



# Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

Federal, State, and Local Government Agencies Working Together in Emergency Response Management

## Monthly Conference Call – Meeting NOTES

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

### Participants

#### Coordinating Group Members:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BIA – Great Plains	Heath Estey	<input type="checkbox"/>	Idaho Department of Lands	Josh Harvey
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BIA – Rocky Mountain	Bryce Rogers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	North Dakota Forest Service	Ryan Melin
<input type="checkbox"/>	BIA – Northwest Region	Brad Donahue	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana DNRC	Matt Hall
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BLM – Montana/Dakotas	Aaron Thompson	<input type="checkbox"/>	Montana County Fire Wardens	Patrick Lonergan
<input type="checkbox"/>	BLM – Idaho	Dennis Strange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana DES	Brett Lloyd
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NPS – Intermountain Region	Paul Cerda	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana Sheriff's & Peace Officers	Steve Holton
<input type="checkbox"/>	USFS – Region 1	Craig Glazier	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana Fire Chiefs Association	Rich Cowger
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Tate Fischer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Facilitator	Karly DeMars

**Deputies and Others:** Corey Buhl (NR Operations), Brian Nickolay (Montana Fire Chief's Association)

### Standing Reports

- **NWCG/NMAC Update** (Aitor Bidaburu) – no report
- **CGAC Report Out** (Dennis Strange) – CGAC is currently working to consolidate comments for the in-person CIM AAR. October 24 is the go/no-go decision for in-person meeting, may be the same dates, but virtual.
- **NRCC Operations & NRCC Update** (Corey Buhl)
  - Reminder, Jay McAllister is retiring at the end of October – party in Missoula on Friday, November 7.
  - NRCC is going to be seriously short-staffed going into the winter – maybe be behind with NR Mobilization Guide updates, plans, software updates and logistics coordination due to personnel retirements and extended leave, and the federal hiring freeze.
- **NRCG Committee Updates:**
  - Dispatch Committee (Craig Glazier) – no update, will discuss charter at November meeting.
  - Operations Committee (Tate Fischer) – Will be having a committee meeting next week. Ian Morgan has taken the interim chair role (vice Jordan McKnight). The committee plans to update is charter, but needs guidance from NRCG on the committees' tasks, purpose and end state. NRCG will plan for the Operations Committee to have some time on the November agenda.

### Old Business

- **DECISION | Review and finalize NRCG's CIM AAR responses**
  - NRCG Representation: Dennis Strange, Rich Cowger
  - CIMT AAR meeting will be held October 29–30 (virtual only option will be determined by 10/24)
  - Bryce Rogers shared a consolidated list of recommendations. These will be sent with the meeting notes to NRCG for a final review/comment.
  - NRCG will also suggest we have representation of our NR Operations Specialist (and similar positions) at the CIM AAR in the future.
- **UPDATE | IC Recruitment – closes October 31** (*ensure application form has been distributed far and wide*)
  - Per Beau Richardson, we have received 14 applications, with two weeks left
  - **ACTION ITEM - ALL:** Clarification needed on AD eligibility – current national mobilization guide (Chapter 20, page 34 – IMT Configurations – All states: “*The Incident Commander positions on IMTs may only be filled by current agency employees.*”); BLM's Fire Operations Division Chief shared that the Deputy IC can still be an AD (in AD pay plan) and has no intention to eliminate the position from the plan. This issue needs to be resolved before the close of the NR IC Application period.

- NRCG members should reach out to their agency representatives to gain clarity on the deputy IC intent outlined above.
- Another consideration, NRCG may receive applications from applicants that plan to use the alternative ICCI pathway, even though the pathway will not be official until January 2026
- The group discussed IC selection criteria/process and plan to implement the following during NRCG's November meeting:

**2026 Incident Commander Selection Criteria** | Agency and NRCG vetting/verification plays a key role in the selection process. NRCG Executive Members are expected to do their due diligence to assess their agency's applicants. Reference checks, character witness interviews, and supervisor approval verification should be conducted during the vetting/verification process. Agency's need to be honest about their support of their IC applicants. If you wouldn't select an IC for a vacant job, you shouldn't select them for an IC role.

- Corey Buhl and Beau Richardson are available to help vet/verify applicants.
- NRCG IMT Liaisons can also conduct C&G interviews and reference checks on applicants.

#### **2026 Incident Commander Selection Process**

1. On November 3 (or before), NRCG executive members will receive a list of all applicants, grouped by agency, from the NRCC IMT Coordinator or NRCG Facilitator. Prior to NRCG's IC selection meeting on November 6, NRCG executive members will review and verify their agency's support (or non-support) of the applicants from their respective agencies. See '2026 Incident Commander Selection Criteria' above.
2. On November 6, NRCG will review, discuss and select **primary ICs** from the submitted applications. Once selections are made, the selected primary IC's will be contacted that day and will be given the following direction:
  - Primary IC's will review deputy and trainee applicants and will propose selections for these positions for their team roster. The Primary IC's will submit their proposed selections to NRCG by Thursday, November 13 (tentative). It will be clearly stated that NRCG will have the final decision for all IC applicants including deputy and trainee ICs.
3. On Friday, November 14, NRCG will meet to review proposed deputy and trainee ICs and will make final determinations on proposed IC rosters.
4. Once NRCG makes final decisions on deputy and trainee ICs, official selection/non-selection letters will be sent to applicants from NRCG.

NRCG Feedback on the importance of competency areas that make an effective Incident Commander (*form sent in September 2025*):

#### Competencies Rated from Essential to Not Important) – from following graphic.

- 1) **Leading People** (*conflict management, leveraging diversity, developing others, team building*) = 100% Essential
- 2) **Fundamental Competencies** (*interpersonal skills, oral/written communication, integrity/honesty...*) = 67% Essential, 33% very important
- 3) **Results Driven** (*accountability, decisiveness, problem solving...*) = 17% essential, 83% very important
- 4) **Building Coalitions** (*partnering, influencing/negotiating*) = 17% essential, 50% very important, 33% important
- 5) **Leading Change** (*creativity & innovation, flexibility, resilience, strategic thinking*) = 17% essential, 33% very important, 50% important
- 6) **Business Acumen** (*human capital management, technology management*) = 17% very important, 50% important, 33% slightly important

1. For each competency area (*skills are listed in italics next to the competency name*), rate its importance for an **effective Incident Commander**.

● Not Important   ● Slightly Important   ● Important   ● Very Important   ● Essential

**Leading Change** (*creativity & innovation, flexibility, resilience, strategic thinking, vision*)

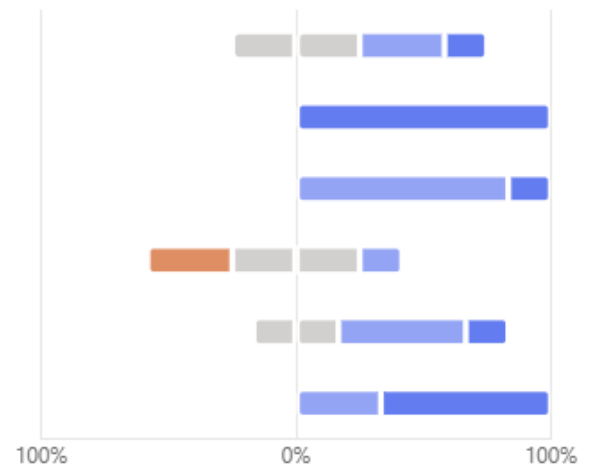
**Leading People** (*conflict management, leveraging diversity, developing others, team building*)

**Results Driven** (*accountability, decisiveness, problem solving, technical credibility*)

**Business Acumen** (*human capital management, technology management*)

**Building Coalitions** (*partnering, influencing/negotiating*)

**Fundamental Competencies** (*interpersonal skills, oral/written communication, integrity/honesty, continual learning, public service...*)



### New Business

- DISCUSSION | Fall Meeting Logistics & Agenda Items
  - Meeting Location/Block of Rooms: Holiday Inn Downtown (200 South Pattee St., Missoula, MT)
  - Timeline:
    - Wednesday, November 5 – start time 1300 hours
    - Thursday, November 6 – all day
    - Friday, November 7 – half day (am)
    - Friday, November 7 – Jay McAllister’s Retirement Party (5-7 PM)
  - Agenda topics discussion
    - Committee / Zone Chairs are welcome to join in person or virtually on Wednesday, November 5. They can also submit written reports for the meeting.
    - NRCG will review current committee charters prior to meeting to understand their role and current direction.

**Next Meeting:** Fall Meeting – November 5-7, 2025 – Missoula, MT