



Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

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

Monthly Conference Call – Meeting Notes

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – 10:00 AM MST

Participants

Coordinating Group Members:

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | BIA – Great Plains | Heath Estey | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Idaho Department of Lands | Josh Harvey |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | BIA – Rocky Mountain | Bryce Rogers | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Montana County Fire Wardens | Patrick Lonergan |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | BLM – Idaho | Dennis Strange | <input 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: Aitor Bidaburu (NMAC/NWCG), Hunter Noor (NDFS), Jason Jarrett (MT Sheriff’s & Peace Officers), Beau Richardson (NRCC), Brian Nickolay (MT Fire Chiefs Association), Morganne Lehr (Facilitator)

Welcomed members back and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Standing Reports

- **NWCG/NMAC Update:** Aitor Bidaburu reported that NWCG is meeting today but was able to join us to give a quick update. January 1 marked the transition to new NWCG leadership, with Eric Litzenberg, from the International Association of Fire Chiefs, serving as the new Chair and Anne Jewell, from the Department of Defense, serving as new Vice Chair. An in-person NWCG meeting is scheduled for February 18–19 in Boise and will include management committee chair representation, the Executive Board, and senior leadership; this follows a major NWCG committee restructuring effort that established new management committees under the Executive Board. The new Interior Fire Director and the USFS Director are expected to address the group and share their vision. NMAC/CGAC meetings are also occurring in Boise this week, with discussions focused on reorganization and developing a high-level strategic perspective, including CIMT national rotation. Additionally, FMB is meeting this week to address the Red Book and wildfire terminology, with a draft paper in development to reduce historical confusion around terminology (e.g., “fire use,” “let burn”) and clarify official policy. Additional reports are anticipated.
- **CGAC Report Out:** Dennis Strange reported that CGAC did not meet in December. Dennis thanked the group for their feedback on the fatal flaw review related to national rotation, noting the input was largely positive and that several points were passed forward. Dennis will attend the CGAC meeting this week in person. Discussion included questions about potential changes to geographic area boundaries; while nothing official has been released and there are many rumors, there is general consensus that states should remain wholly within a single geographic area, though some adjustments may still occur. Dennis noted he has not seen any formal proposal, and while an Executive Order directed a review, it did not specifically mandate changes.
- **NRCC Operations:** Corey Buhl was unavailable to provide an update

- **NRCC Update:** Beau Richardson attended in place of Kate Holsapple, who is attending the NMAC/CGAC meeting in Boise this week. Beau reported that overall fire activity remains minimal, consistent with the time of year, though there has been a slight uptick in orders for the Southern Area, primarily for fuels modules and miscellaneous overhead to support fuels work. Staffing updates include three vacancies: the USFS Assistant Aircraft Coordinator position has been tentatively filled by Liz Bauer, with a projected start date in March; the DNRC Assistant Coordinator position remains open; and the FWS Meteorologist position is still pending classification and approval to fill. The BLM Deputy Geographic Area Coordinator position is currently open and closes this Thursday, replacing Jay McAllister.
- **NRCG Committee Updates:**
 - Dispatch Committee – no update available.
 - Operations Committee – Tate Fischer reported that currently the Operations Committee is working the realignment of the Operations Committee and IC Subcommittee (NRCG Memo 2025-011).

Unfinished Business

- **STATUS UPDATE |** IMT Recruitment & Application Period – Beau Richardson reported that the IMT recruitment/application period concluded late Friday, January 16. A total of 858 applications were received across all CIMTs, Type 3 IMTs, and pooled positions, including 588 applicants from the Northern Rockies Geographic Area. Of the total, 737 applications were for CIMTs (with each of the four CIMTs receiving 150 or more applicants) and 134 for Type 3 IMTs. Overall, 601 applicants were primary or alternate/qualified, with 257 trainee applications submitted. No significant shortages were identified, except for Communications positions (COML/COMT), where numbers remain limited (5 COML and 3 COMT). Next steps include coordinating with the IC Committee Chair to schedule a selection meeting, reviewing duplicate applications later this week, and distributing duplicate applicant lists to ICs. For comparison, 724 total applications were received in 2023, indicating a notable increase in applicant interest across the board.
- **STATUS UPDATE |** Operations Committee / IC Committee Realignment – Realignment memo was sent to committee chairs in December. Tate Fischer and Patrick Lonergan shared that the IC Subcommittee Chair has been in contact with the Operations Committee Chair, but a meeting has not been scheduled to collaborate.
- **STATUS UPDATE |** Issuance of 'Incident Management Team Capacity Recommendations' tasking to the Operations Committee. NRCG will move forward by issuing the *Incident Management Team Capacity Recommendations* tasking to the Operations Committee (pending signature). The committee will be provided with NWCG's *T1/T2/T3 Complex IMT Transition Action Plan* to inform their work. The intent is not to require teams to transition to a higher level, but to develop a thoughtful path to build Type 3 IMT capacity toward CIMT capability. NRCG is seeking a clear recommendation on the preferred approach, including whether to transition one existing Type 3 IMT to CIMT and how to strategically phase implementation.
- **STATUS UPDATE |** Action Item from December 2025: Outline NRCG leadership intent for the Operations Committee, including scope (Agency Preparedness and Suppression Operations) and membership. NRCG is working to outline leadership intent for the Operations Committee, including clarifying its scope (Agency Preparedness and Suppression Operations) and confirming membership structure, with each NRCG member agency holding one vote. Bryce recommends holding off temporarily, while Tate requests the group consider Dennis's previous input as part of the discussion before finalizing direction.

New Business

- Delegations of Authority for NR Operations and NRCC Center Manager – NRCC Center Manager
- Review of action items and tasking lists – the action item and task list was updated during the meeting.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 17, 2026