

National Predictive Service Group (NPSG) Meeting

Meeting Notes

Location: Portland, Oregon
Meeting Dates: February 6-7, 2007

Members Present:

- Tom Wordell – FS/NICC – Fire Analysts Representative – NPSG Chair
- Rick Ochoa – BLM/NICC – Fire Weather Program Representative – NPSG Vice Chair
- Chip Collins – NPS – Field Level Fire Managers Representative
- Gerry Day – BLM/NWCC – GACC Center Managers Representative (outgoing)
- Paul Witsaman – NWS, National Weather Service Representative, vice Lamoni
- Randy Dzialo – BLM/WBC, Intelligence Coordinators Representative, vice Lococo
- Brad Smith – NASF Representative
- Chuck Maxwell – FWS/SWCC – GACC Meteorologists Representative (outgoing)
- Tom Rolinski – BLM/OSCC – GACC Meteorologists Representative (incoming)
- Kim Christensen – FS/NICC Manager – NICC Representative
- Neal Hitchcock – FS/NIFC – NMAC Representative
- Charlie Leonard – FS/NICC – Intelligence Program Representative

Members Absent:

- Sheldon Wimmer – Geographic Operations Group Liaison
- Dan Smith – NFAEB Liaison
- Susie Stingley-Russell – ONCC – GACC Center Managers Representative (incoming)

Guests:

- Kim Kelly – GIS Specialist, Northwest Coordination Center
- Brad Quayle – Remote Sensing and Application Center
- Brian Schwind – Remote Sensing and Applications Center
- Robyn Heffernan – Meteorologist, National Interagency Coordination Center
- Tim Spangler – COMET Director
- Paul Duffy, Ph.D. – University of Alaska via Conference Call
- John Saltenberger – NWCC, Fire Weather Program Manager
- Terry Marsha – NWCC, Fire Weather Meteorologist

Notetaker: Lani Williams – Boise Interagency Logistics Center

Meeting Agenda Topics:

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Meeting Logistics
 - a. Introduction/background of new members
2. Update/Info sharing from National PS Meeting in Orlando
3. Update/Info sharing from Center Manager & NMAC/GMAC meetings
4. 2007 Project Proposals

- a. ROSS Data Delivery Reports
- b. PS ArcIMS site & Service Level Agreement with RSAC
- c. GACC/PSA Boundary Alignment
- d. Live Fuel Moisture Website and Database
- e. Cheetah2 Program and Data Updates
- f. NPSG Funding Status / Discussion / Decisions
5. NPSG Action Item / Task Tracking Review & Updates
6. Budget Advice Template for PS Positions (update)
7. Protocols for monetary vs. non-monetary awards
 - a. Develop formal protocols for NPSG to follow
8. Met and Intel Working Group Updates
9. COMET – Overview and Opportunities for online training
10. NPSG Strategic Plan update
11. PS Handbook update
12. Seasonal Assessment update from ESAW
 - a. Discuss proposal for new monthly/seasonal outlook process
13. Bin Items & Future Meeting Logistics
14. NMAC Strategic Action Plan Overview

Exhibits:

- A. Action Items, Decisions and Meeting Topics
- B. NPSG Funding
- C. Predictive Modeling Tools in Alaska
- D. Service Level Agreement Between the USFS Remote Sensing and Applications Center and the National Predictive Services Group
- E. ROSS Data Delivery Report Funding Proposal
- F. Cheetah Funding Proposal
- G. National Fuel Moisture Database Project Proposal
- H. 7-Day Fire Potential Verification
- I. COMET
- J. NPSG Strategic Plan
- K. Proposal for New Monthly and Seasonal Outlooks (Revised)
- L. Predictive Services Decision-Making Process

Tuesday – February 6, 2007

Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Logistics (Gerry Day)

Rick welcomed everyone and covered logistics of the Northwest Communications Center. Everyone introduced themselves, and the Agenda was briefly covered. The Field Manager Representative is yet to be named. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was requested to fill the position.

Agenda Item: Update/Information Sharing from the National Predictive Services Meeting in Orlando – Tom Wordell

- Intelligence Working Group - Randy Dzialo
 - Fire Occurrence Reporting System (Tom Wordell)
 - The final report will be completed this week and presented to NFAEB on February 21; with a follow-up meeting after the report presentation to discuss future plans. The project became a user needs assessment for fire occurrence reporting; which focused on the business requirements. The assessment identified 38 critical elements for federal agencies with a subset for states. The report did not propose a system but focused on what were identified as user needs.
 - SIT/209 Program: There is a meeting next week to discuss the life and future of the SIT/209 Program. It was designed with a seven year life-span, which it has now reached. Still working to have the “Ownership” field capability in the program; usage will become an education challenge.
 - ROSS Reporting/Queries: Currently there are a variety of programs to accomplish the same goal. NICC is developing a new user interface to access the ROSS Data Delivery System for users at all levels designed to pull consistent, uniform numbers. In addition, ROSS is implementing a COGNOS System which may provide additional capability
 - Intelligence Training/Positions – Support and Lead: The consensus of the group was to concentrate their efforts on having the Intelligence Support Position sanctioned and to delay efforts related to the Intelligence Lead Position.
 - 7 Day Product – Resources Portion: There are proposals posted on MyFireCommunity. The proposals contain both a visual and test portion.

- Meteorologist Working Group – Tom Rolinski
 - Daily Product: Chuck is working on a proposal for standardizing the daily graphical product.
 - Monthly Seasonal Outlook: NICC is proposing a new process for developing the Monthly Seasonal Outlook; they will produce the product with input from the GACCs and other sources. GACCs will have the ability to customize their reports. This topic will be discussed in more detail tomorrow.
 - Live Fuel Moisture Database Proposal: Ed Delgado is developing the framework for a national database which will be hosted by the Fire Lab.
 - Predictive Services Decision Making Process: Fred Svetz proposed a process for the Predictive Services Group to follow for making decisions which requires unanimous approval. The proposal was used in acceptance to the group. It will be re-examined based on the clarification of roles.
 - 7 Day Product: This topic was discussed and generated more questions than answers concerning product improvement.
 - 2nd Fire Behavior and Fuels Conference: Predictive Services has scheduled a special session that will last an entire day at the conference. The conference will be in Destin, Florida during March 26-30, 2007.
 - Team Building: It would have been more beneficial if the session would have been targeted for the group.

Predictive Services Handbook: Agenda topic for tomorrow.

Agenda Item: Update/Info Sharing from Center Manager and NMAC/GMAC Meetings – Kim Christensen and Gerry Day

- Center Managers Meeting:
 - GACC Manager Representative to NPSG – Susie Stingley-Russell is the new representative. She is from the Northern California Operations Center and was unable to attend this meeting.
 - IT Support for the GACCs – Gerry is working with Laurie Jakubowski and Colleen Shelly for IT support personnel for each of the GACCs. The Agreement/MOU with the Washington Office and the IRM organization is yet to be finalized.
 - Fire Weather Program – The Western Great Basin is experiencing difficulty filling their current vacancy due to budget constraints. National program funding commitments are being reviewed by NFAEB.
 - Northwest Coordination Center Incident Prioritization – Gerry shared an Access Database that is used by the Northwest MAC in prioritizing incidents. Contact Gerry for more information or a copy of the program.
- NMAC/GMAC Meeting:
 - Incident Prioritization Needs – There was a discussion regarding authorities concerning prioritizing and allocation of resources and the information needs to make decisions effectively. These needs will be discussed during the Breakout Session with Aaron Gelobter.
 - Large Fire Costs – The Forest Service is seriously addressing the Large Fire Cost Issue as well as the liability and accountability for decisions involving large fire costs.

Agenda Item: 2007 Budget Proposals – Tom Wordell (Exhibit B) Tom updated the budget. There are some items that reflect a savings, including the Seasonal Assessment Workshops and funding for a project for NICC Intelligence that has received alternative funding. There is approximately \$34,000 available for 2006 funding. Current funding proposals include:

- **Predictive Modeling Tools in Alaska – Paul Duffy, Ph.D. (Exhibit C)**
This project will update the statistical model developed prior to 2004, and redefines the teleconnection indices. The model identifies weather anomalies that influence fire activity. Three phases were identified. The initial work was funded through Joint Fire Science and alternate sources to fund this proposal have not been explored. The need and usefulness of this product has not fully been investigated, although it is agreed that opportunities for predictive products in Alaska need to be explored additional feedback concerning this proposal is needed.
- **Service Level Agreement with the Remote Sensing and Applications Center (RSAC) and NPSG – Kim Kelly, Brian Schwind and Brad Quayle (Exhibit D)**

RSAC and NPSG have entered into a Service Level Agreement designed to facilitate geospatial support for Predictive Services Products. Currently the 7 Day Significant Fire Potential Map is supported at hosted by RSAC. This agreement outlines procedures and processes for future ArcIMS coordinated product implementation. There was not a request for funding at this time; future funding may be accomplished through the existing **IT IRB**.

- Phase IA – Development (May 2007)
 - Develop Pilot ArcIMS Site
 - Decide which Predictive Service Guidance/FWX Layers to begin adding
 - Metadata on Posted Layers – Link for downloading posted GIS Data Layers (shapefile/.tiff)
 - Experimental Following Base Data Layers
 - Phase 1B – Enhance Site Functionality (October 2007)
 - Phase II – Guidance Outputs and Increased Functionality (October 2007)
 - Phase III – Exploring Partnerships (Ongoing)
 - Phase IV – Migration (Coordinate as Necessary)
 - Phase V – Maintenance (Data and Portal Page) (Ongoing)
- **ROSS Data Delivery Report – Charlie Leonard** (Exhibit E)
NICC Intelligence is currently working on a project to standardize data entry and is clean-up data records in ROSS. The previous proposal requested \$15,000 to fund Julie Polutnik. Alternate funding was provided by the Forest Service. This request is for funding to cover projected funding.
 - **Cheetah – Tom Wordell** (Exhibit F)
Currently the fire occurrence data through 2004 has been entered into Cheetah. There are issues involved in exporting the data into Fire Family Plus as well as Cheetah. A new data pull can be formatted to include latitude and longitude for mapping capability.
 - **Live Fuel Moisture – Ed Delgado** (Exhibit G)
Ed Delgado is modifying the Eastern Great Basin Live Fuel Moisture Website for GACC use. The Fire Lab at Missoula has agreed to host the site and provide operations and maintenance. This project is supported by the National Fuels Committee and will meet the California needs identified by Larry Hood, but does not provide for funding. Chuck Buescher has been working with Ed; funding is requested to provide travel and per diem.
 - **7 day verification** (Exhibit H)
Agreed to fund previously.

Decision:

Postpone funding for Alaska Proposal until local support for outputs and local funding is investigated and substantiated.

Fund the Live Fuel Moisture Proposal for \$7000.

Fund the additional ROSS Proposal for \$5000.

***Fund Cheetah for \$12000-15000 for the ability to import new file formats along with lat/long data and generate new reports.
The remaining funds will allocate at the Spring Meeting or are available for the Executive Group to obligate as needed.***

➔ **Action Item No. 159:** Gerry Day will talk to Dave Curry regarding the Alaska Proposal.

Lead: Gerry Day

Target Completion Date: May 8, 2007

Agenda Item: Action Item/Task Tracking Review and Updates– Tom Wordell (Exhibit A)

The Action Items Tracking Table was updated.

- Action Item 115 – Proposal needs to be presented to the Center Managers, Rick will follow up with Robyn Heffernan.
- Action Item 125 – The final report is scheduled to be released in March.
- Action Item 149 – Robyn Heffernan has linked the Strategic Plan Action Items; this item needs follow-up.
- Action Item 150 – Needs posted to NPSG website
- Action Item 153 – Rick and Tom will follow-up with Mike Barrowcliff to elevate the importance of this issue.

Agenda Item: Budget Advise Template for Predictive Service Positions (update) – Tom Wordell

This issue addresses program erosion and funding implications; in November the NFAEB stated that they support the program as a national program. Tom and Don Artley developed the Standard Operating Procedures for Supporting Regional Predictive Services Positions, which will be presented to NFAEB at their meeting on February 21.

Agenda Item: Protocols for Monetary and Non-Monetary Awards – Tom Wordell

NPSG has issued both types of awards in the past. Monetary Awards have been given to individuals who have made a significant impact on Predictive Services. Public presentations of these awards may be appropriate at times. Money for awards is included in the budget and has already been set aside. To date awards have been issued for:

- People who lead products and tasks that NPSG Chartered.
- People who were involved in those projects.
- People who served on NPSG.
- People who brought forth innovative ideas.

Other suggestions for awards/recognitions include:

- Certificates
- Traveling Award
- Single/Traveling Unit Award

➔ **Action Item No. 160:** Paul Witsaman will send Tom information regarding the Unit Award. Tom Wordell, Tom Rolinski and Rick Ochoa will develop an Award Proposal; to be presented at the Spring Meeting.

Lead: Tom Wordell, Tom Rolinski, Rick Ochoa and Paul Witsaman

Target Completion Date: 05/08/2007

Agenda Item: Meteorologist and Intelligence Working Group Updates

- Meteorologist Working Group - Tom Rolinski
 - Decision Making Process – The process is being revised based on clarification from NPSG.
 - Daily Product Proposal – Chuck Maxwell is working on a daily product that is currently in use by some of the GACCs; which have found it to be useful. The business requirements need to be articulated and collaboration is possible with the National Weather Service.
- Intelligence Working Group – Randy Dzialo
 - Most of the items were covered earlier from the National Predictive Services Meeting in Orlando.
 - Data Quality Issues – The quality of data is a recurring concern. This topic will be discussed further tomorrow.

Wednesday February 7th

Agenda Item: COMET – Overview and Opportunities for Online Training – Tim Spangler (Exhibit I):

The need for training, particularly on-line training arose from the User Needs Assessment. COMET has been providing on-line training to NOAA and the National Weather Service for the past fifteen years through the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR). Cooperative Program for Operational Meteorology, Education and Training (COMET)

- COMET Fast Facts
 - Founded in 1990
 - Staff of 36
 - Annual Budget of \$6 million
 - Over 165 universities have participated in COMET activities since 1990
 - Over 450 hours of computer-based distance learning created for 50,000 users world-wide
 - Sponsors include NOAA, Department of Defense and International – Canadian, Australian and European Meteorological agencies.

COMET has received top training awards. Part of their success is their understanding that individuals learn in different ways and a PowerPoint presentation is not a learning experience. They try to make their training modules more generic to appeal to a broader

audience. COMET uses a variety of online learning methods including tape lecture, interactive exercises and teletraining.

- Advanced Fire Weather Initiative S-591 will be available during the Spring of 2008, this was requested by the National Weather Service.
- Instruction is web-based and can be found at www.meted.ucar.edu
- It may be effective to supply annual training online; although it would involve updates travel costs would be reduced.

Agenda Item: NPSG Strategic Plan Update – Robyn Heffernan and Tom Wordell
(Exhibit J)

Robyn Heffernan has taken the lead and is working with Shari Shetler to develop the plan using the NWCG Template. The group needs to review the document and provide Robin with feedback and comments. This is the Strategic Plan for NPSG as Chartered under NFAEB, and provides oversight to the Predictive Services program.

- ➔ **Action Item No. 161:** Tom will email the Strategic Plan; the group needs to provide comments to Robyn using track changes by the end of February. The Action Items associated with the Strategic Plan need to be reviewed for individual or position as the named responsible entity.

Lead: Robyn Heffernan and Tom Wordell

Target Completion Date: 02/28/2007

Agenda Item: Predictive Services Handbook Updates – Chuck Maxwell

The comments received at the Predictive Services Meeting in Orlando were incorporated into the Handbook; it was then sent out to the GACCs. The Draft will be distributed at NFAEB in March and should be adopted the first of June. The long-term goal is to have it entered into the directives system.

Agenda Item: Seasonal Assessment – Robyn Heffernan and Tom Wordell (Web-link): -
http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/ESAW_fullreport_2007_final.pdf

The publication from the Eastern Seasonal Assessment is available on the website. The proceedings are from a workshop not the national outlook. The critical factors that are dictating the map are a weakening El Nino and the low snowpack in the eastern United States. Robin has developed the template and the report from the Western Seasonal Assessment Workshop should be available within a couple of days of the conclusion of the workshop. The GACCs are encouraged to supplement the reports.

- Proposal for New Monthly and Seasonal Outlooks (Revised) (Exhibit K)
This process was discussed at the Predictive Services Meeting in Orlando. There is a need to quantify significant fire potential, or a measure of activity/fire events compared to an historic measure (above, normal, below).
 - NICC will hold a conference call of climatologists around the 20th of each month to solicit information, attendance by the GACCs would be optional.

- One week prior to the end of the month, NICC would release the draft maps.
 - The maps would depict one month and two to four months out.
- Two days before the end of the month there will be another conference call with the GACCs, attendance by the climatologists would be optional.
- Prototypes will be distributed through NPSG and the Center Managers for comments.
 - Comments/feedback should be directed to the Meteorologist and Intelligence Working Groups.
 - Terminology should be consistent with increasing/decreasing.
- The product verification process has not yet been determined.

Agenda Item: Bin Items and Future Meeting

- The Meeting Notes from the Boise Meeting in October 2006 were approved.
 - These notes will be posted to the NPSG website
- Future Meetings:
 - May 8-10, in Fort Worth, Texas – Paul Witsaman and Brad Smith will host.
 - October 9-11, scheduled for Reno, NV – decision to be made at the next meeting.
- Agenda topics for the May Meeting
 - Adopt a logo – Review the latest from Jay
 - Strategic Plan review and final edits
 - Latest Daily and 7 Day Products
 - Predictive Services Handbook Update

Decision Making Process – Tom Rolinski (Exhibit L)

The document was modified and a section relating to national perspective was added, with NPSG as the final decision maker. The process still lacks opportunities to solicit buy-in from the constituents. Tom will revisit the process on the Meteorologist Conference Call next Wednesday.

Agenda Item: NMAC Strategic Action Plan Review – Aaron Gelobter and Rex Mann

Aaron provided a brief overview concerning the tasks associated with the NMAC After Action Review following the 2006 Fire Season. The group continued with the discussion in a Breakout Session following the NPSG Meeting.