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Monday, April 13 – General Session

This is a public meeting for the purpose of conducting government business.

MAC Exercise – Virtual Options (Craig Goodell)

- Have not been able to contact Matt Gibson as of yet; however, so plan on having some type of virtual MAC exercise at this time.
 - Suggestion to move this to an earlier time period discussed; however, prep-time will be needed to develop this exercise.

Restrictions & Closures (Chris Barth)

- Have reached out to each of the agencies fire prevention coordinators to gain individual agencies perspective.
- Unanimous from all input received that each agency’s primary focus is on the prevention messaging and not prioritizing restrictions at this time.
- Nationally, a retired prevention coordinator has been brought in to address this issue.
- Do have a tasking to take a small group approach for information gathering to compile a gap analysis in an effort to develop some consistent tools and messaging.
 - Request made for a brief write up describing the unanimous agreement towards prevention messaging as opposed to prioritizing restrictions. Request to also address possible differences between the separate GACCs that encompass Idaho.
- Request expectations regarding timing from the BOD.
 - **Action Item: Chris Barth will have the write up to the BOD by the end of next week, April 17th.**

- Currently, there is not an effort to stand up a National Prevention Education Team. Discussions around this option are ongoing.

NR Predictive Services Update (Mike Richmond)

- (see PowerPoint)
- Last two months over Western Montana and Idaho have been quite dry. Also, has been colder than average. Fortunately, this is helping to offset the dryness.
- No significant drought within the region as of yet.
- Soil moistures are still wetter than average.
- Snow packs are above average in all PSAs. This is due in part to the cool temperatures.
- Do have some moisture in the short term forecasts; then turning to a slightly dryer and warmer pattern.
- Three month outlooks will be updated next week.
- No significant concerns showing at this time; most reflecting near average. Enso-modeling may affect this in the next few months.

Northern Rockies Draft Resource Draw-down/Step-up Plan – Overview (Craig Goodell)

- (reference Draft that was distributed for review)
- Utilizes a table that goes through PL 1-5 addressing associated resources.
 - Important to note that this references available resources.
- Important to have a plan in place to provide a base line to operate from during season.
 - Can develop rational for instances that would require deviating from the plan at any time.
- In relations to Covid-19, not able yet to discuss what resource mobilization looks like across boundaries at this time.
- **Action Item: BOD will vote on draft approval during the next monthly conference call, May 19, 2020.**

AFD Operating Plan (Ryan Patrick)

- (see PowerPoint)
- FY20 NRCG Financial Plan Review
 - Adjusted for inflation.
 - Reviewed all tabs and formats.
 - If all in agreement and there are no issues, then need to move forward for each agencies signature.
 - Please send any questions to Ryan Patrick.
 - No specific concerns identified.
 - **Action Item: Ryan Patrick will move forward with executing the agreement and obtaining signatures.**
- FY21 NRCG Financial Plan Changes
 - Moving into the future, would be interested in any interagency volunteers that would like to assist with a simplification effort.
 - Please send any interested individuals names to Ryan Patrick.

- USFS would be interested in any percentage changes that might arise during this effort.
- DNRC would also be interested in seeing the history of where the percentages have come out.
 - **Action Item: Ryan Patrick will attempt to research and distribute that historical information request.**

IMTs as they relate to Covid-19 response within Region (Rich Cowger/Rick Connell)

- Had 26 departments participate in the Town Hall meeting.
 - So far, none are overwhelmed as of yet.
- IC Committee – have assigned each IMT functional area with assessing possibilities for providing remote capabilities.
 - Will involve a variety of spectrums.
 - Conducting weekly calls addressing this topic.
 - Requesting clarification from the BOD regarding sideboards and timeframes.
 - BOD appreciates the current approach addressing multiple aspects; in regards to timeframes, also appreciates the ongoing rapid efforts to address this effort.

Team Availability (Mike DeGrosky)

- The topic is largely dependent upon mobilization ability due to the current Covid-19 circumstances.
 - Unable to have this discussion without a team by team roster inventory.
- National questioner came out this morning requesting to identify current availability status.
 - ICs are unable to accurately answer this without higher level guidance and direction regarding out of area availability.
- Nationally, the Area Command teams are addressing higher level plans that will incorporate specific GACCs plans; these will then need to include specific agency mobilization decisions.
- IC Committee emphasized the importance of addressing from a risk based standpoint.
- Regarding ADs, will need the ICs to identify who will be available and who will not.
- ICs are beginning discussion on supporting one another by sharing individuals between the teams.
- Many agencies are compiling trade off analysis.
 - IMT compositions would play a factor in these analysis.
 - If the team is primarily composed of individuals from within the region, then should be able to stand up a team regionally.
 - ND FS – Important to note state wide/specific quarantine restrictions that would be associated with mobilization across state boundaries. Governor’s orders are written differently.
 - USFS – also important to address community concerns regarding mobilization from one county to another.
 - Important to also differentiate between potential impact from illness and immediate impacts from a pending fire.
 - Some tribes are also expressing concern regarding individuals coming into the community.
 - Could be address through good prevention messaging.

Northern Rockies Strategy Discussion (Mike DeGrosky)

- Interagency Support prior to green up – part will relate to the work that the Northern Rockies Task Group is doing with the Area Command team.
- Discussed current structure that exists to support a type 3 or type 2 incident in regards to social distancing.
- Continuously evolving information flow is contributing to a need for flexibility and adaptation amongst all agencies.
- Specific agency response and mobilization may necessitate conversations at the local MAC Group Zone levels.
 - Each agency is working on internal Covid-19 response frameworks. Most are currently in progress with the intent of being shared upon completion.
- Aitor Bidaburu – some of this was discussed at NMAC this morning.
 - Response plans from Area Command teams are going to deal a lot with the “what” and identifying the risks.
 - There will be some work for the Geographic Area Coordinating Groups to address the “How”.
 - Core of the reports identifies the best practice for functional areas.
 - Logistics will have a significant amount of the work load.
 - Discussion around putting together a logistics SME task group to formulate recommendations.
 - IC Committee would prefer to have centralized, systematic discussions.
 - If IC Committee is willing; would like to task them with utilizing the existing identified Command and General Staff to address each individual item that arises for large fire response.
 - Action Item: Each BOD will identify areas of concern regarding large fire response in an effort to give the IC Committee a prioritized list of items, so that they may formulate GACC best practices recommendations. BOD members will send these responses to Mike DeGrosky.
 - If possible, would like to identify health experts to assist with this effort.
 - Important to note these resources may have limited availability.
 - Action Item: Rick Connell will discuss this possibility with the ICs and will get back to Mike DeGrosky.

Contracting Update (Tim Murphy)

- On the USFS side, dozers, excavators, transports, fallers and mechanics have closed and panels will occur 4/13. EMTs, paramedics & ambulances close today.
- Currently, on schedule overall.
- DNRC has Type 2 & 2IA crews out that closes the first of June.
- NPS has questions from their solicitor on the template for the weed washers and tents; attempting to address this.
- Are a few issues with the transition from ROSS to IROC; working on rectifying these.
- Fielding calls from contractors regarding some of the same concerns that agencies are currently addressing.

Vice-Chair Position (Mike DeGrosky)

- IDL has requested to skip the incoming chair rotation for 2021 due to the current BOD vacancy.
- Rotation discussion on moving this position forward to the Montana Fire Chiefs Association due to previous FWS service as chair.
 - Mike DeGrosky will reach out to Rich Cowger regarding this.
- Josh Harvey, as current Acting Vice-Chair, will cover the Wednesday call and will also talk with Craig Foss regarding participation on Friday's Agency Administrator call.
- Please send any items the BOD would like to see addressed on the Agency Administrator's call to Mike DeGrosky prior to Friday, April 17th.

Friday, April 17 – Executive Session (WFAAs, NRCG BOD Chair & Vice-Chair)

Agency Roundtable of Current COVID-19 Mitigation

(Such as restrictions on employee movement, resource mobilization, specific SOPs developed, etc.)

Round Robin by Agency

- BLM – Working on ensuring that agency will be at full strength. Continuing to formulate protocols; have some good risk mitigation protocols involved. Planning to have full complement of resources. Will have an emphasis on success with initial attack. Amplifying strong prevention messaging.
- FWS – Developing good protocols and guidance. Most is focused around how employees work in teams and the mitigation measures among these groups and teams. Largest issue currently is around bunkhouse management; working on that guidance. Focusing on the team or “unit” environment. Have already brought on most fuels and prescribed fire individuals. Do currently have a stand down on prescribed fire. Those individuals are currently focusing on preparing for suppression. Planning on bringing on full contingency of resources. Decision made to participate fully on Incident Management Teams.
- NPS – Similar to other DOI agencies. Experiencing challenges with on boarding and housing. Working closely with the public health service. Attempting to identify any gaps that exist at various guidance levels. In discussions with the Southwest regarding pro-active restrictions; desire to engage with all partners and cooperators at each level regarding this topic.
- USFS – Not planning to do any travel outside of the GACC at this time; will re-evaluate this as needed. All employees in the Northern Region are expected to support wildfire in this coming year. Strategy will be rapid containment and this will continue to be an evolving discussion. On boarding of seasonals has been a challenge and there are some delays. Housing is also a challenge; prioritizing the housing for wildland firefighters. Taking a similar approach as DOI on this. Have modified some of the training to occur in small groups. Relying heavily on risk analysis and trade off analysis for decision making. Have requested each unit to do scenario planning. Would be interested in the thoughts of this group, and the NRCG, regarding scenario planning and sand table exercises applicable to the future and thoughts pertaining to how to address local partners; specifically around the topic of evacuations. Also in the process of an unscheduled hiring event and will be bringing in 60 permanent hires and 60 temporary hires.
- IDL – Each district has developed direction regarding Covid-19 and agency is working on overall operational guidance. Bringing on most seasonals in May; intend to utilize the module concept regarding housing and training. Red Cards were extend through the end of May; working on pack testing for new hires. Considering additional exclusive use contracts for engines and at

least one crew. Also looking at Type 3 teams and seeing how can support those by engaging non-fire resource personnel. Looking at utilizing heavy equipment more heavily than in the past.

- MT DNRC – Developing state wide protocols to develop and maintain a healthy workforce. Seeking approval from the Governor’s office to allow firefighters to travel from state to state. Working on multiple protocols; would like to see those collected amongst the agencies and shared. Focused on rapid containment. Looking at possibly bringing individuals on two weeks early, allowing for self-isolation, to ensure bringing on a healthy workforce. Emphasized the importance of communication with local governments and county health. MT DES has reached out to MT DNRC in an attempt to facilitate good communications and informational sharing. Encourage all to participate in this effort to increase interagency informational sharing. Emphasized importance of early, consistent, interagency prevention messaging.
- ND FS – Developed and implemented seasonal staff on boarding policies that do include a 14 day self-isolation. Did release guidance and health screening process. Developed and implemented a pandemic coop plan. Received guidance on interstate travel and do plan to support mission. Working on some best operational practices for daily activities. Have begun creating a PPE cache to be able to provide for incoming resources. Began a fire prevention messaging campaign. Engaged in restriction calls at state and local levels. Engaged with ND Firefighter Association regarding a multitude of aspects. Coordinating with the state EOC to provide support staff. Affiliate with the University and dealing with those complexities as well.
- BIA – working on developing protocols and guidance; currently in relation to fuels as well. Do have some severity personnel that traveled to Fort Totten. Working on mitigation with response and remote support. Also working on interactions with Tribal leaders.

Discussion Topics

- Acknowledged that many agencies are taking similar approaches for similar issues.
- Many agencies are looking at bringing in both local and out of area individuals for seasonal positions.

NRCG Board of Directors Actions to Address COVID-19 Exposure Mitigation

- NRCG Board is holding weekly Covid-19 virtual meetings.
- Board members are functioning at maximum capacity with planning at all levels, both agency and interagency. Currently not feasible to accept additional tasking.
- Have multiple efforts occurring:
 - Working with Area Command Team on draft plan for the Northern Rockies Wildfire Response Plan.
 - Tasked Craig Goodell to assemble a NR Covid-19 Task Group to facilitate interaction with the Area Command Team.
 - This task group is also working on gathering all agency specific guidance documents together to formulate a gap analysis.
 - Have tasked the IC Committee to address some of the issues related to response and large fire; including how to provide remote support.
 - Have tasked the Fire Prevention and Education Committee with how to increase consistent prevention messaging. This committee has also interacted with most agencies regarding restriction discussions.
 - Idea of including Covid-19 as a condition for restriction considerations will be discussed in the future.

- Have tasked the Operations Committee with working with the NRCG Zones and Chairs to identify how to best align support efforts across the GACC.
- Have a virtual MAC Exercise planned. This would align with the USFS request for scenario planning.
- Vice-Chair position is currently being held by IDL; however, that position will soon be vacant. Board agreed to extend the courtesy to IDL to skip the incoming chair role (for a two year period) and pass along the opportunity to Montana State Fire Chief's Association. (It was agreed that due to FWS previous service as Chair for the last rotation, that they would not be considered as the next incoming chair. This will also assist with the Chair rotation for the Agency Administrator's group, as FWS is the incoming Chair for that group and it was agreed upon that both groups would not have the same agency as Chair at any given time.)
 - This transition would occur this next January and BIA-RM would assume the Vice-Chair.
- Interaction and role with the health community – emphasized importance of sharing the Leader's Intent letter once it is finalized.
 - MT DNRC – request is to also share identified protocols and procedures with MT DES.
 - IDL – have already been engaged with state EOC; they would be more interested in safety protocols and who from outside the state is coming in and where those individuals are going.
 - ND FS – also engaged with the state EOC; vetting all policies and procedures through the department of public health and utilizing this entity as a subject matter expert.
 - BIA – each regional director has a weekly call with Tribal leaders and some include Indian Health Services.

Commitments to Response or Extra Support Needed

- Agencies are currently addressing this on multiple facets, both internally and in an interagency capacity.
- IDL – Have had some questions regarding the USFS Chief's Letter regarding primary objectives.
 - USFS – Regional Forester's direction was primarily rapid suppression; with a heavier emphasis on the interface areas.
- Acknowledged the need to ensure that none of the mitigation efforts increase risk in regards to other response aspects.

Letter of Intent Draft Review

- Appreciated the inclusion of the commitment statement.
- BLM – no further comments or suggestions; however, desire to be strategic and recognize being aware of redundancy regarding gaps in team compositions and ability to respond.
- Unanimous agreement upon draft.
- Action Item: Diane Mann-Klager will send out final draft for Agency Administrator's last review; then will send the final draft to Pam Jolly for finalization and 508 compliancy.
- Need for a follow up call or meeting will be needs driven at this time. NRCG BOD will identify and approach the Agency Administrator's group should such needs arise.
 - May be a need for another call or meeting once the Area Command Team releases the Northern Rockies Response Draft plan.