



# **Northern Rockies Coordinating Group**

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

## **Board of Directors Conference Call Agenda**

**Tuesday, August 18, 2020**

### **Participants:**

**Board Members:** Darron Williams, Ray Hart, Bryce Rogers, Aaron Thompson, Mike Granger, Mike DeGrosky – Chair, Rich Cowger, Patrick Lonergan, Ryan Melin, Dan Warthin, Ralph Rau

**Deputies and Others:** Greg Morris, Craig Goodell, Kathy Pipkin, Anthony Krause, Dylan Kopitzke, Mike Behrens, Derek Yeager, Jordan McKnight, Rick Connell, Wanemah Hulett, Pam Jolly

**Purpose:** Welcome and a reminder that this is a public meeting for the purpose of conducting government business.

### **NWCG/NMAC Update: (Aitor Bidaburu)**

- Unable to attend this call due to meeting schedule conflict.

### **Northern Rockies GACC and Operational Updates:**

#### **NRCG Operations (Craig Goodell)**

- Current activity – Team 5 - Sampson is on the Bear Creek Fire. Have quite a few crews assigned right now.
- Do have an emerging fire on HLF – Wood Lake – approximately 50 acres; Type 3 organization.
- Do have two fires in the back country on the Flathead National Forest. Limited resources assigned to these.
- Have two initial attacks occurring in Grangeville this morning.
- Lightning and winds are forecast for the next few days.
- All Type 1 IHC and T2IA crews are in GACC.
- All Geographic areas are reporting a need for crews. If activity increases, will need to cycle the crews the region already has.
- Would like the board to consider preposition order for five type 2 crews to come to the Northern Rockies in the next few days.
  - DNRC – Encourage hanging on to crews that are currently in the GACC. Support prepositioning additional crews.
- Brought on a Type 1 PIO to support fire information.
- Northern Rockies Covid Support Group update – assembled; group is having daily calls and coordinating with zone Covid coordinators and IMT Covid coordinators. Information sharing is going well.
  - USFS – Request email with organization structure of this group to be disseminated to the Board. Craig Goodell will distribute this information.
- Have requested Willy Acton to assist as a Geographic Area Aviation coordinator.
- Anticipate possibly moving towards PL 4 and MAC.

#### **NRCC Update (Kathy Pipkin)**

- South and North Operations are showing a critical need for engines.
- NICC has advised that they will not accept any name suggests for engines – that includes hard dollars or severity. Region would have to be completely depleted of engines prior to a name suggest being accepted. This applies on an interagency basis.
  - USFS, BLM, FWS, DNRC, NPS, BIA – All indicated concerns over impacts to agency specific



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agreements that may be felt from this issue.

- Kathy Pipkin will share the associated email with the Board.
- DNRC – Encouraged all units to utilize available contract engine resources to the fullest capacity.
- Helicopters are also an extremely scarce resource.
  - Have been advised to notify NICC if resources are being released.
  - Northern Rockies preposition orders are suggested for the two upcoming Type 1 helicopter resources that may be released in the next few days.
- Currently, availability for mid-management positions is limited.
  - Have informed NICC will not be accepting out of area requests for specific mid-management positions.
  - Encourage all to inquire with their specific agency resources for in GACC support availability.

### **Community Protection/Preventing COVID-19 Transmission from Fire Camps and other Fire Operations – Informational Topic (Mike DeGrosky)**

- Earlier in the year, began receiving questions regarding what is being done to prevent Covid spread to communities during operations.
- Since then, have been engaged in discussions regarding answering those questions. Have been talking with Montana State Health Officer, and that has now evolved to include many other departments and Governor's office.
- Did ask the IC Committee as to what they thought they would need regarding screening, isolation, evacuation, etc. regarding Covid.
- Are activity working on this issue. Call planed in the near future; DPHS has offered to give a proposal for review as to what they think needs to be done to sufficiently protect communities.
  - Would then have an opportunity to comment and advise what resources would be needed to accomplish those recommendations.
- Have been discussing a tasking to the Zone Chairs to ensure that each zone is reaching out to County Health Departments and understanding capacity issues, should significant fire operations occur.
- Ask that all remember that in the six party agreement, in Montana, the DNRC is the liaison for the local county departments.
  - Request if agencies and / or zones are accomplishing this, please coordinate with their local DNRC office.
- Dylan Kopitzke – Feel that these communications are readily occurring and are in a fairly good space.
- DNRC, BLM, USFS, FWS - Deliverable ask would reduce flexibility; thus, there is not an ask of a deliverable at this time.
  - Emphasized importance of keeping communication channels open.
- Derek Yeager - also feel in a good space with current coordination.
- Mike Behrens – meeting weekly as a zone group and sharing information. Involves two health districts, one with a higher Covid rate. Working to ensure good protocols and open communications.
  - **Action Item - Mike DeGrosky will send an email to all the Zone Chairs regarding addressing Community Protection/Preventing COVID-19 Transmission from Fire Camps and other Fire Operations.**
- Rick Connell – Regarding GACC based Covid group, concern over the number of individuals that are



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engaged and involved in the process. As group is developed, do need a way to ensure all are aware of who is involved and participator in the process.

- DNRC – Acknowledged similar concerns, especially in regards to HIPPA.
- Craig Goodell – Purpose of the GACC group is to provide support as requested.
- BLM – Biggest issues seeing so far is the lack of testing. Would like to see this group identify each county in Montana’s testing capacity.
  - DNRC – That is one of the topics that are attempting to receive clarification from other states entities.

### NRCC Organizational Chart – Decisional Topic (Kathy Pipkin)

- Reviewed position updates and changes.
- Currently, do have one vacant position currently - assistant aircraft coordinator.
  - Would like to have Board approval to move forward with the assistant aircraft coordinator.
  - USFS – Supports maintaining the assistant aircraft coordinator position as it currently exists.
  - **Vote to approve maintaining the assistant aircraft coordinator position as it currently exists.**
    - **Approved – unanimous consent.**
- Additionally, do have a meteorologist retiring at the end of the September.
- With the meteorologist position, would like to change that to a FWS Fire Analyst.
  - Rational is that previously, the skill sets needed were different in the past for these various positions.
  - Last year, the detailed fire analyst positions served the Northern Rockies needs well.
  - Propose FWS carry the Fire Analyst positions and leave the Meteorologist position vacant.
    - FWS – Funding for Meteorologist is directly from the WO, specifically for a Meteorologist. There has been talk of that money going away. If that were to occur, it would pose significant challenges. Currently, are making inquiries regarding this funding. **At this time, not able to agree to any changes.**

### Planning Fall Board Meeting and Fall NRCG Zones and Committee Meetings Expectations – Decisional Topic (Aaron Thompson)

- Decision needed regarding holding the 2020 Fall NRCG meeting as virtual or in-person.
  - BLM – Agency is still non-essential travel.
  - USFS – Support virtual.
  - FWS – Support virtual.
  - NPS – Support virtual.
  - Group discussion and consent; no opposition expressed to holding 2020 Fall NRCG meeting virtually.
  - **Action Item: 2020 Fall NRCG meeting will be held virtually.**
- BLM – Need exists to issue NRCG Leader’s Intent for Zone & Committee virtual meeting expectations.
  - **Action Item: NRCG Board agreement that Chair will send out an email regarding NRCG expectations for Zones and Committees to hold their meetings virtually, prior to the fall NRCG Meeting.**



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### **Preposition of an Additional Five T2 Crews – Decisional Topic (Craig Goodell)**

- Crews are ODF State Crews, specifically, and are self-sufficient and have their own transportation.
- Plan is to distribute across the GACC.
  - BIA NW – Informational, regarding AFC Best Value Crews - that request has been suspended regarding sending those crews out of GACC. Suggestion for Craig Goodell to follow up on this.
    - Craig Goodell will follow up.
- **Vote to approve prepositioning an additional five T2 crews.**
  - **Approved – unanimous consent.**

### **Review of Action Items: (Mike DeGrosky)**

- Postponed in the interest of time.

**The next scheduled NRCG Monthly Conference Call is September 15, 2020 at 10:00 Hours Mountain Time**