

ISSUE PAPER

Prepared for: Rocky Mountain Coordinating Group

Submitted: October 15, 2008

Title: The Status of the Rocky Mountain Area WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS Program

Issue: Systemic and Chronic Problems within the RMA WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS Program

Background/Status:

WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS data supports a wide variety of interagency fire operations and preparedness activities, some of which are listed in Chapter 10 of the 2008 Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations. These include, but are not limited too Fire Danger Pocket Card for Firefighter Safety, Staffing Levels, Fire Danger Ratings, Severity Funding, Seasonal Risk Analysis, Preparedness Plan, and Fire Danger Rating Operating Plans. In addition to past published and non-published documentation illustrating a substandard WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS program in the Rocky Mountain Area and Predictive Services bringing these issues to the forefront, recent quality control efforts continue to show systemic and chronic problems within the WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS program, which are a result of both, lack of training and work performance. During the 2008 fire season, RMA Predictive Services found problems that ranged from greening-up stations at the same time despite major elevation differences, wind sensors reporting zero mph for 30 days or more, several weeks of missing 1300 obs prior and during fire season, lack of annual maintenance, inconsistent and/or erroneous usage of the wet flag parameter, all of which ultimately led to substandard NFDRS output. Additionally, RMA Predictive Services tasked an impartial WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS expert, Jim Brain, to randomly sample and quality control several RAWS/NFDRS station catalogs in the Rocky Mountain Area, utilizing the Weather Information Management System (WIMS). His findings (attached) were very discouraging. Predictive Services personnel are available to address concerns or answer questions regarding this matter.

Recommendations:

- 1) Continue to hire Jim Brain or WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS expert on an annual basis to coordinate interagency WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS activities prior through fire season(s) starting in March 2009.
- 2) Internally develop the WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS skill base empowered to provide the program oversight needed. Identify individuals and allocate funds to insure they adequately trained and have the time available to perform the duties.
- 3) Fire personnel intimately involved in WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS, attend WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS training/refresher.
- 4) Develop and adopt an RMA WIMS/RAWS/NFDRS Operating Plan that requires compliance and also outlines enforcement and accountability in EPAPs and preseason preparedness. (2 year timeline to accomplish)
- 5) Develop and adopt an RMA NFDRS Plan (Must accomplish items 1 thru 4 first, with initial draft NFDRS plan in 2010)
- 6) Full consensus among RMCG for items listed above by January 2009, or next RMCG meeting.

Alternatives:

- 1) Status Quo

Contact: (Includes name, phone number, electronic address)

Tim Mathewson- RMA Fire Weather Program Manager-RMA Predictive Services
303-445-4309/tim_mathewson@blm.gov

ACTION TAKEN

(Circle One)

APPROVED / APPROVED AS MODIFIED BELOW / REJECTED / **DEFERRED UNTIL: Jan 09 meeting**

10/24/08

Date

David Carter

Rocky Mountain Coordinating Group

Explanation: (if needed)

RMCG basically agrees with your proposal but wants time to include Ops & Dispatch committee inputs to better craft a plan to address the issue. This issue will be an agenda item at the next RMCG meeting, Jan 20-22, 2009.