



ROCKY MOUNTAIN COORDINATING GROUP

Bureau of Indian Affairs (Southwest, Rocky Mountain and Great Plains Regions)
Bureau of Land Management (Colorado and Wyoming)
Fish and Wildlife Service (Mountain-Prairie Region)
Forest Service (Rocky Mountain Region)
National Park Service (Intermountain and Midwest Regions)
State Agencies in Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas

September 11, 2008

To: Participating Agencies, Prospective Incident Commanders, Fire Use Managers, and Incident Management Team Members

From: Chairman, Rocky Mountain Coordinating Group *David Carter*

Subject: Vision and Direction of the Future of Rocky Mountain Geographic Area Incident Management Teams and Announcement of Recruitment for 2009-2011 Rocky Mountain Area Incident Management Teams

Vision and Direction of the Future of Rocky Mountain Geographic Area Incident Management Teams

Wildland Fire Policy changed greatly with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review of 1995 and the Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy of 2001. Among the key principles discussed in these Policies was the principle of Firefighter and public safety as our first priority in every fire management activity being paramount to everything we do. Another was the recognition of Wildland fire as an important ecological process and that the exclusion of fire from fire adapted ecosystems will further cause them to deteriorate has led many Land Managers to increase their efforts a "using" fire to obtain resource objectives as stated within their respective Land and Resource Management Plans.

The Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy of 2004 brought operational clarification to the Policy to better provide for consistent implementation of the Policy at all levels. Among the clarification provided the Strategy stated that "only one management objective will be applied to a Wildland fire. Wildland fires will either be managed for resource benefits or suppressed. A Wildland Fire cannot be managed for both objectives concurrently". Another precept of the Strategy said that "once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefits." The Strategy also attempted to define what an Appropriate Management Response (AMR) was. The Strategy also clarified the decision processes to be used to develop response strategies for suppression or Wildland Fire Use events. They are the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) and the Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP).

On March 24, 2008 the Wildland Fire Leadership Council agreed on modifying the guidance to the "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2004)". The Memo stated "the proposed modifications or "revised direction" will be tested in a limited number of field units this summer (2008) and then incorporated into the revised "Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy" that will be issued in November 2008" for national application in 2009. The revised direction for the future will include allowing wildland fires to be managed for one or more objectives based on Land and Resource Management Plan direction; allowing wildland fires that burn together to be managed for more than one objective; the use of the Wildland Fire Decision Support System or WFDSS to help guide and document the planning and decision making process for Wildland fires. This revised direction is currently being tested as a pilot program in units within the Rocky Mountain Area (RMA).

Recruitment for 2009-2011 Rocky Mountain Geographic Area Incident Management Teams

In anticipation of the next full scale Incident Management Team (IMT) rotation for 2009-2011, and in keeping with the expected policy changes for 2009, the RMA Executive Group tasked the Rocky Mountain Coordinating Group (RMCG) in late 2007 with developing a "Succession Strategy" for RMA IMT's. The Succession Strategy developed by RMCG outlined several alternatives for the Executive Group to consider. The Alternative the Executive Group chose was to move forward with four (4) IMT's reconfigured so that each team would have the capability to respond to the full range of management scenarios including Wildland Fire Use. **This alternative provides for one Type 1 IMT, two Type 2 IMT's primarily for the Geographic Area and National responses, and one Type 2 Team primarily for Zone response within the Great Plains Zone.**¹ The Executive Group directed the RMCG "to move forward with implementing the four team reconfigured approach for the next three year rotation. We believe that under this option the RMA can field four strong teams, while at the same time work on strengthening "our bench" for the future.

The RMCG anticipates this to be a very "dynamic" process over the next three years at least. Prospective Incident Commanders (IC's) and other Team Members must keep in mind that:

- All the teams **will be responding to fires that will include objectives for resource benefits** and may be long term implementation efforts of varying complexities.
- Teams must quickly become fluent in new national processes associated with the 2009 guidance.
- Teams will be required to mobilize members to meet **staffing needs of the assignment and NOT always carry the team's full roster**. In other words Agency Administrators may require different team configurations based on the assignment's objective and complexity, rather than the traditional "short team" or "long team" configuration.
- Team members not receiving mobilization orders with the initial call-out **may or may not be available to "freelance"** on other assignments so as to maintain maximum capability for their team while it is responsible for an incident.²
- Teams may be asked to meet specific standards for management of long term incidents and long term planning documents. A current example is that of the Gunbarrel Wildland fire with multiple types and sizes of teams for management and the state of the art planning effort included.
- **Teams will be asked to respond to "All Hazard" incidents** as capable and available.

RMCG anticipates a transition period for the next three years for each team to become fully capable of managing all types of wildland fires successfully within the framework listed above. The goal of the RMCG is to work closely with the RMCG Operations Committee, the Incident Commanders and Team Members to ensure the success of this initiative.

To ensure success of this effort the **RMCG will also be recruiting for a five person Fire Use Support Group (FUM1, OSC2, PSC2, LSC2, LTAN/FBAN) and a Decision Support Group (LTAN, GISS, others as needed for a regional cadre)**. The primary purpose and focus of these two groups will be to work closely with assigned teams as necessary to provide expertise to IC's and Section Chiefs involved in long term implementation incidents and to provide the assigned teams with state of the art Wildland fire decision support (WFDSS) and modeling assistance.

The Fire Use Support Group will travel, as needed, to incidents to assist, mentor, and train assigned teams with the intricacies of long term planning and management of fires where resource benefits are an objective or where a situation warrants a longer term suppression approach. This Fire Use Support Group is not expected to have delegated authority for a fire given its primary purpose is to "mentor" and assist other teams, although it could be appropriately staffed and assigned to a fire within the Geographic Area or nationally as those situations warrant. This Fire Use Support Group, as configured, would also not normally be available on a RMA or National mobilization list, but could be "stood up" on an as needed basis. The RMCG Operations Committee will be assigned to work with the RMCG to ensure the best possible outcome and direction for this group will occur. RMCG will be looking for individuals to serve on this Fire Use Support Group who are willing to be part of something that is "bigger than they are".

During 2008 RMCG, with the assistance from an Interagency Task Group, began the process of developing the Decision Support Group. Depending on fire needs this group may consist of a WFDSS Analyst/Fire Behavior Specialist, Geographic Information Support Specialist, and/or other specialists as necessary for an incident. The Decision Support Group will interface with the team responsible for the Wildland fire. Until all key Command and General Staff personnel

¹ RMCG, Agency Executives and the RMCG Operations Committee will be determining mobilization areas and procedures for all GACC and Zone Type 2 IMT's for publication in the 2009 RMA Mobilization Guide.

² The RMCG Operations Committee will be tasked with defining in the 2009 RMA Mobilization Guide under what circumstances a team member may "freelance".

assigned to Rocky Mountain Area teams became proficient with integrating incident operations with Wildland Fire Decision Support System products the Fire Use Support Group described above would assist them through this process.

Again, this incorporation within the Rocky Mountain Geographic Area of having all teams capable of managing all wildland fire and all-hazard incidents will be an on-going and dynamic process. It will require willingness from each IMT Member to change and adapt to what for some may be a new way of doing business. There will undoubtedly be “bumps in the road”, but by working together with the Executive Group, RMCG, RMCG Operations Committee and the IMT Members we can achieve our vision.

Attached to this letter is the Rocky Mountain Geographic Area 2009-2011 Incident Commander, Deputy Incident Commander, and Fire Use Manager Application. For those interested, please give this careful and serious consideration. The announcement period for the Incident Commander, Deputy Incident Commander, IC Trainee and Fire Use Manager (FUM1) positions for the Type 1 IMT, two Geographic Area Type 2 IMT’s, one Zone Type 2 IMT, and one Fire Use Support Group will **close on October 6, 2008 and must be submitted through your agency’s RMCG Operations Committee representative (see attached list).**

Finally, RMCG anticipates that the IMT Member recruitment announcement will be open from November 1 through December 1, 2008. That announcement will be distributed after the Incident Commanders have been chosen. If you have additional questions please call me at 303-236-8110, or contact your respective RMCG Agency Representative.

Cc: RMA Executive group
RMCG Representatives
RMCG Committee Chairs

Attachment: RMA 2009-2011 Incident Commander Application