

Northern Rockies Coordination Group Charter

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Rockies Coordination Group (NRCG) is established to provide an interagency approach to wildland fire management and all risk support on all land ownerships within the States of Montana, North Dakota, Northern Idaho, and a small portion of South Dakota.

MISSION

To further interagency cooperation, communications, and coordination, and to provide interagency fire management direction and all risk support for the Northern Rockies. The mission is achieved by:

- operating at a strategic/oversight level
- encouraging cooperation across jurisdictional and administrative boundaries
- oversight of fire health and safety issues
- providing interagency direction to field units
- providing a group response to agency specific requests that have interagency implications

SCOPE

NRCG deals with all fire management related issues or opportunities that have interagency implications within the Northern Rockies Geographic Area. NRCG conducts its business at two levels. A Board of Directors deals with issues that are Geographic Area in scope. Within the Geographic Area, Zones are in place to conduct business at a more local level.

AUTHORITIES

Cooperative Fire Protection Agreements between Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior, and the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and the respective states of North Dakota, Montana and Idaho. These agreements are implemented under the authorities of:

- The Reciprocal Fire Act of May 27, 1955 (42 USC 1856a, P. L. 84-46)
- Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, as amended (16 USC 2101-2114, P.L. 95-313)
- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of May 22, 1974 (P.L. 93-288; 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207, as amended)
- State Codes for forest and rangeland fire protection and emergency operations
- Montana Code Annotated 76-11, 76-13 and 77-5
- Idaho Code 38-104

- North Dakota Century Code (Chapter 18-02, Chapter 37-17.1 – ND Disaster Act of 1985)

MEMBERSHIP

The Northern Rockies Coordination Group membership consists of representatives from government bodies at all levels *with statutory responsibilities related to fire suppression*. Governments includes tax-based state, federal, local (including municipalities, counties, or other local authorities), and tribal government.

The agencies that make up the NRCG welcome a strong relationship with contractors and contractor organizations in order to obtain products and services for our taxpayers, but voting membership in the Coordinating Group is limited to those with statutory responsibilities related to fire suppression due to the inherently governmental function and responsibility of oversight and control over contract performance.

The NRCG Board of Directors is composed of representatives from the following organizations (some of the Zones may add other local representatives to their executive group):

- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- U.S. Forest Service
- Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Division
- Idaho Department of Lands
- North Dakota Forest Service
- Montana Firewardens Association
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- Montana State Fire Chief's Associations
- Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officer's Association

Each member of the Board of Directors will have the authority to speak for their organization. Agencies will be responsible for the appointment of their representatives.

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

The NRCG recognizes that a successful wildland fire suppression response requires strong interagency partnerships among federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies. Each level of government has authorities which make it responsible for some aspect of fire suppression, but since wildland fire respects no boundaries, all levels must work together in order to be effective. This principle of cooperation among governments is encouraged as a national and geographic area policy.

The agencies that make up the NRCG embrace the approach of working with partners to accomplish our agency missions in the most efficient manner possible. The Group operates on the principle that each member organization is an equal government partner and fully supports each other in achieving our mutual missions.

OFFICERS

NRCG will appoint a chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson that will serve for two calendar years. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointed according to the rotation schedule identified in Appendix I or as agreed to by the NRCG. An executive secretary will be provided by the Forest Service. The Vice-Chairperson shall advance to the office of Chairperson after the completion of the second year or upon the permanent vacancy of the Chairperson.

Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson: The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson are responsible for the overall operations of NRCG. The chairperson calls the meetings and conference calls, sets the agenda, facilitates the meetings, and facilitates efforts to reach agreement on issues. The Chairperson will sign NRCG decision documents. A signature by the Chairperson represents consensus agreement by all of the NRCG participating members. In absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson will assume the duties of the Chairperson.

Executive Secretary: The Executive Secretary reports to the Chairperson. The secretary will ensure that meeting notices are distributed, minutes of meetings are taken, edited, filed and distributed; products from working groups are reproduced and distributed to NRCG members and agencies. The secretary tracks work commitments, distributes executive committee tasks, prepares decision documents and conducts follow-up on the status of NRCG decision implementation.

Zone Coordinators: The duties of the Zone Coordinator are closely aligned with the responsibilities of the Executive Secretary. This individual provides the coordination bridge between the Geographic Area, NRCG Board of Directors and the zone organization that is in place to manage the business of a zone.

COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

NRCG will establish standing committees and task forces to address issues. All standing committees will operate with a charter. When task forces are established, work orders will define specific issues to be addressed.

Standing committees may be composed of membership from each of the Zones, technical specialists, and an NRCG representative who will serve as a liaison. Committees will appoint a chair. Responsibilities of the chair will be enumerated in the committee charter.

Issue specific task forces are envisioned. Technical specialists and interested individuals

from the NRCG fire community will make up the task forces. Standing committees can develop their own task forces when they identify a need and each task force must have a specific work plan defining their objectives.

All committees and task forces will keep meeting notes that will be distributed broadly to NRCG members.

FINANCING

Each agency's financial contributions will be through negotiation for individual projects and will be limited to expenses incurred by representatives of the agency performing agency approved actions.

Nothing herein shall be construed as obligating any of the member agencies to expend funds of the United States, or the States of Montana, Idaho, or North Dakota, in any contract or obligation for future payment or work in excess of appropriations authorized by law and administratively allocated for this work.

ADOPTION OF POLICY

Agency representatives will have the authority to represent their organizations in all operational aspects for fire management. They will be expected to provide an interpretation of their organization's policy. If a change in policy is required within an agency, the members will work through the appropriate agency administrators.

This charter reflects agreement by the Northern Rockies Wildfire Agency Administrators (Executives Group) and will be reviewed/approved whenever a new NRCG Chair is selected.



Larry Kotchman, Chair
Northern Rockies Wildfire Agency Administrators



Date

Appendix I

Chair Rotation Schedule

- Montana Fire Chief's Association
- Bureau of Indian Affairs – Rocky Mountain Region
- North Dakota Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Montana Sheriffs and Peace Officer's Association
- Bureau of Indian Affairs – Pacific Northwest Region
- Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Division
- U.S. Forest Service
- Montana Fire Warden's Association
- Bureau of Land Management
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- Idaho Department of Lands
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service