Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

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

# Monthly Conference Call – Meeting Notes

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

**Participants**

**Coordinating Group Members:**

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

**Other participants:** Aitor Bidaburu, Brian Nickolay (MT Fire Chiefs Assoc, Alternate), Beau Richardson (NRCC), Morganne Lehr (Facilitator, Alternate), Hunter Noor (NDFS), Craig Howells (USWFS)

---

**Welcome / Opening Remarks | Aaron Thompson, Vice Chair |** Aaron emphasized the need for a focused and productive fall NRCG meeting, including discussion of the coordinating group's program of work, committee structure, and preparation for the fall CIMT After Action Review (AAR). Members welcomed Ike Jessop as the new Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officers Association representative, replacing Steve Holton.

**Standing Reports**

- **NWCG/NMAC Update** (Aitor Bidaburu) **–** The national CIMT AAR is scheduled October 27–28 in Boise, followed by an internal NMAC AAR on October 29. Invitations and the agenda have been distributed, including to associate members and a Type 3 IC representative. Following Chuck Russell's retirement, LJ Brown will serve as acting NMAC chair. The revised iCAP application process has received positive feedback from geographic areas that have begun IMT recruitment. A proposed WFS/USFS MOU related to NWCG was noted, along with the NWCG all-chairs meeting planned for February in Boise. Aitor highlighted the value of associate NMAC members' direct participation in calls, which improved communication and efficiency.
- **Associate NMAC Representation / NRCC Operations** (Corey Buhl) **–** No report.
- **NRCC Update** (Beau Richardson) **–** NRCC remains at National and Northern Rockies Preparedness Level 1, with staffing unchanged. The center continues to support prescribed fire as needed, identify opportunities to assist other geographic areas, and prepare annual statistics and materials for the fall meeting. Kate Holsapple is on leave. Forest Service representatives were unable to attend this NRCG meeting due to the Regional FMO meeting taking place this week.

**Unfinished Business**

- **Status Update | Incident Commander Applications (closes October 30) –** Two Type 3 applications have been received, including a potential primary IC for the proposed additional Type 3 team and a trainee interested in supporting Type 3 capacity. Members supported involving the Operations

Committee in an initial application review before NRCG selection, with consideration of a short review window and early distribution of existing applications. The process and timing require coordination.

- **Status Update | Zone Validity Review Task Group –** Ryan Melin is leading the review, with Rich Cowger involved in East Zone discussions. Options include adjusting zone boundaries along county lines. Members raised concerns about adding administrative layers, potential Forest Service objections, and whether zones remain necessary where dispatch boundaries already serve interagency functions. The task group will further evaluate alignment with dispatch consolidation and present findings at the fall meeting.
    - **ACTION ITEM:** Review zone maps alongside dispatch boundaries and develop options for NRCG consideration.

- **Status Update | Committee Review Task Group –** The Training Committee review is complete, with discussion focused on turnover, committee charter, and purpose. The Operations Committee review is scheduled for this week. Additional committee review work remains underway.

**New Business**

- **Fall CIMT AAR Preparation –** NRCG discussed preparation for the national CIMT AAR, with representation identified from Dave Williams, Corey Buhl, Mike Behrens, Brent Olsen, and Morganne Lehr (RIST). Members requested access to the submitted responses and clearer direction on the AAR focus. Concerns included team continuity and health, fatigue management, the CIMT coordinator position, agency administrator turnover, and the limited opportunity for geographic area review before the national AAR. Members emphasized that improved transparency regarding NMAC team rotation strategy would help teams and coordination centers plan and reduce uncertainty during assignments.
    - **ACTION ITEMS:** Rich Cowger will share available AAR updates from the IC Subcommittee to NRCG. Request talking points from the identified representatives. Add a Northern Rockies CIMT AAR discussion to a future NRCG agenda ahead of the national AAR, where practicable.

- **Fall/November NRCG Meeting – Proposed Agenda / Timeline –** The fall meeting is scheduled November 3, 1:00–5:00 p.m.; November 4, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; and November 5, 8:00 a.m.–noon, at the Best Western GranTree Inn, 1325 N. 7th Avenue, Bozeman, Montana. A virtual option will be available, although in-person participation is preferred for NRCG members. The proposed agenda and timeline will be shared.

- **Other New Business –** Members welcomed Ike Jessop as the new Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officers Association representative. Appreciation was expressed to Beau Richardson and Karly DeMars for their support and coordination.

**Next Meeting:** November 3–5, 2026