needs to complete this staff work.
- Topic abstracts will be solicited and submitted to chair 4 weeks prior to meeting so the chair can develop agenda for distribution to the group.
- Decision documents will need to be submitted to the chair so they can be distributed to the group 2 weeks prior to the meeting.
- The group will strive to meet 3- 4 times per year
- Need to establish fall and winter meeting dates by COB May 16.

ACTION ITEM: *The chair will collect suggested formats on decision documents and topic abstracts. The chair will then make a decision and develop the format the group will use for future meetings.*

The group spent some time developing the following table in an attempt to delineate and understand the relationship with other groups or entities.

- **Establish meeting schedule** – considering:

Group / Entity	Type of Relationship -Information (I) -Coordination (C) -Decision (D)
National Coordinators	I
GACC Center Managers	I, D
MAC Groups (NMAC / GMAC / Sub Geo)	I
(*) Intell and Met Working Groups	I
NWCG Working Teams	I, C
Local Units (Fire fighters, etc)	I
Agency Administrators	I
WFLC	I
Fire Directorate (Nat'l / Regional / State / Local)	I, D
FBANS / LTANS	I
Fire Weather Program Mgrs / Fire Wx Mets	I
NASF Representative	I
Geographic Area Boards / NWCG	I
Research	I
External Affairs / PAO	I

(*) = sub-groups under Predictive Service Group

ACTION ITEM: *Neal will develop a decision flow diagram on how issues are brought into the group and routed to various other entities in order to reach decisions*

- **Group Decisions:**

The group agreed to make decisions using a consensus model. This means that:

- Everyone can live with the decision and will support the decision once its agreed upon. (Support of a decision can range from full support to no strong feelings one-way or the other, but will support the decision of the group).
- Bill Plough will collect some decision model examples and present a recommendation to the group at our fall meeting.

- **Meeting expectations and deliverables**

- The group felt that by developing issues and having agenda topic abstracts, we should be able to clearly identify what our expectations are and what needs to be delivered.

- **Communication protocols with outside entities**

The group agreed on the following protocols:

- Outreach and connection to constituents is very important
- Website development is needed to convey information
 - Link to other key websites
 - Some user groups will be hard to reach (end users)

ACTION ITEM: *Heath Hockenberry agreed to develop and incorporate an NPSG link on the NICC webpage he is developing at NIFC.*

- How will assignments be developed to drive staff work? The group felt this should be handled through issue development and decision documentation.
- Members are expected to come to meetings well prepared to discuss and share staff assignments (e.g. pre-work).
- Should the group develop meeting themes/focus/topics to capitalize on specific issues or lessons learned and keep meeting focused? This question was not fully answered.
- Decision & Task tracking
 - Group will use a format similar to one the FWWT utilizes to track action items, tasks and deliverables (see appendix)
- Evaluation of what's working/not working – how do we do this? The group felt we needed to do periodic follow-ups with our various constituency groups with questionnaires to assess how they feel predictive services is doing.

Agenda Topic: Misc. Updates & Reports: CEFA Review - Tim Brown

Tim briefly discussed a virtual reality “cave” DRI has proposed for funding from the DOD. He also discussed highlights from the CEFA review that took place the week prior to this meeting.

- CEFA presented 10 projects to the review panel, which were reviewed in terms of quality and performance
- The group also reviewed 5 pages of questions, which were developed from OMB
- Tim also had 9 questions he asked the group from DRI

Tim presented an overview of some of the projects DRI has been working on and how the contract with the BLM was established.

The findings/recommendations of the CEFA review panel were:

- There is value with DRI and collaboration should continue
- The BLM should develop a stakeholder oversight panel for DRI
- There should be a science quality review
- There should be an agency person assigned to DRI
- There should be minimum base funding
- The BLM should develop stronger ties between field operations and what DRI is working on
- The BLM may wish to integrate activities with DRI directly with the GACCs
- Should continue to have periodic reviews
- Should focus on areas that are unique from other research avenues and require a rapid response

A summary of the CEFA Review will be compiled and distributed to the group in the next several weeks.

Friday Notes - 5/16/2003**Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

Chair: Gerry Day was elected to serve a two-year term

Vice Chair: Tom Wordell was elected to serve a two-year term and then assume Chair

Agenda Topic: Questionnaire Findings

The group presented the findings from their questionnaire surveys.

ACTION ITEM: Tom agreed to consolidate responses and email a draft out to group for review prior to getting the information out to the user community.

Gerry asked the group to write down the three most important themes they felt came from the questionnaire surveys so the group will know what to focus on. These should provide guidance in order for the group to focus their time and energy and initiate agenda items for the next meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Gerry to summarize and route the "important themes" to the group.

Budget and Funding Issues

Neal thought the group should articulate what funding we need and describe what tangible items and products will be generated from our program. He didn't think we should limit our goals for requesting a budget, even in a declining budget environment.

Both Neal and Gerry thought we should be ready when there are funding opportunities. They felt the budget request should tie back to our vision and strategy in how we interface with user groups and provide useful, well-integrated products to the field.

Gerry would like to find an equivalent process to JFSP for tapping into money for research and development of operational-based products. Neal said he would look into this and get back with the group.

Gerry wanted to know what Rusty's ideas were for a National Fire Weather Center and if this concept could be done in a true cooperative, collaborative interagency approach. Rusty agreed to discuss this later during the meeting.

Gerry expressed concern about ensuring an adequate infrastructure at the GACC level to support the PS mission and expectations.

Eric brought up the aspect of all-risk and how support for these events are impacting time and energy at all levels within the coordination system.

Bill thought we should develop a list of products that are currently available, those that are being developed and will be available to everyone in the future and those that need to be developed.

Neal suggested we contact Mike Hilbruner to look into the links with the research community to help develop a better link between our needs and their research efforts.

Gerry thought we should tap the existing skill base we have at the GACCs now to help determine future research efforts. He felt we needed to be able to recognize and facilitate research opportunities.

Neal said we needed to prioritize our research needs so we have a manageable program.

Rick thought homeland security both has needs that we could possibly contribute to and use as funding opportunities. Gerry and Neal were cautious with this approach and wanted to make sure we don't out-run our headlights.

Gerry thought we needed to determine how we decide what are our budgetary needs are going to be and how we will allocate those funds.

Heath thought we should develop a short and long-term project list to help determine what we should fund.

Rick also brought up the fact we may want to consider funding some training needs.

Tom discussed what short-term funds were available for this Fiscal Year through NICC and wanted input from the group on how they felt the funds should be allocated.

The group decided to develop a list of projects/efforts they felt should be considered. These were then categorized into short and long-term projects to determine which would be available for funding this year.

POTENTIAL FUNDING NEEDS

Project/ Entity	Type of Project Short or Long Term	Who is responsible to do write up
Update Cheetah program	Short	Tom Wordell
Initiate a Phase II for the experimental 14-day Fire Danger forecast product	Short Term	Tom Wordell
Long Range/Climate forecast training for PS employees	Short Term	Rick Ochoa
Hiring fire analyst at each GACC	Long Term	Rick Ochoa
IT System support with data which feed products (Analysts, GIS, Web design, programmers, fire danger/fuels developmental needs, etc)	Long Term	Gerry Day
Develop national system that utilizes PSA, key weather stations, critical fire business thresholds, etc.	Long Term	Rick Ochoa
Develop RAWs MOS equations (bridge funding)	Short Term	Heath Hockenberry
AWIPS at GACCs	Long Term	Heath Hockenberry
FXNET	Long Term	Heath Hockenberry
Corporate Web Pages	Long Term	Rick Ochoa
ROMAN	Short Term	Rusty Billingsly
R&D for fire danger/fuels classification/operational (pre-positioning decision support) products	Long Term	Tom Wordell

ACTION ITEM: *A short paragraph will be written for each item identified above by the person identified and submit to Tom Wordell by July 1, 2003 who will compile and re-distributed. Make sure the write ups include what factors need to be considered to determine what gets funded – such as:*

****Where is it on the NPSG priority list?**
****What's the cost of not doing this?**
****What are the benefits and who will it affect?**

****How much does it cost?**
****Are there other alternatives?**

-Is there IRM approval?
-Is it national or geographic area in scope?
-What is the life cycle?
-Are there other sources of funding?
-Which agency IT rules will it fall under?
-Is it research and development or an operational tool?
-Will it require a contract or be completed in-house?

-Is there a developed business case?
-It is new or improved?
-How long will it take to implement?
-Is it a cooperative project?
-What type of support does it have?

**** = Top five questions that need to be addressed**

Gerry thought we should develop an issue paper that highlights the RAWs quality control responsibilities the assistant fire weather managers at each GACC has in their position descriptions.

ACTION ITEM: *Rick Ochoa will lead the NICC predictive service group in developing an issue*

Heath discussed the IT business case that was developed for implementing an AWIPS system and data support required at each of the GACCs.

Rick Ochoa suggested that Heath take the business lead for the AWIPS proposal. The group concurred. At this point a letter is needed that describes the need for supporting the project in order to get IT approval and the “go-ahead” for developing the full business case. He felt if the NPSG supported the project, it would demonstrate interagency support. Heath is planning to construct this letter in the next couple of weeks and get it back out the group for review. The group will then review the letter and hold a conference call prior to approval/support so we understand whether AWIPS is a smart business move for the agencies and what the costs will be if we support implementing it or if we don’t implement it. Heath will describe the caveats for viewing/sharing the information when he sends it out. Once the NPSG (and other groups) gave approval, then Heath could route it up through Kim Christensen to Larry Hamilton. Heath would also take the responsibility of drafting up the MOU that would be required for the project to go forward. Tom McClelland will complete the IT needs.

Agenda Item: National Coordinators – Tactical Management of Shared Resources

Gerry led a discussion on how the daily coordinator conference calls should flow to allow us to deal with imminent threats and resource allocation decisions needed to mitigate it. Rick said he and Heath would attempt to coordinate as best they can with the GACCs so their summary falls in line with the geographic areas. Rick said the Geographic Area meteorologists also have a responsibility to contact Rick or Heath if they know their local situation has changed.

Kim expected the coordinators to do a quick round robin to indicate what actions they have taken or are anticipating in response to forecast fire weather and fire danger.

Gerry suggested that NICC discuss a “tentative” scenario for shared resources so the GACC Center Managers (GACMs) could critique it.

Kim thought Tom and Rick should start off the discussion and then have the GACMs explain how they feel before Kim responds with suggestions.

After discussing this topic, the group agreed the coordination calls should go as follows:

- Quick briefing of national fire weather and fire danger (Rick, Tom, Heath)
 - Round-Robin – GACC actions planned for the day
 - NICC manager comments/response
- **NICC Manager will have final say in terms of nationally shared resource movement

Gerry explained how the PNW is going to allocate resources based on a variety of factors they are assessing and predicting.

ACTION ITEM: Gerry will have Terry Marsha make a copy of the 10-Day Large Fire Potential Model and send it out the group.

Gerry felt we needed to close the loop with the vision statement.
Rick felt it's something we need to do this summer

ACTION ITEM: Rick, Tom, Bill and Eric will draft a vision and mission statement paper for the NPSG and will ship out a final draft by July 15, 2003.

Session Close Out

National Predictive Service Group – Action Item Tracking Table

Task #	Date Assigned	Action Item	Notes Page #	Due Date	Responsible Party	Date Completed
1	05/15/03	Develop a draft organizational leadership diagram for the group, which will then be routed for comments/revisions prior to being accepted by the chair.	3	07/01/03	Neal Hitchcock	
2	05/15/03	Collect suggested formats on decision documents and topic abstracts. The chair will then make a decision and develop the format the group will use for future meetings.	5	11/10/03	Gerry Day	
3	05/15/03	Develop a decision flow diagram on how issues are brought into the group and routed to various other entities in order to reach decisions	5	07/01/03	Neal Hitchcock	
4	05/15/03	Develop and incorporate an NPSG link on the NICC webpage he is developing at NIFC.	6	07/01/03	Heath Hockenberry	
5	05/16/03	Consolidate responses and email a draft out to group for review prior to getting the information out to the user community.	7	06/15/03	Tom Wordell	
6	06/16/03	Write a short paragraph for each item identified in the Potential Funding Needs Table on page 9 of the May 2003 NPSG notes. Submit to Tom Wordell who will compile and re-distribute.	9	07/01/03	Various NPSG Members	
7	06/16/03	Develop an issue paper addressing what the responsibilities of the Assistant Fire Weather Manager at each GACC are with respect to RAWS data quality oversight. Once approved and signed by the NPSG	10	07/01/03	Rick Ochoa & NICC Predictive Service Group	

		chair, it should get routed out to the fire directors, center managers and NWS				
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Task #	Date Assigned	Action Item	Notes Page #	Due Date	Responsible Party	Date Completed
8	05/16/03	Make a copy of rationale Terry Marsha developed for identifying PSA fire danger levels and send it out the group.	12	06/15/03	Gerry Day	
9	05/16/03	Draft a vision and mission statement paper for the NPSG	12	07/15/03	Rick Ochoa Tom Wordell Eric Jager Bill Plough	