

Northern Rockies Coordination Group Charter

INTRODUCTION

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

MISSION

To facilitate interagency cooperation, communications, coordination, and to provide interagency wildland fire management direction and all-risk support for the Northern Rockies Geographic Area; the mission is accomplished by:

- operating at a strategic/oversight level
- encouraging cooperation across jurisdictional and administrative boundaries whenever possible
- providing oversight regarding wildland fire health and safety issues
- providing consistent interagency direction to field units, and
- providing a unified group response to agency specific requests which has interagency implications.

SCOPE

The NRCG deals with all wildland fire management and risk related issues and opportunities that have interagency implications within the Northern Rockies Geographic Area. The NRCG conducts its business at two levels: 1) NRCG deals with issues specific to the entirety of the geographic area, and 2) zones within the geographic area which are established to conduct business at a more local level.

AUTHORITIES

Cooperative Fire Protection Agreements between the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior, with the United States Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and the respective states of North Dakota, Montana, and Idaho are in effect and 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 NRCG membership consists of representatives from governmental bodies at all levels *with statutory responsibilities related to public safety or natural resource protection involving wildland fire*. Governments includes tax-based state, federal, local (including municipalities, counties, or other local authorities), and tribal governments.

The entities of the NRCG welcome a strong relationship with contractors and contractor organizations to obtain products and services for our taxpayers; however, voting membership in the NRCG is limited to those with statutory responsibilities related to *public safety or natural resource protection involving wildland fire* due to the inherent governmental functions and responsibilities of oversight and control specific to contract performance.

The NRCG is composed of representatives from the following organizations (Zone organizations may add other local representatives to their internal executive group):

- Bureau of Land Management
 - Idaho State Representative
 - Montana State Representative (Voting member)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - Northwest Region (Voting member)
 - Rocky Mountain Region
 - Great Plains Region
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Division
- Montana Fire Wardens Association
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- State Fire Chiefs Associations
 - Montana
 - Idaho
 - North Dakota
- Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association
 - Montana
 - Idaho
 - North Dakota
- National Park Service
- North Dakota Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service

Each member of the NRCG will have the authority to speak for their organization; however, only one representative from each organization will be considered a voting member. 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 wildland fire suppression, but since wildland fire respects no boundaries; all levels must work together to be effective. This principle of cooperation among governments is modeled by national, as well as geographic area policy.

The agencies which make up the NRCG embrace the approach of active partner engagement to accomplish agency missions in the most efficient and effective 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 goals, objectives, and missions.

OFFICERS

The NRCG board members 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 NRCG Operating Guide or as agreed to by the NRCG. An executive secretary will be provided by a member agency of NRCG. The vice-chairperson will assume roles and responsibility of the Chairperson after the completion of the second year, or upon the permanent vacancy of the Chairperson.

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

Executive Secretary: The executive secretary reports directly to the chairperson. The secretary will ensure that: meeting notices are distributed; minutes of meetings are taken, edited, filed, and distributed; and 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 coordination between the Geographic Area, NRCG, and the zone organization that is in place to manage the business of a zone.

COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

NRCG will establish standing committees (E.g., Operations, Dispatch, Incident Commanders, etc.) and subsidiary task forces, when needed, to address issues. All standing committees will operate under a formalized charter. When task forces are established, taskings will be defined highlighting the specific issue(s) to be addressed. Furthermore, one point of contact will be established by said task force to facilitate discussion(s) with the NRCG.

Standing committees may be composed of membership from each of the Zones and include other technical representation as needed. Committees will appoint a chairperson and responsibilities of the chair will be enumerated in the committee charter. An NRCG representative will be assigned to each committee to serve as a liaison to NRCG. All committees and task forces will keep meeting notes that will be distributed broadly to NRCG members.

FINANCING

NRCG will establish an annual financial plan for NRCC and NRTC operations that determines member agency contribution amounts. Voting on these financial plans will be limited to member agencies that provide financial contributions.

Nothing herein shall be construed as obligatory for any of the member agencies to expend funds of the United States, or the States of Montana, Idaho, or North Dakota pertaining to contracts or obligations for future payment or work more than appropriations authorized by law and administratively allocated for this work. Each agency's financial contributions will be negotiated for individual projects and will be limited to

expenses incurred by representatives of the agency performing the agency approved actions.

ADOPTION OF POLICY

Agency representatives will have the authority to represent their organizations in all operational aspects for wildland 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 respective agency administrator on the NRCG Wildland Fire Agency Administrators.

This charter reflects agreement by the Northern Rockies Wildland Fire Agency Administrators.



Craig Foss
Craig Foss, Chair
Northern Rockies Wildfire Agency Administrators

4/23/2024
Date