

Northeastern Interagency Coordination Center

Established 2002



Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission
Commissioner's Meeting
2019

Celebrating 70 Years of Partnerships &
Smokey Bear's 75th Year Preventing Wildfires

2019 End of the Year Report

2019 Started off the same way 2018 ended; with the US Federal Government shutdown. Molly was furloughed for the first 4 weeks of January coming back to work just in time for the winter meeting. Thank goodness for Don's position because he showed up every day to work (weather permitting), often sitting with his jacket on because the building was cold, just to keep NECC open. Everyone needs to thank him for his dedication. 😊

In all my 20 + years, I've only seen a handful of seasons that were this slow. 2019 was the 3rd slowest year NECC has had when it came to mobilizing resources out of area but if you include the resources imported to assist with NFFPC members or resources we moved around for member to member assistance it rises to the 6th slowest year.

The first resources were mobilized in February going to New Hampshire, New York and Ohio assisting with Compact supported Forest Health projects. Our first fire resource we supported was the end of March when the FWS Walkill River National Wildlife Refuge's Engine to assist New Jersey State with a wildland fire. We began bringing in resources from outside of the compact in April to help the Forest Service with their prescribed burning projects, and our first National mobilization to western states, was not until June 22nd when we sent a SEC2 to New Mexico. The first crew assignment was in September (if you don't count the one that got cancelled the evening before they were to depart from Harrisburg Mobe Center). Nationally on the US side of the border we did not get past a PL3 for the entire year, and we barely heard a peep out of our Canadian partners because their activity was just as slow.

All in all, NECC mobilized 116 Single Resources, 32 engine personnel, and 60 personnel on the 3 Type 21A hand crews we sent to California. We imported 37 individuals from outside of the compact, moved around 80 compact members to assist other compact members in prescribed fire, Forest Health and NECC. A total of 329 personnel was moved through NECC.

Reported wildland fire activities were down throughout the compact while prescribed fire activities were up. Compared to previous years, the number of wildfire ignitions reported to NECC were about ½ of what we usually receive. The acres/hectares reported were 3rd lowest since 2002 when NECC began and started collecting this information. However, when looking at prescribed fire activities, the number of burn projects reported to NECC was the highest it has been since 2002 but the acres were just above average.

NECC sponsored a Crew Boss Refresher in May where 25+ qualified and trainee CRWB's throughout the NE Compact attended. The goal was to provide information for when they take interagency crews out. NECC has been mobilizing more and more "Interagency" Type 2 IA crews, and every year new issues come up because all agencies are a little different in things like time sheets, travel, task books, injuries, etc., so the refresher was designed to equip CRWB's with information they can use if "issues/questions" arise during their mobilization.

This year, New Hampshire State supplied NECC with one of their radios so dispatchers can monitor State fire activities and possibly access to the Civil Air Patrol while they are providing

their detection flights. We didn't get the radio until later in the season when fire season was over so we did not get to utilize it this year, but I suspect we will in 2020.

NECC personnel continues to participate in outside activities. **Molly** was the Administrative Assistant for the Eastern Area Coordinating Group and attended Northeast Operations Committee and Commissioners meetings. She continued to provide the weekly LMAC calls, and she provided NECC updates at the WMF wildland fire refreshers.

Don was busy in 2019. He finished up his first full year as the EA Dispatch Working Team Chair representing the NE compact, he attended the annual Burlington Vermont and the Gray Maine National Weather Service Fire weather meetings, provided NECC update at the Green Mountain NF Fire Refresher; attended the annual Appalachian Region (previously known as Region 5) National Fish and Wildlife Service's FMO meeting, attended the annual WildCad/IROC meeting, took the NFDRS class, and attended the EA Center Managers meeting.

Mari: Went on a 3-week fire assignment to the Eastern Area Coordination Center (EACC) providing Intel support and working on her Task book. She attended the Winter Meeting in January and continues to be the National Park Service representative to the EA Dispatch Working Team.

I'd like to give a shout out to **April Porth** who manages the 4th tier dispatch center which NECC supports; NPS-Delaware Water Gap. As a 3rd tier center, NECC receives the original order and we pass it along to April who then fills and mobilizes her NPS resources. There are not many 4th tier centers left in the US and April does an outstanding job in getting her folks out. In fact, the majority of the NPS personnel mobilized through NECC are from her center. When filling crews and we find our crews shorthanded, she always finds us a few firefighters to help us out. She is an integral part of NECC's success, and the one dispatcher most folks don't even know about, but now you do. 😊.

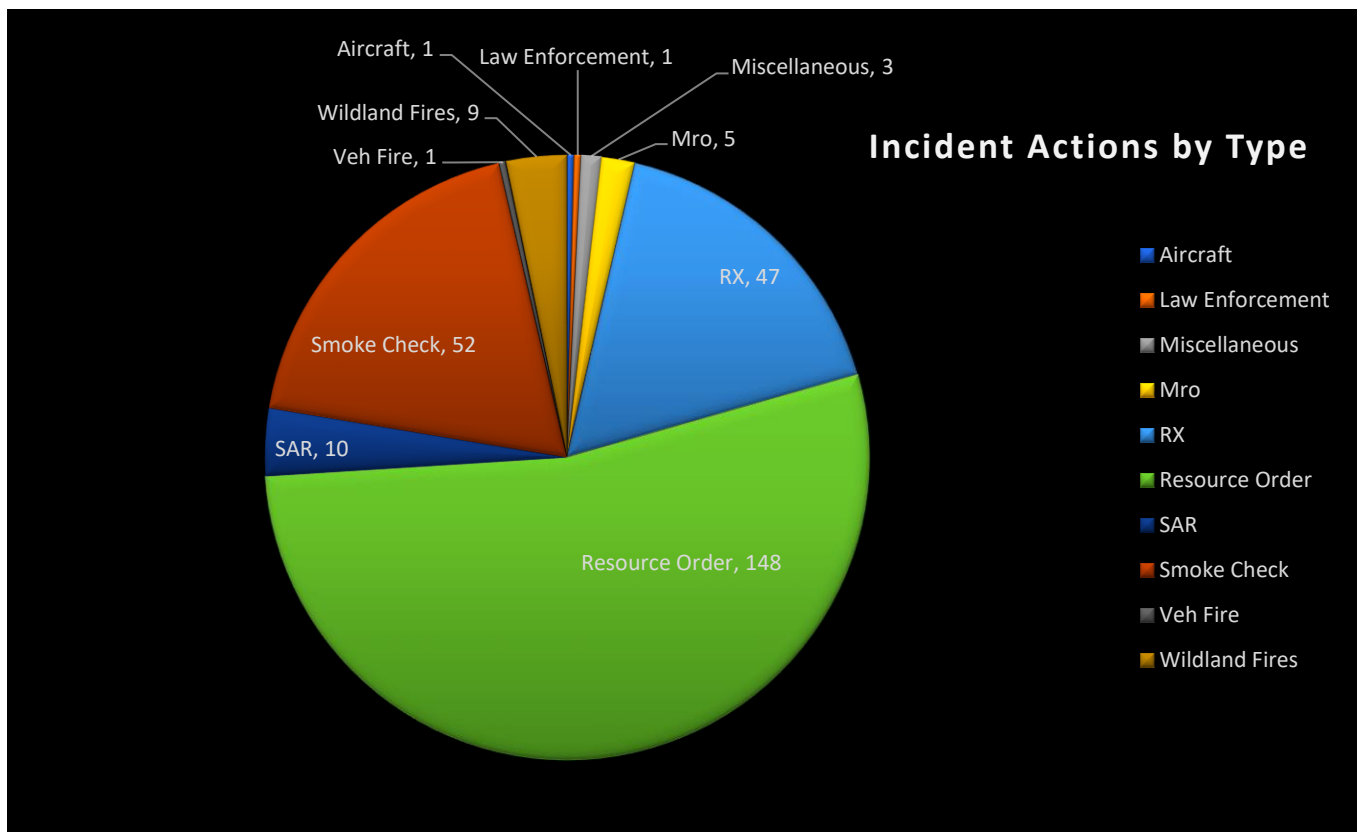
Looking into 2020: NECC will have a new dispatcher starting in March (Gareth Weaver). He is a Forest Service employee and will be assisting with wildland fire and prescribed fire activities for both forests as well as assisting the center in mobilization efforts. There are numerous electronic programs which we use here at NECC that are changing, but the biggest one is a new mobilization program called IROC starting sometime in March. We are hoping it goes off without any hic-ups, but that will be seen, but in the meantime, If you look at the past 17 years, there is no place to go but up regarding assisting the national, international and local efforts, so NECC will plan for a busy season like it was 2006, 2012 or 2017.

Molly, Don and Mari

INCIDENT ACTIONS

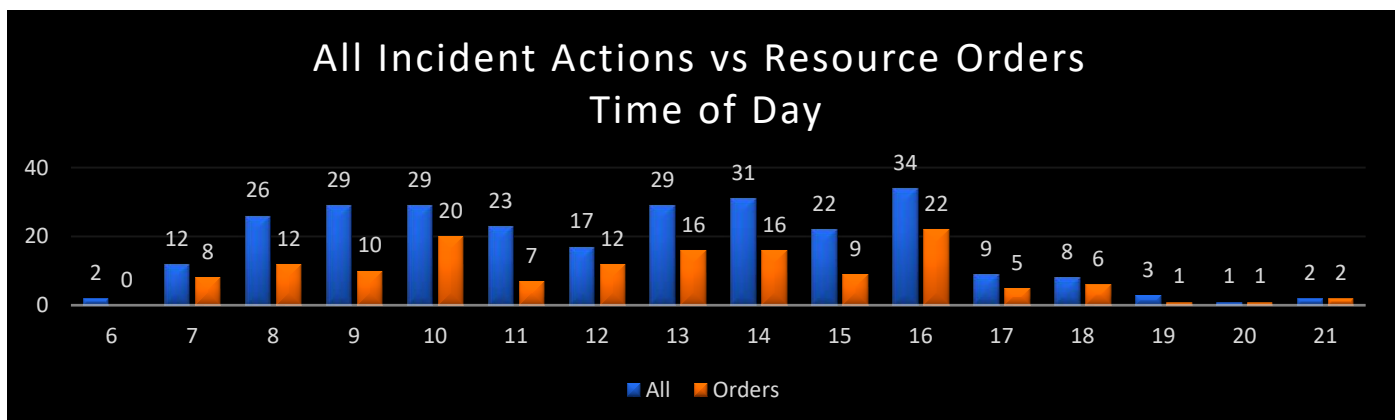
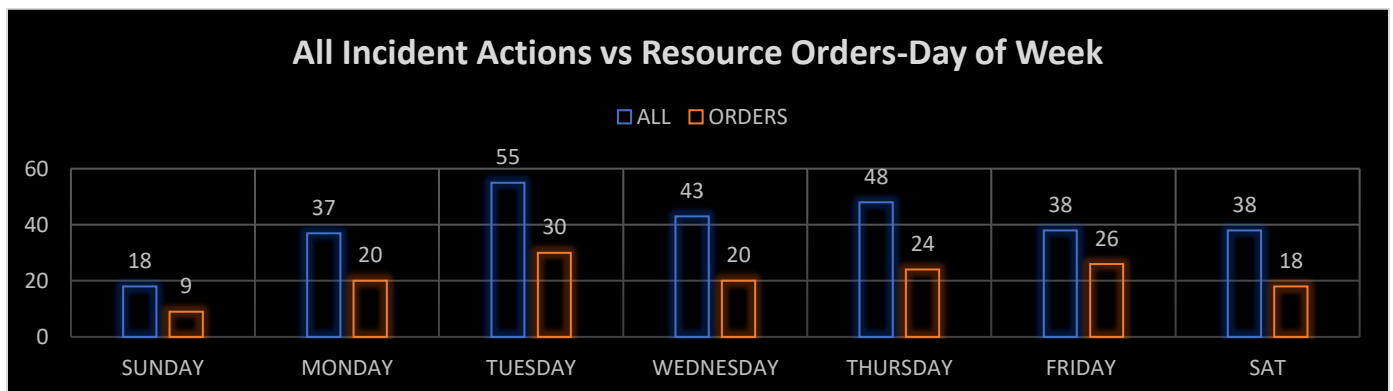
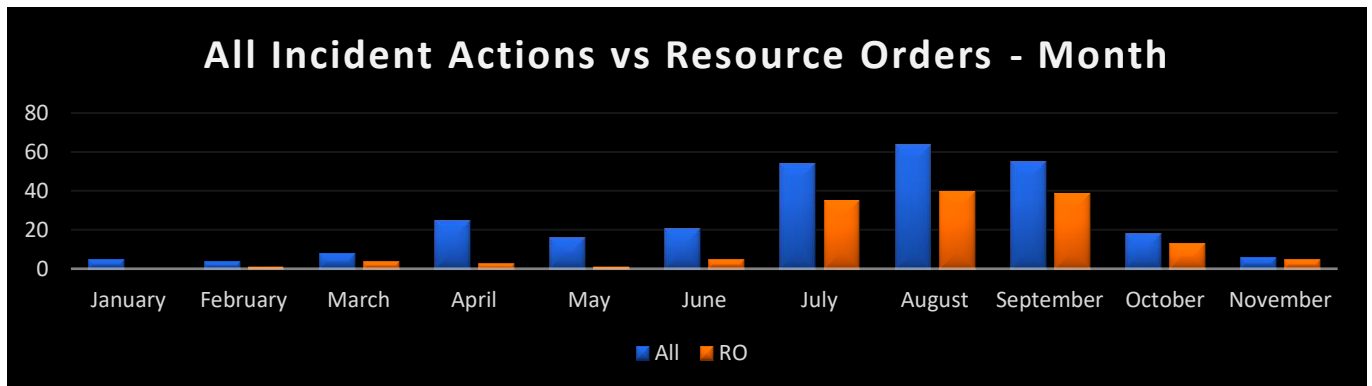
The WildCad program, which everyone has heard of, provides NECC with a great tool to keep track of all that we do, but it does not show everything we do. Besides mobilizing resources or providing communications support for wildland and prescribed fire activities we also; manage personnel qualifications; manage RAWs stations and provide WIMS support; provide support for search and rescues; monitor aviation resources during forest health flights or forest radio maintenance projects; and don't forget about the daily Situation Report that gets posted every day or the conference calls we support or participate in. Much of what we do never gets noticed or noted anywhere, so even though mobilizations are much of our workload, it is not the entire picture of all we do.

Even in slow years resource orders are NECC's biggest workload and 2019 was no exception. What did increase however was tracking of fire activities for the White Mountain NF (Smoke Checks). White Mountain was wanting to capture unreported fire activity on the Forest, so they asked NECC to assist with tracking these non-reported incidents. Field going personnel, when they came across an abandoned campfire or an old burn area, would capture the geographical area and lat/long and either turn it in to NECC or local LEO's who would forward it to us, and we then would create an incident in WildCad. The hope is to give the forest better information on where fire activities may be occurring which will help with their fire prevention efforts.



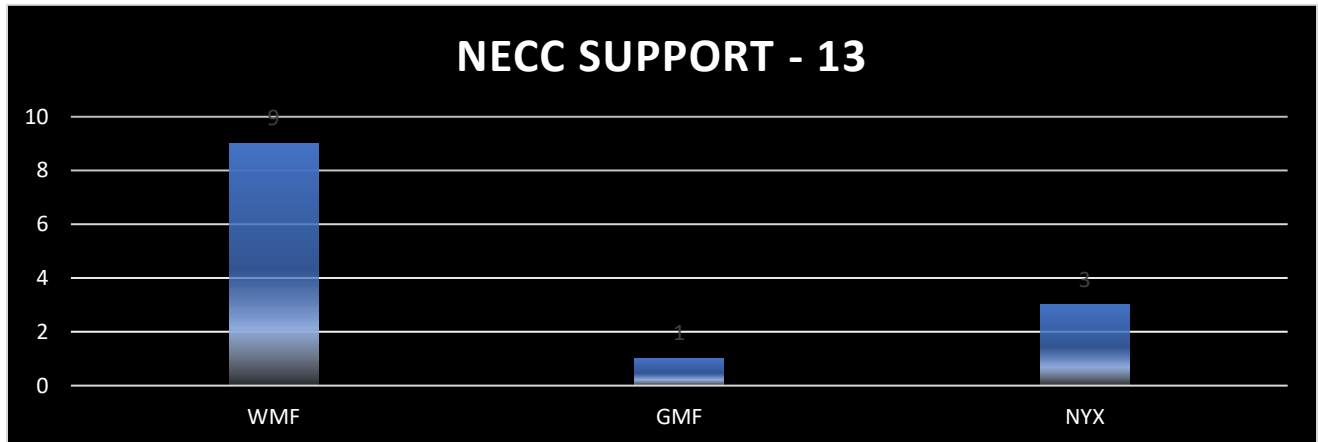
The below graphs show the total incident actions NECC created in 2019 during the months, weeks and times of day. As you can see, August, Tuesdays and the 1600 hour are not only the busiest for resource orders, but they are also the busiest for “other” support NECC provides.

A 6am or 9pm phone call often is not associated with a resource order but NECC dispatchers still need to answer the phone and provide the support to whomever is on the other end of the phone. So, you can see our day does not always start at 0700 and end at 1630.



MOBILIZATIONS

The US National PL level did not get above a 3 in 2019, therefore NECC did not go to 7- day coverage the entire year, however we still brought compact resources into help when needed. NECC did receive a few resource orders on weekends, however that was not consistent throughout the summer and the on-call dispatcher was able to fill the orders and get the resources on their way. Only once in 2019 did more than one dispatcher work on a weekend and that was when we were mobilizing the 3 crews to California.



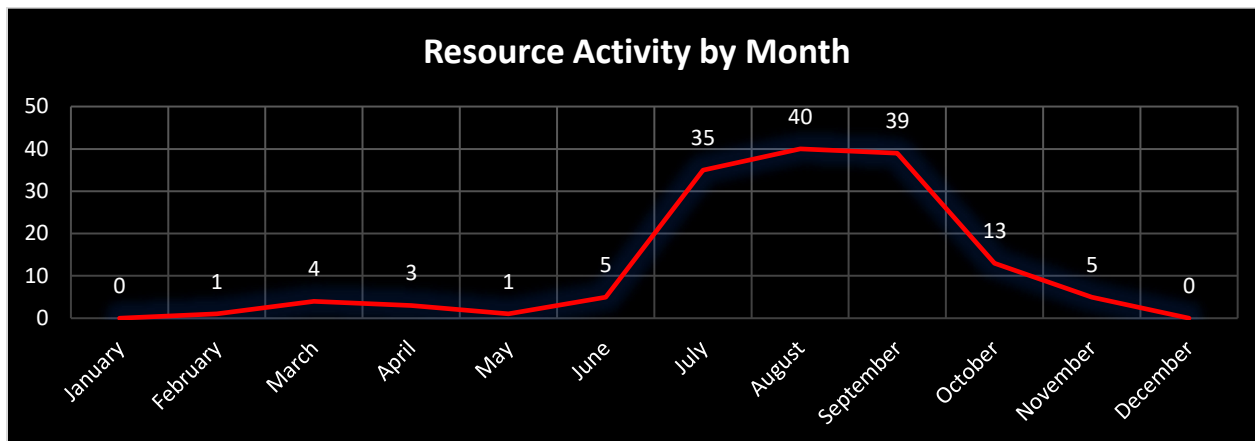
4 of the WMF personnel above were drivers for crew mobilization

NECC can get extremely busy during the summer months with mobilizations, especially June through August however this year we just didn't get the orders like past years. A lot of this has to do with fire activities throughout the country, however it also has to do with availability of our resources.

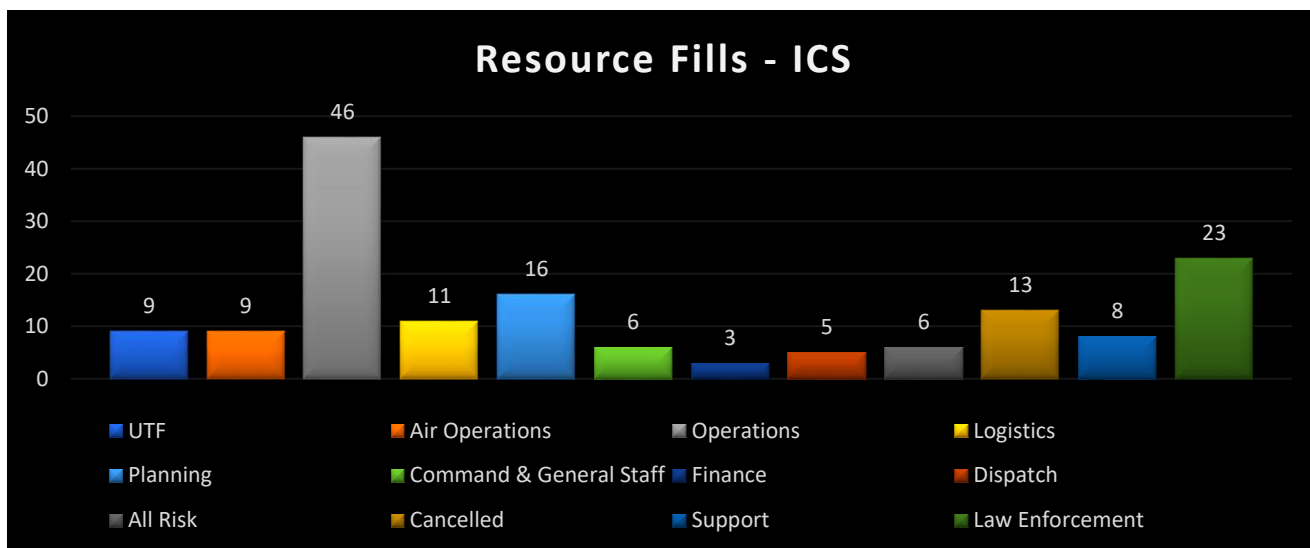
Most years, the majority of folks wait until we get to a PL4/PL5 or when they hear on the news how bad things are before going available, however when folks wait too long, such as what happened to some this year, the window of opportunity misses them, and they never get an assignment. Nationally we never got past a PL3 so the number of resources that made themselves available were low and when resources finally did make themselves available, so did everyone else in the country, so the competition for an order made it that much more difficult to get out.

Just as a reminder: NECC will not receive a resource order unless we are showing resources, with the needed qualifications, available in ROSS. It is that simple.

Typically, September starts to swing down in the number of orders we received, but 2019 stayed consistent from July through September.



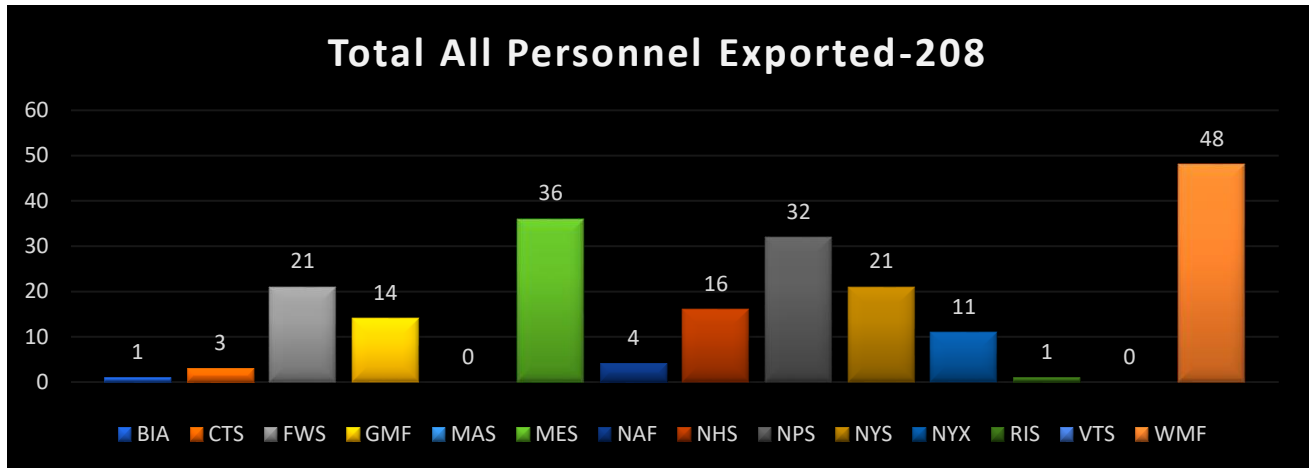
Operations are always the area that we provide the most support in. The 46 operations resource orders received were for single resources, crews and engine with about 150 personnel mobilized. Most of the Law Enforcement orders are for SEC2's which is the one single position we fill the most of next to FFT2's.



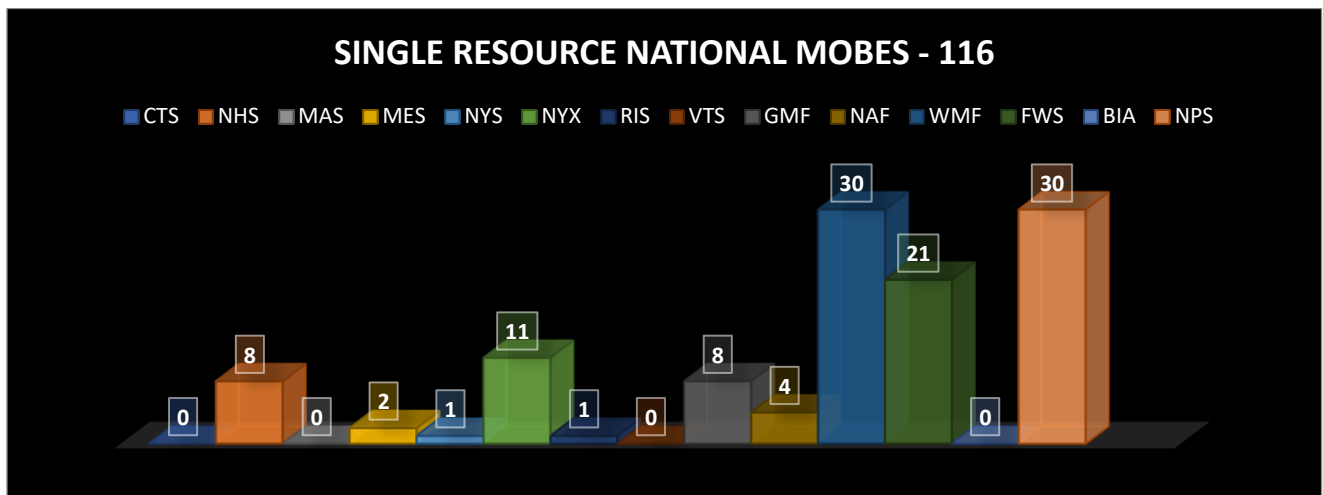
This year was a strange year for cancelled orders. Of the 13 we had, NECC had already filled the order and some resources already on their way. New York State Crew #1 had just arrived at the Harrisburg Mob Center only to find out they were being cancelled. Cancellations do occur every year, but it usually occurs on very busy years. UTF's effected 29 personnel being mobilized.

With Canada also having a mild fire season, our Canadian Province partners did not need any assistance from within the compact. All resources NECC mobilized Nationally were for US activity.

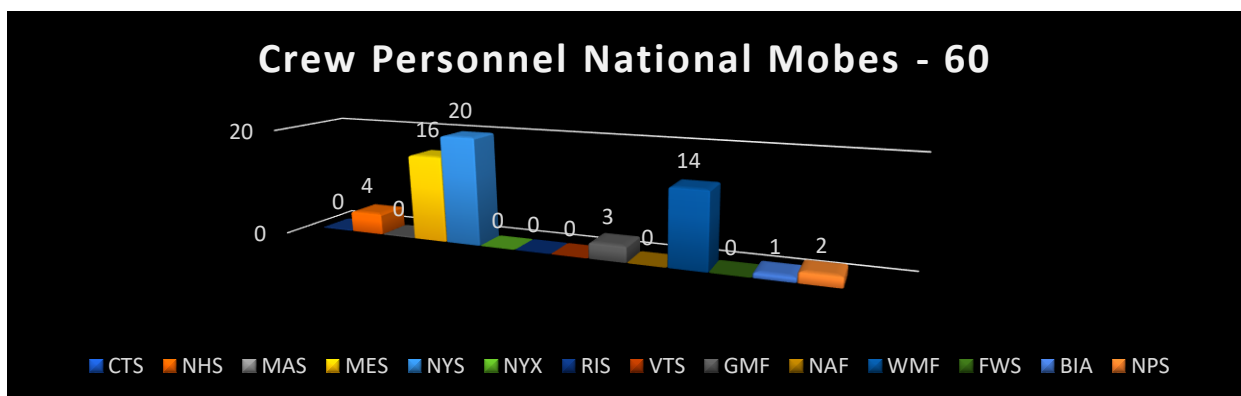
The next few graphs shows the breakdown of agency participation in National mobilizations as well as the destinations these resources assisted.



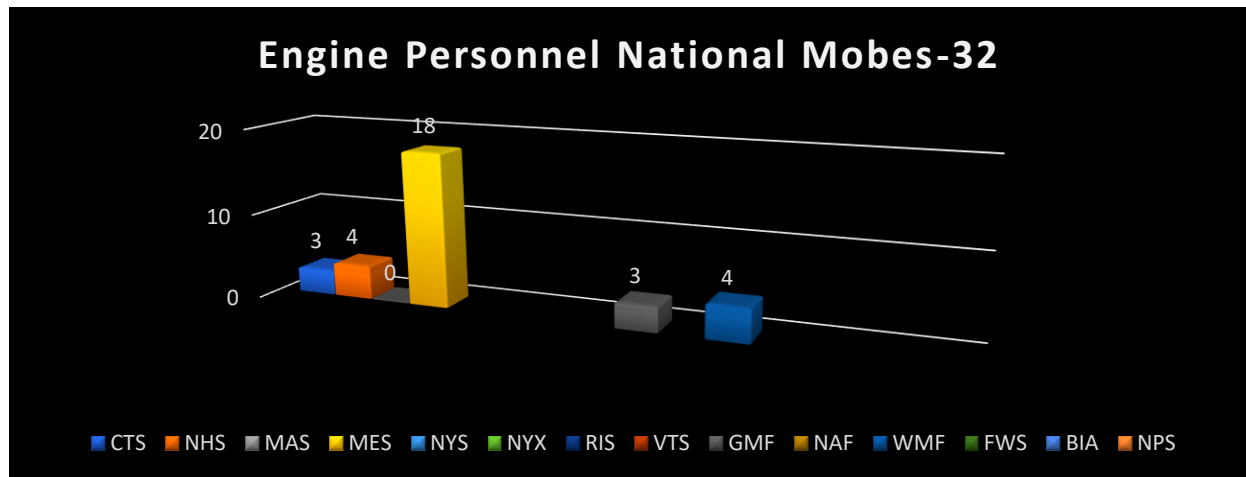
Agency – Single Resources



Agency - Crews

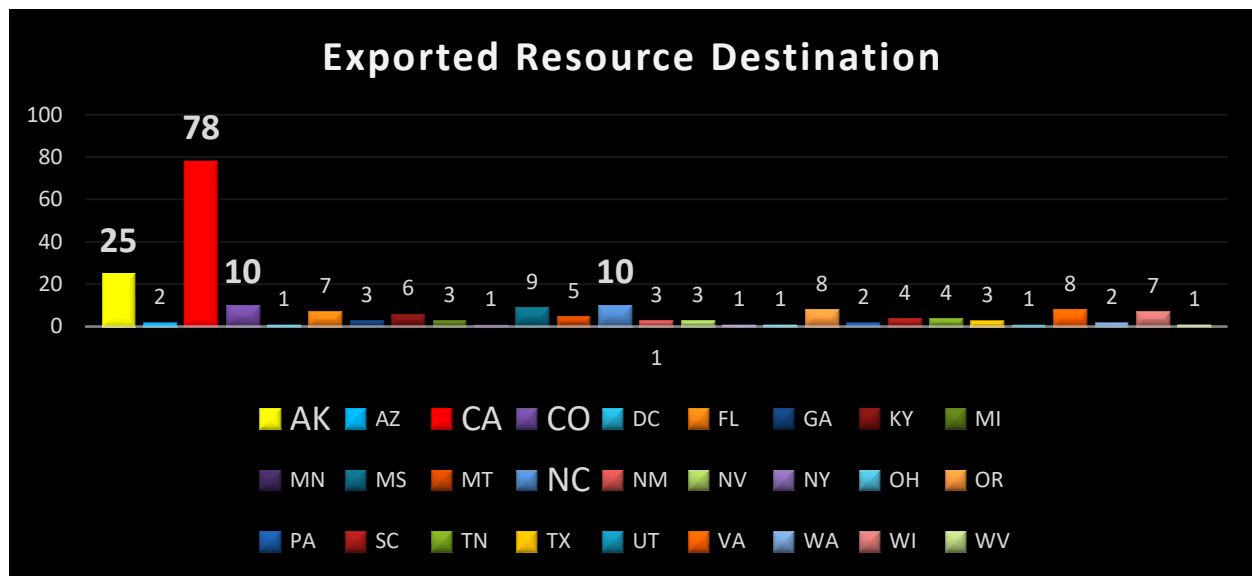


Agency – Engines

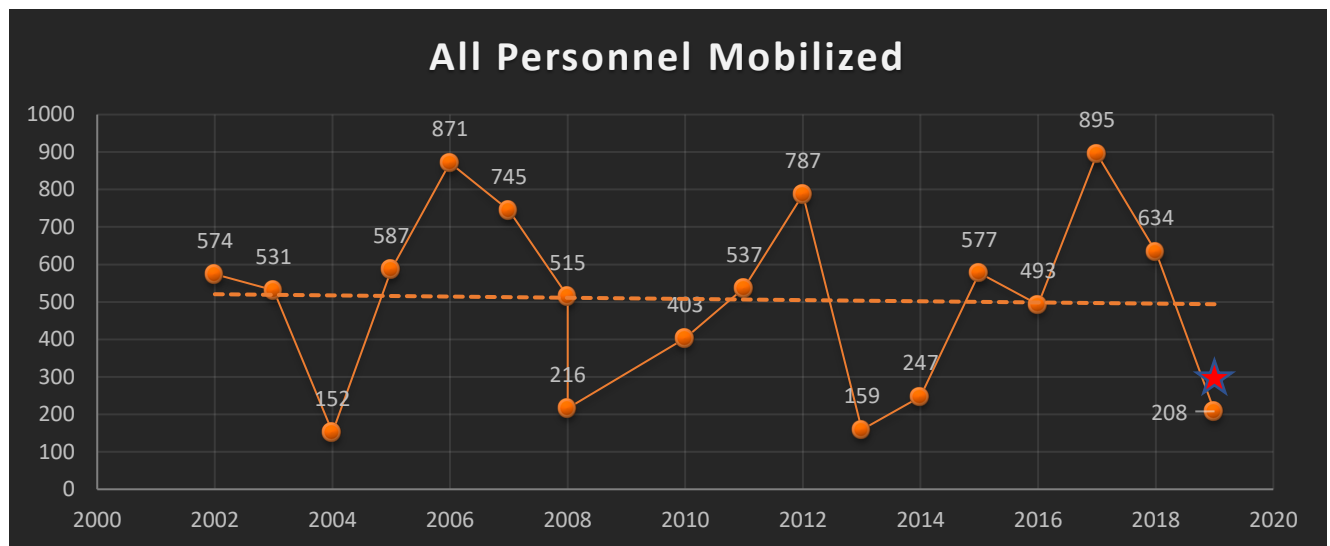


Destinations:

27 States were the destinations of our resources in 2019 with the majority heading to California and Alaska. 23 of the states had less than 10 resources mobilized. The only other states that had 10 or more were Colorado and North Carolina.



Overall, like I said in the beginning of our report, this was the 3rd lowest year for mobilizations since NECC began. Only 208 personnel were mobilized on national incidents, however when we add in the compact support for Forest Health, Prescribed Fire and NECC/Mob Center support we bump things up 5th overall (288)★

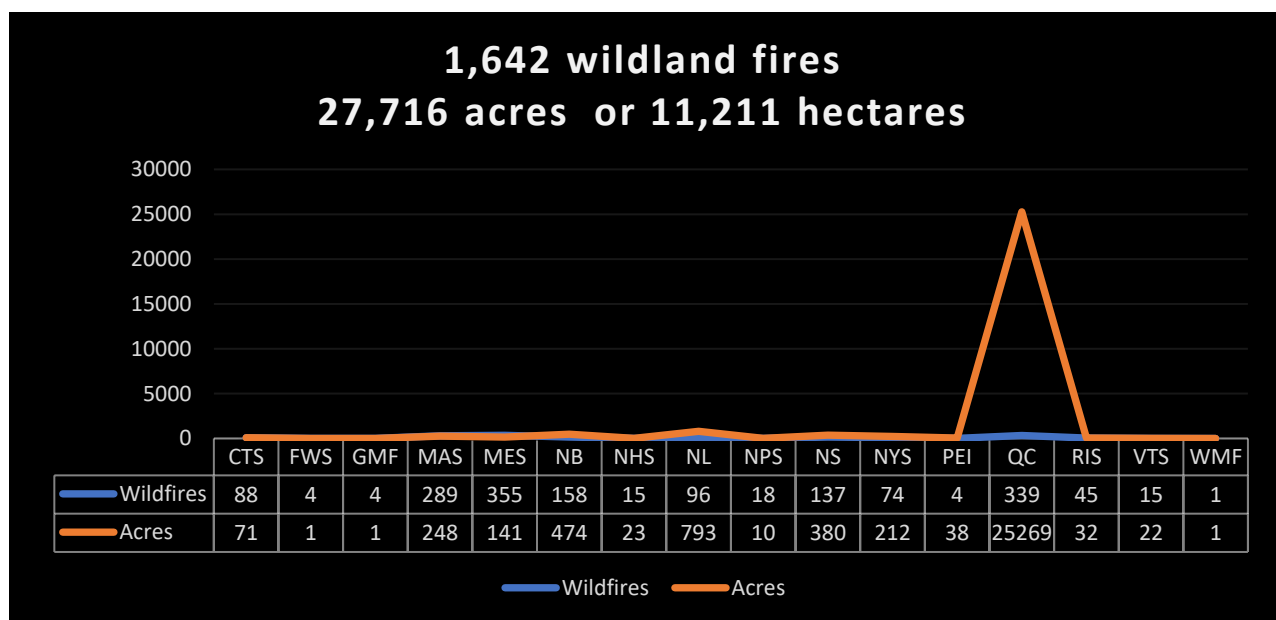


Above graph does not include imported resources.

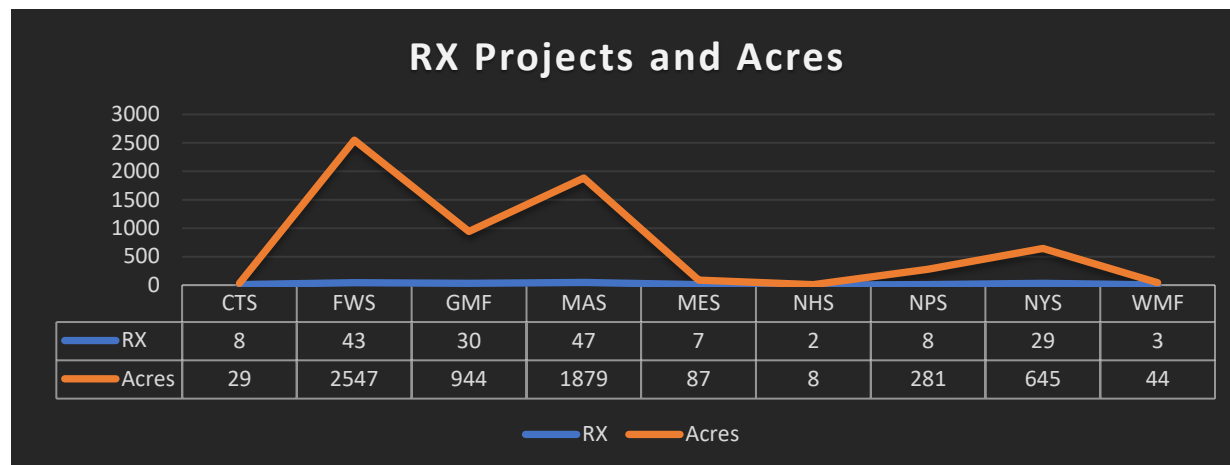
Reported Fire Activity

Wildfire: Just like national wildfire activity in Canada and the US, NECC's partners were also having a slow-mild year. Quebec typically has many very large fires, however 2019 they were below their average in both ignitions and acres/hectares. The graph below shows the 2019 fires and acres for all our partners that reported to NECC.

Kudos go out to our Canadian Partners who consistently provide NECC with their daily fire statistics.

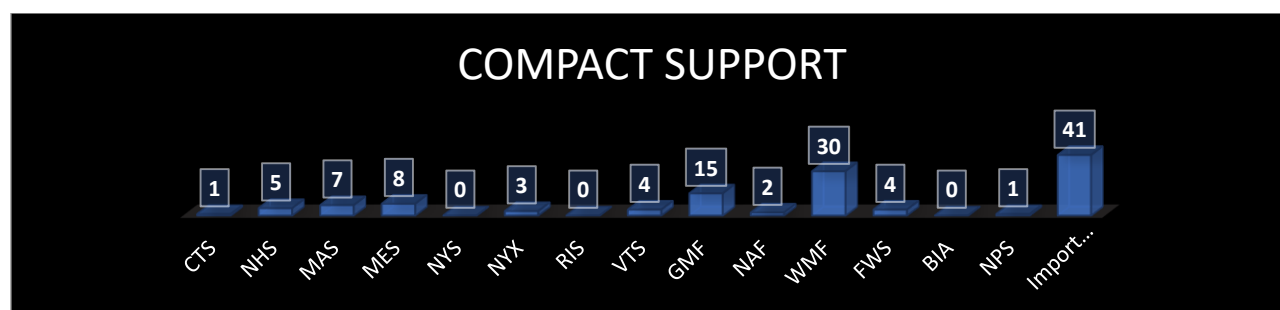


Prescribed fire projects in 2019 were the most ever reported to NECC. The US Fish and Wildlife Service typically has a robust burning program as does Massachusetts, which they continued in 2019. Forest Service brought in numerous resources from outside of the compact to assist with their burning projects allowing them to do multiple broadcast burns at the same time.

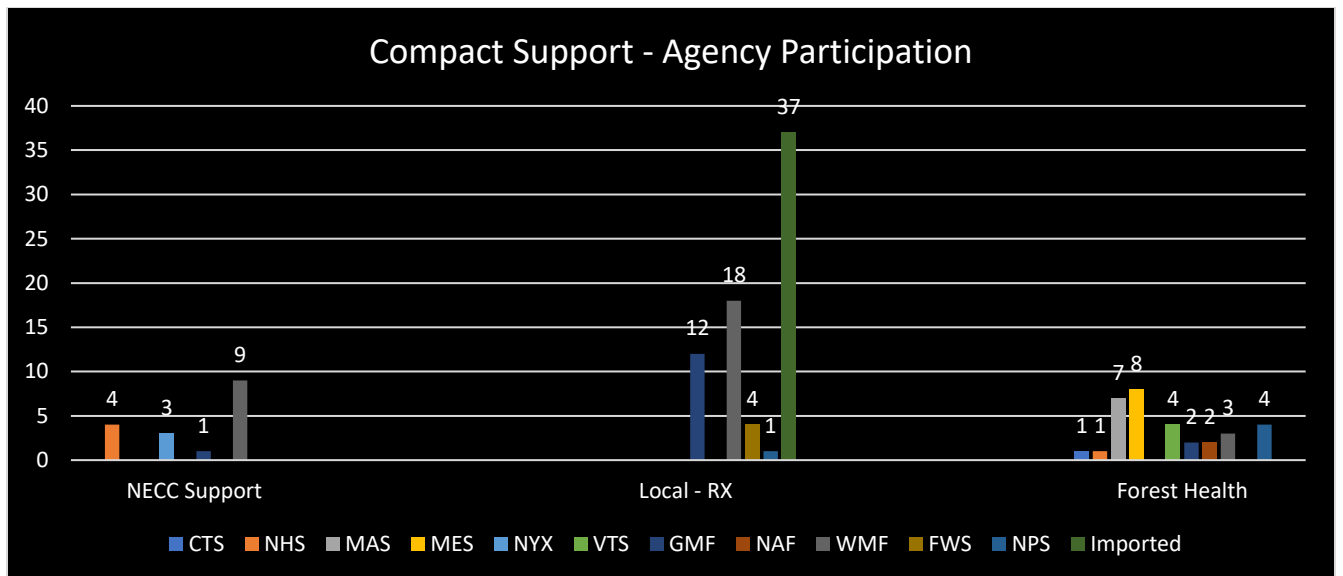


Compact Support

When I talk about compact support, I'm talking about RX projects, forest health projects, all risk incident, etc. The graphs below show agency participation in prescribed fire projects, forest health assistance as well as NECC. Not only did NECC support compact agencies assisting each other in their local activities, there were times where we ordered in resources to assist agencies in reaching their goals. Importing resources does not occur very often for us at NECC and I'm not sure if 2019 was an anomaly, but I do know that it was a successful move for our partners.

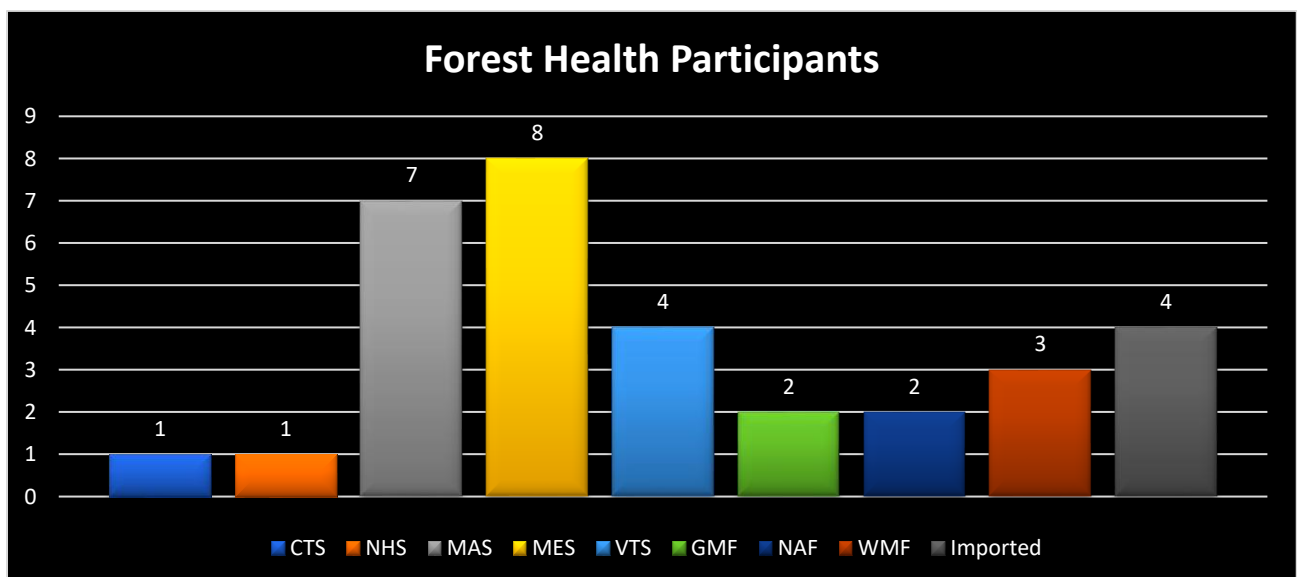


NECC's US partners had local activities on their units in 2019. The above graph shows agency participation while the graph below breaks it down into specific project types. You can see the various agencies that were able to provide support to not just NECC, but also compact partner prescribed fire activities as well as partner Forest health projects.



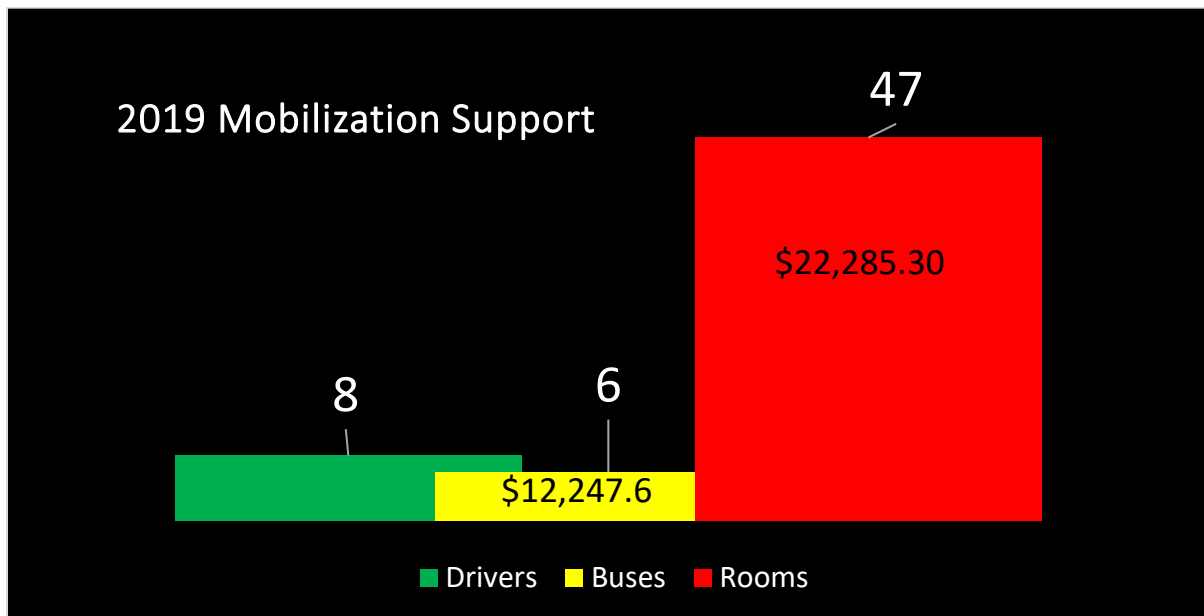
Note: 8 of the personnel noted under NECC Support are drivers that assisted in getting crews to airport or mobilization points (4 NHS and 4WMF)

Forest Health projects and participants have been increasing over the years, therefore NECC is generating numerous resource orders annually to keep track of this activity. This year there were 29 Compact personnel participating with Forest Health Projects within Compact, and the Airforce brought in 4 personnel from outside of the area to help them with some of their Forest Health projects.



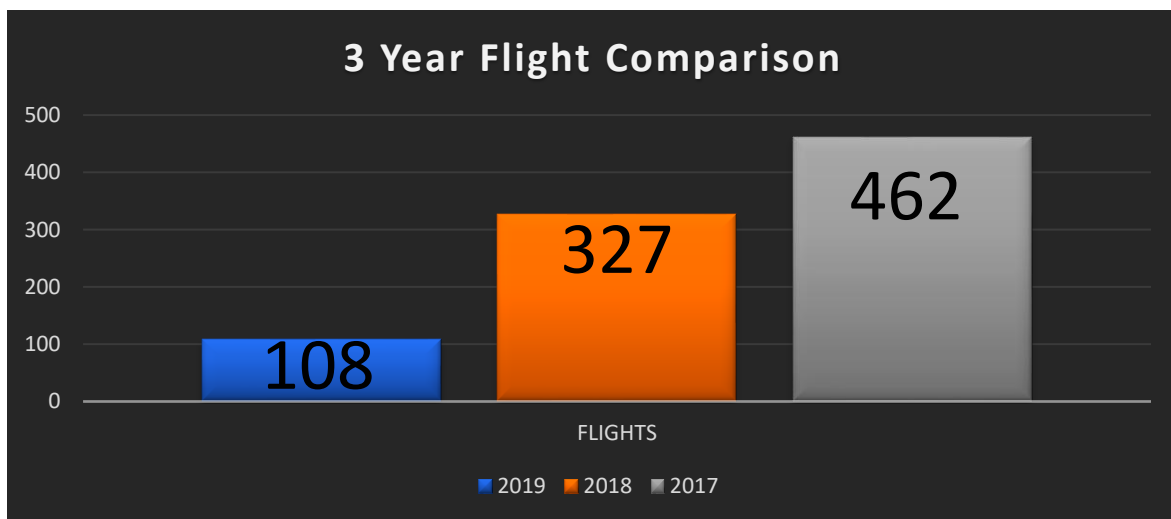
Support

Typically, NECC provides support (meals, motels, transportation) to the Manchester Mobilization Center, however because it was such a slow year we never opened. On a busy fire season year, NECC may have to secure 10+ motor coaches to take crews to the mob centers or commercial jet ports and then pick them up upon returning from assignment. Much of our logistical support for this year was securing motels for Forest Health personnel.



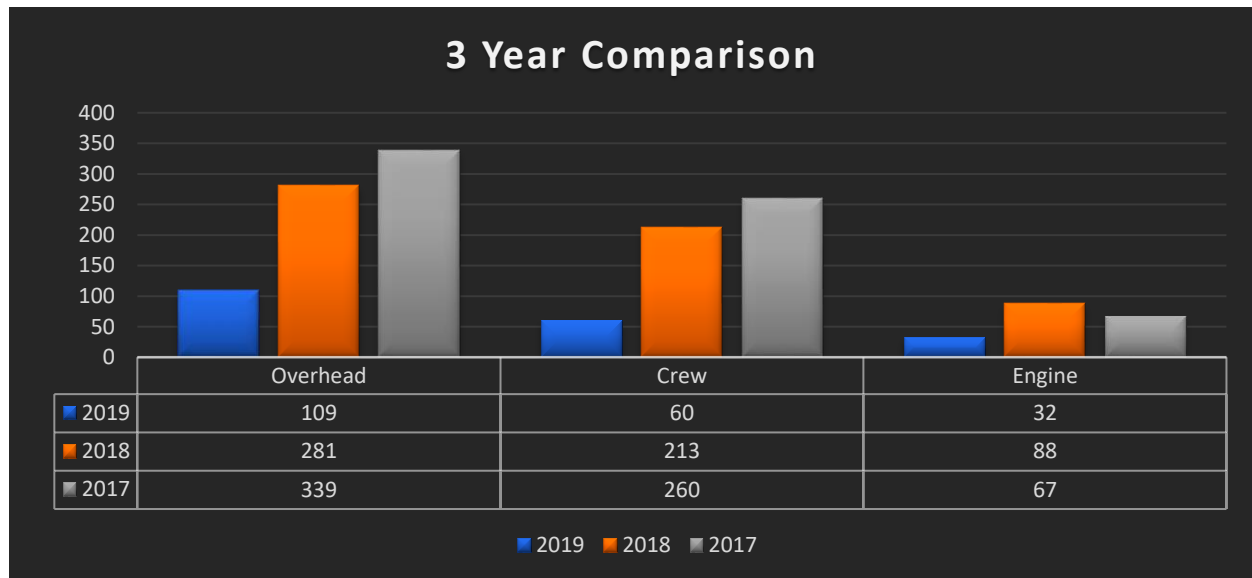
No meals purchased for mobilizations in 2019

As you can see below, NECC was way down on the number of flights we secured in 2019 compared to the last few years. I can always tell how busy we were when I look at the flight statistics.



In a nutshell

Most dispatchers do enjoy these slow years, it gives us time to regroup and breath because we have no illusions that another 2017 is just around the corner. The below graph shows just how slow 2019 was when comparing it to 2017 and 2018.



When I look at the **All Personnel Mobilized** graph, showing activity since 2002, my prediction is that 2020 will show increased activity and mobilizations. Question is, how much?

