Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

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

Monthly Conference Call – **MEETING NOTES**

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 – 10:00 AM MST

Participants

Coordinating Group Members:

X	DOI – U.S. Wildland Fire Service	Aaron Thompson	X	Montana County Fire Wardens	Adriane Beck
X	USFS – Region 1	Craig Glazier		Montana DES	Brett Lloyd
X	Idaho Department of Lands	Josh Harvey		Montana Sheriff's & Peace Officers	Steve Holton
X	North Dakota Forest Service	Ryan Melin	X	Montana Fire Chiefs Association	Rich Cowger
X	Montana DNRC	Matt Hall	X	Facilitator	Karly DeMars

Other participants: Brian Nickolay (MT Fire Chiefs Association), Tate Fischer (Operations Committee Liaison), Kate Holsapple (NRCC), Beau Richardson (NRCC), Morganne Lehr (Facilitator backup), Haley Schelin (NR Dispatch Committee), Andy Schell (East Zone Chair), Claire Smith (NR Dispatch Committee), Melissa Swain (NR Incident Business Committee)

Welcome / Opening Remarks | Chair Ryan Melin welcomed participants and encouraged members to reach out as needed throughout the fire season.

Standing Reports

- **NWCG/NMAC Update** - Aitor Bidaburu reported that National preparedness level remains at PL2, with one GACC at PL3. One CIMT is currently assigned nationally. NWCG continues work on Rapid Extraction Module (REMS) tasking, S-320 beta delivery, SafeNet modernization, and other national initiatives. Resource rostering and CAD integration remain topics of discussion.
- **CGAC / Associate NMAC Representation / NRCC Operations** - No update available.
- **NRCC Update: Kate Holsapple reported** limited fire activity has been managed within the geographic area. Intelligence products continue to be distributed Monday through Friday. Staffing updates included Zach Snyder's selection for the Overhead & IMT Coordinator position, Beau Richardson's transition to Deputy Center Manager, and the selection of a new FWS Meteorologist. IT concerns continue to be elevated through appropriate channels.

New Business

- **Dispatch Committee Update / Discussion -** Dispatch Committee representatives (Claire Smith, Haley Schelin, and Kate Holsapple) highlighted significant challenges associated with NMAC's tasking regarding rostering of all resources through IROC and WildCAD integration, including inaccurate resource status, duplicate orders, limited resource typing functionality, and increased dispatcher workload. Although the long-term benefits of integration are recognized, members emphasized the need for clear national guidance and system improvements.

- **ACTION ITEMS** *associated with the Dispatch Committee Report*
  - NRCG will prepare a letter to NMAC outlining dispatch concerns and requesting support and guidance. This will be submitted for NMAC's May 21 meeting
  - NRCG will develop a memo to Duty Officers outlining expectations related to resource rostering.
  - Kate Holsapple will share similar correspondences from other geographic areas.

- **Eastern Montana Zone** – Andy Schell, current Chair of the Eastern Montana Zone, shared preliminary findings from its self-assessment of zone configuration and boundaries. Multiple alternatives were discussed, with a focus on improving communication and efficiency. NRCG supported continued evaluation through the 2026 fire season.
  - **ACTION ITEM:** Eastern Montana Zone will continue its assessment and provide recommendations for NRCG consideration at the Fall 2026 meeting.

- **Incident Business Committee Business –** Committee Chair, Melissa Swain, presented updates to the Northern Rockies SIIBM supplements, including revisions related to procurement processes, formatting updates, and removal of outdated guidance. NRCG supported approval of the revised IBC Charter.
  - **DECISION:** NRCG unanimously approved the Incident Business Committee Charter pending final chair signature.

  Cost Share Methodology: The committee reviewed existing cost-share methodologies (comparing current Northern Rockies and Great Basin) and discussed opportunities to align future updates with revisions to state master agreements. Additional review and coordination will continue.

Unfinished Business

- **NRCG Memorandum Review / Approval - *2021_008_MEMO – 2021 Structure Protection Guidelines*** - After group discussion, NRCG members unanimously approved updating the 2021 version with minor updates and an updated date year. The memo will be approved by the chair and posted on NRCG's website.

- **Review/Discussion: 2023_004_MEMO – Guidelines for Private Firefighting** - NRCG members discussed proposed revisions to the Guidelines for Private Firefighting, with particular emphasis on clarifying the distinction between insurance resources and other private entities such as timber protection associations.
  - **ACTION ITEM:** IDL and North Dakota representatives will provide additional input. The memorandum will be revised and brought back for further discussion at the July meeting.

- **Status update: Zone MAC / GMAC exercise training in June 2026** (Corey Buhl) – no report

- **Status update: IMT Operation Guide Review/Approval** (Beau Richardson) – will review in June

- **Status update: Operations Committee – IMT Capacity Survey and Committee Taskings** (Craig Howells, Morganne Lehr) – will receive update during May meeting.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 16, 2026