Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

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

Monthly Conference Call – Meeting NOTES

Tuesday, July 21, 2026 – 10:00 AM MDT

Participants

Coordinating Group Members:

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

Other participants: Aitor Bidaburu (NMAC/NWCG), Brian Nicholay (Montana Fire Chiefs Association), Beau Richardson (NRCC), Corey Buhl (NR Operations), Dave Williams (USFS Representative), Craig Howells (US Wildland Fire Service Representative)

Welcome / Opening Remarks | Ryan Melin, Chair

- Welcomed Dave Williams, USFS Operations. Dave will serve as the USFS representative when Craig Glazier - work cell (406) 531-8952, e-mail - david.williams1@usda.gov

Standing Reports

- **NWCG/NMAC Update (Aitor Bidaburu) –** NMAC is considering activation of a half military battalion, potentially based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, with the Pacific Northwest the likely Geographic Area for assignment. NMAC does not anticipate canvassing Geographic Areas for MCADs but will support military resources with necessary overhead. An Australia/New Zealand request for assistance is anticipated around July 25, with the Pacific Northwest the likely recipient. Middle-management and a small IMT group may also be available. FAST Teams are being established in the Rocky Mountain and Great Basin Geographic Areas under shared delegations with NMAC associate members; the respective Geographic Area boards will help define their focus. Great Basin may begin exporting resources. NWCG is meeting today, with discussion anticipated regarding potential NGO membership; no decisions are expected at this time.

- **NR Operations / Associate NMAC Representation (Corey Buhl)** – The Northern Rockies is experiencing significant initial attack activity in the northwest portion of the Geographic Area, with weather intelligence indicating potential for increased activity. Crew coordinators have effectively supported resource movement, and efforts are underway to increase capacity. Transition and coordination with Dave Williams has gone well. Corey will be unavailable Thursday through Sunday, with Dave acting during that period; Corey plans to be in Missoula the following Monday to provide support. A critical Northern Rockies need is additional Short-Haul Type 1 Helicopter Restricted Managers.
    - NR Operations Position Capacity / Backup (USFS / DNRC) – Follow-up from the June meeting remains focused on ensuring adequate backup and capacity for the NR Operations position.
    - ACTION ITEM: Agencies should canvas employees for qualified Short-Haul Type 1 Helicopter Restricted Managers who may be available to support current needs.
    - NMAC Meeting Notes Needs – The NMAC Chair continues to find meeting notes useful.

- **NRCC Update (Beau Richardson)** – Initial attack and resource ordering have increased across the Geographic Area. Kate is supporting the Rocky Mountain/Great Basin FAST Team. One CIMT is currently assigned in the Northern Rockies—Team 1 in North Idaho—and all Northern Rockies teams are currently committed. CIMT mobilization and rostering have generally gone well, including mobilization of teams with large rosters; Team 6 mobilized with approximately 120 personnel. A continuing challenge is identifying and securing approvals for non-standard incident needs, such as Starlink services or lodging for certain positions, which can create incident business delays or denials. Agency Administrator pre-mobilization calls may provide an opportunity to identify these needs earlier.
    - Operational Calls – Weekly Geographic Area operational calls have begun and are held Wednesdays at 1000 hours.
- **NRCG Committee Reports**
    - Mitigation/Education/Prevention Committee – Restrictions and closures are active. Agencies should continue using appropriate state processes and established pathways for restrictions, closures, and prevention messaging.
    - IC Subcommittee – No report / no NRCG Liaison Identified.

Unfinished Business

- **REPORT | Feedback/Response from NMAC Regarding Resource Rostering (Ryan / Kate)** – No substantive update or solution has been received from NMAC regarding previously identified resource rostering concerns. Dispatch centers continue to experience issues with inaccurate resource status and limitations in appropriately tracking resources. The dispatch community is documenting issues to support continued improvement.
    - ACTION ITEM: Revisit and reinforce resource rostering concerns with NMAC this fall.

- **DECISION | Type 3 IC Recruitment Update – Approval and/or Extension** (Morganne Lehr, Beau Richardson)
    - A modified recruitment for an additional Type 3 IC was issued in late June, with applications due July 21. The intent was to select an IC who could begin building and recruiting an NRCG-supported Type 3 team.
    - Timing has been challenging because fire activity has increased and many qualified/interested candidates are currently committed.
    - One formal application was received, with another individual expressing interest but not completing an application by the meeting.
    - The group discussed extending the current recruitment versus postponing and incorporating the opportunity into the normal fall IC recruitment process.
    - Craig Howells provided additional background on the need for the team and the intent of the recruitment.
    - The group acknowledged that the opportunity has been difficult to clearly communicate during the current recruitment period.
    - **DECISION / ACTION ITEM:** Discontinue the current recruitment effort and include the additional Type 3 IC/team opportunity in the normal fall/winter IC recruitment process.

- **DECISION | Identify an NRCG Training Committee Liaison and an IC Subcommittee Liaison** (All)
    - Training Committee – The committee is working with a new NRTC Manager, Matt Heisler, and has experienced challenges related to staffing and coordination. Additional NRCG support may help strengthen coordination and development of an effective training calendar. Dave recommended providing support wherever possible.
    - IC Subcommittee – The group discussed whether the NRCG Operating Plan/SOP should be revised to better define liaison roles and how they interact with NRCG. Discussion also included potentially expanding participation to agency representatives and/or deputies to increase capacity.
        - Brett Lloyd offered to serve in an interim liaison role and invite the IC Subcommittee Chair to provide a briefing to the Coordinating Group.
    - **ACTION ITEM**: Brett Lloyd will serve as interim liaison and coordinate an IC Subcommittee briefing for NRCG.
    - **ACTION ITEM:** Consider future revisions to the NRCG Operating Plan/SOP to clarify liaison roles and opportunities for expanded agency/deputy participation.

- **NRCG BUSINESS | NRCG/GMAC Representative Schedule**
    - July 19–25 – Brett Lloyd, MT DES
    - July 26–August 1 – Matt Hall, MT DNRC
    - August 2–8 – Aaron Thompson or Craig Howells, USWFS
    - August 9–15 – Josh Harvey, IDL
    - August 16–22 – Craig Glazier, USFS
    - August 23–29 – Josh Harvey or Ryan Melin
    - August 30–September 5 – Brett Lloyd, MT DES
    - September 6–12 – Aaron Thompson or Craig Howells, USWFS
    - September 13–19 – Matt Hall, MT DNRC
    - September 20–26 – TBD
    - ACTION ITEM: Ryan Melin will select and coordinate a week for NRCG/GMAC representative coverage.

New Business

- None

Next Meeting: August 18, 2026