

**NRCG Operations Committee Meeting
December 13-15, 2006
Missoula, Montana**

Attendees: Mark Grant, Sally Estes, Randy Sanders, Wally Bennett, Chuck Stanich, Mark Heppler, Larry Svalberg, Glen McNitt, Doug Turman, Bob Lippincott, Rory Laws, Bob Fry, John Specht, Rick Kusicko, Brad McBratney, Bill Cowin, Dan Cassidy, Greg Poncin, Tom Heintz, Rick Hafenfeld, John Monzie, Bob Cunningham, Jess Secrist, Tammy Clark, Jim Reuter, Bidy Simet, Dave Solem, Valdo Calvert, Jose Castro, Kathy Elzig, Beth Card, Tony Lubke, Bob Gilman, Tom Corbin

Opening Comments – Bob Lippincott

- 50 fire responses for IMTs
- sharing resources was very good this year
- continue to struggle getting more folks into the IMTs - NRCG working on a strategy paper – looking outside of the box
- recommended liaisons to Teams
- need to look at drawdown plans
- Phil Perkins retiring – Bob Fry replacing
- Need to seriously look at and recommend number of IMTs
- Kusicko will be able to participate this year, but may not be able to in future years
- Larry Dawson, Tracey Nimlos, and Bob Lippincott went to the Albuquerque Service Center (ASC) to talk to folks about getting back on to IMTs and into expanded dispatch roles; talked to about 60 folks, some of which had red cards up to 2 years ago; several want to participate including new folks; a proposal was made to the ASC Board that the Northern Rockies would take the first step – initially concentrating on finance positions – will put on training at ASC and work with R-3 who would produce a list of folks who would be available for fire season

Training Committee – Cunningham

- Beth Card is chair
- Strategic training plan developed last spring – presented to Forest FMOs – received concurrence on some issues that were FS specific
- Beth presented the plan to the NRCG board this week – primary recommendation to ops committee is how to staff IMTs – feel it is up to agencies and agency administrators to direct employees to fire management
- Zone training curriculums are full every year as well as the NRTC

Business Committee – Bidy Simet

- With the retirement of Roberta Whitlock at the end of this year, the Blue page supplements to the Interagency Business Management Handbook have been apportioned throughout the committee
- Best Value contracts will influence what goes into the handbook
- Assist with procurement and buying team coordination and workshop – Debby Wesselius - lead; short handed on buying teams this year – if you know anyone,

get them involved; workshop will be part of the FS regional training academy this year

- Work on additional training, reps at dispatcher workshop, Teams meetings, equipment committee
- In process of reviewing AD rates – comments due now
- Finance/Logistics workshop again this year – cost share agreements
- I-Suite train the trainer workshop this year
- Work rest issues – going with what’s in the Incident Business Handbook – no additional written guidance
- Performance evaluations especially for contracted equipment – imperative that the form needs to be used, timely, accurately – needs to get back to contracting officer – recommend being honest; may be updated this year by equipment committee - if you have comments – get back to Kevin Erickson or someone on the equipment committee
- Only 1 national buying team from the Northern Rockies this year
- Can we ask ASC to provide a buying team?
- State of Montana and Fed AD plans are going to be closer

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Fire Use Sub-Committee - Brad McBratney/Dave Solem

- Solicited input from past representatives
- Intended to be interagency
- Opened the door to any interested participants
- Brainstormed initial action items and prioritized
- Solicited approval from the NRCG Operations Committee
- Developed a charter
- Provide fire use input to the Northern Rockies mobe guide
- Develop and recommend WFU Team and WFU Module configuration and standards – guide should be out by summer
- Coordinate activities with other committees
- Identify training needs and coordinate 3-year training plans for WFU with the NRCG training committee
- Develop recommendations for coordinating smoke management issues within the NR
- Provide an information strategy for internal and external use on the WFU program
- Identify and seek resolution to barriers in implementing the WFU Implementation and procedures reference guide in the NR
- Develop a long term strategy to ensure proper skill mix for a WFU program in the NR

- Participate with NRCG ops committee in WFU team nomination and selection process
- Identify new tools and models to help fire managers and agency administrators with information risk assessment of WFU

FY 2007 Action Plan for the Northern Rockies Fire Use Sub-committee - handout
Operations Committee went thru the Action Items in the Action Plan. The Fire Use Sub-committee asked approval from the Operations Committee to move forward on the action items.

- **Decision: Operations Committee approved this request except action item #1. Due to the fact this is a national, FS specific issue, the Operations Committee recommended dropping this action item.**

Another question from the Sub-committee – how do you want the information flow to the Operations Committee.

- **Decision: Minutes should be sent to the chair of the Operations Committee and the chair will distribute.**
- **Action Item: Recommend adding a State representative to the Sub-committee. Brad McBratney will contact Don Wagner (IDL) and Ted Mead (DNRC).**

It was also suggested to rename the Fire Use committee to Appropriate Management Response committee.

Equipment Committee – Jim Reuter

- Met in November – Phil Perkins represented the Ops committee
- Questions – 3 FF on engine - recommendation to keep 3
- Water tender solicitations under BVC
- Equipment inspection workshop later in February
- Proposal for retying from NWCG – handout – comments to Dan Cassidy by January 10 – dcassidy@mt.gov

Questions/comments back to committee –

- Feedback from contractors –
 - need for 3rd person is an issue – initial setup – online access to put in solicitations
 - Most contractors are accepting that BVC is a good system
 - Severity pay is an issue
 - Performance evaluation was an issue – didn't get rated since they didn't have an opportunity to perform at some level
 - Working longer operational period than what their contract said – need to have ability to double shift type 6 engines in contract – Debby W. coming out with language to articulate how to expand an operational period

- Need to have more discussions on what makes sense – recommend language in contract so they do not have to sign up on another EERA after 12 hours – recommend language out of pink book on rurals from IDL

Aviation Committee – Rick Hafenfeld (handout - Incident Management Team Aviation Positions paper)

- Took white paper to IMT workshop, along with listing of positions
- Purpose of white paper was to summarize where we saw barriers and made recommendations to the NRCG BOD – specifically AOBDs and ATGSs; expect to get feedback from BOD after this week.
- Wants to keep pushing to have AOBD on Type 2 Teams – NR is only GACC that does not have them as part of the teams
- Gained 2 AOBDs – 2 AOBDs retired – net zero
- Allen Edmonds is the chair of Aviation Committee
- During the summer, had daily aviation conference - coordinate among all units – successfully arrange for sharing, movement, identifying out of area folks, coordinate with national helicopter position in Boise
- Aviation committee will meet in Feb. in Billings – aviation conference – agenda items out soon
- Need to do something different than we have been doing – can we set down as a group and sign off ASGS taskbook

Recommendations from Aviation Committee:

- When Type 2, Type 3, or Fire Use has an air support and has gone to 470 – Maggie McDonald will facilitate getting an AOBD out there to get task book signed off.
- Target those 7 folks and get them to Southwest early
- Look into resources from Canada
- Fire Use Teams – order ASGS early

Northern Rockies Air Tactical Group Supervisor White Paper handout

Identify barriers and make recommendations to Operations Committee on actions that can be taken to improve the availability of ATGS resources in future years.

- Recommendation #1 – Risk: support
- Recommendation #2 – Workload: support
- Recommendation #3 – Availability: support
- Recommendation #4 – Compensation: support – should be forwarded to NRCG as well as national; should be for several positions, not just ATGS; a letter to supervisor was suggested stating how valuable these positions are; Cunningham will meet with folks at the national level in January and provide this feedback to them.
- Recommendation #5 – Competition for ATGS: supports the concept – need to identify how to get there, i.e. make sure there are enough to go around, how would they fit into the teams, etc. Some things to think about:

- Air attack folks align them with the teams – list as support, won't eat up 1 of the 27 or trainee slots – then can be used locally if that team isn't being used
- Air attack list rotation possible alternative
- Bigger challenge is getting platforms – how many platforms nationally can we rely on?
- People being held for initial attack – nothing wrong with putting them in a T3 heli – consideration it only has 1 AM radio – in a pinch this is an option

- - **Action Item: Spring Meeting topic – 2 weeks prior to spring meeting, aviation group will flush out and provide feedback at spring meeting**

Northern Rockies Safety 2006 Overview – Paul Chamberlin (handouts – Camden Fire, Derby Helicopter Evacuation, Draft Facilitated Learning Analysis, Gash Creek Fire Lessons Learned Analysis)

- Safety officer course – good course – well received – another course in January – downside – not getting enough applicants
- Had 313 UTF Safety Officer – highest was Safety Officer 2
- 2006 Season – active and pretty safe – no fatalities – some events that happened – one thing we do well is the safety assistance team – this is not an inspection – they are there to assist – 84 site visits – going to a team is not time well spent – would like to see time spent going to the local unit/firefighters
- Year end report not completed yet
- Are we on right track with this? Yes – not intrusive – good feedback from troops
- Focus on learning from lesser events to prevent future problems/tragedies - make it a learning opportunity

2007 Operations Committee Charter – Lippincott

- Updated Membership
 - **Action Item: Bob Lippincott will send to Tracey Nimlos for signature**

AD/EFF Issues from Dispatch – Mark Heppler (handout)

- Dispatch understands ADs are important and vital to our mission.
- Handout explains the timeframe it takes to sponsor an AD.
- When ICs order ADs, take into consideration that there is a workload – make sure front end items are done before, qualified, etc.
- We do want people traveling with resource orders. What can dispatch do to facilitate team members getting a copy of their order quickly and does not hold them up for their dispatch? When you give dispatch names, make sure they are available.
- Need consistency in how ADs are treated across the GACC; NRCG Guidelines

- Possible MOU for ADs with a contractor to take on workload of ADs, qualifications, travel, timesheet

Team Reports – Lessons Learned

- Imperative to be engaged with local resources - don't ever indicate you want them to go away - leads into value of having a liaison with the team
- Launch operations people before rest of team – proven valuable – assign them to the local IC
- Prepackaging resource orders within the team, i.e. water handling, etc.
- Sharing of resources between teams
- Need ATGS for single missions - Area Command thru kink into air plans that were in place with dispatch
- Jurisdictional responsibilities in eastern MT different than N. ID
- Spike camps very beneficial
- Line officer wanted team to take over right in the middle of burning period; before closeout on one incident was asked to take over new incident – sent operations, FBAN to new incident to take over until Team could take over right after briefing;
- Job shares – not with same team from incident to incident can cause some problems/stress – can affect team continuity and performance
- Shorten stage 3 process
- Traveling with more than 3 alternates in command/general staff
- Lack of fire use ICs
- Transitions – manage this time - the time spent doing this is invaluable
- Communications between teams invaluable
- Ran long-term assessments on every incident
- Asked line officer what their definition of success was
- Challenge of the future is how to build holistic team
- Need to keep teaching how to do things the old way when computers aren't up and running
- Canadian resources – on Derby may have been underutilized – personal information exchange sheets – did not make use of that; did a fantastic job
- Big challenge not being able to establish a fire camp in a timely manner - worked with dispatch – next time this was fixed
- Derby fire - size, private ground, mitigate work/rest due to lack of resources
- Coal bed methane – above ground structure make up is different throughout the country; take advantage of company resource capabilities; local agencies may not have an idea of where all the structures are
- Church of the Universal Triumphant - ammunition, underground tanks
- Set the community up to live with fire after team leaves (flyers, video clips)
- Hazmat
- Turtle Lake Fire – logistics challenge, i.e. Float planes, canoes, backhaul (tied in with Outward Bound program)
- Established public safety groups in high recreation areas
- Bring in folks to back up agency administrators when they get tired - for example, several tragedies on one unit

- Confusion of WFU and suppression or management of fires internally and externally
- FUMT did mostly suppression
- Fire use teams need to start getting more depth
- Railroad/Bundy – did not have a good accounting of where people were, so pulled everyone off to accomplish that, however, had no way to involve the private landowner of what was going on which in turn they felt that the team was pulling out and leaving the fire for them to take care of
- Landowners will work 24-36 hours to protect their property; may need to change tactics due to landowners wanting to keep green pieces;
- Weed washing program not working very well
- Drawback of sharing resources, i.e. different planning section chief on 3 fires
- Air attack platform – borrowed – because of their cycle, they are gone when really needed
- Full suppression to fire use incidents – this is the future
- Underestimating potential of fires – amount of unburned fuels, weather, etc. - at the same time backing off to think about where the fire is going is not accepted by the local folks
- Colorado assignment – by time the team got there, they could have driven; team staged – lot of team building during this time
- Gash – 33 days – long time – had enough depth to rotate folks; 21 days is fine especially for folks in camp – any longer, questionable
- Canadians – more interested in helping on fires that are going to threaten their borders; more language being put into border IA agreements; should be flushed out by Spring meeting; crews from Canada have different expertise – standards are also different

Team Liaison Officer

At the NRCG meeting this week, they authorized adding the position of Liaison Officer to Teams.

Need to identify liaisons. Look to DES to supply some of these folks.

Team members need to be reminded that they are all liaisons.

In addition to liaison, a respected member of the community should be asked to participate with the team.

- **Action Item: Bret Waters tasked to come up with names of people with the required skill sets and put together a workshop before fire season 2007. Bob Fry will assist. IDL will identify someone. Contact Bret if you want to be a part of this group. Followup at Spring meeting.**

Teams Discussion

- Need to identify some things we can do long term
- Look at numbers at PL 4 (August) - what is our capability
- Short team is not going to work in August

- Is there some mix to better support ICT3s as well as other incidents, i.e. fire use; find drawdown when we need to bring in out of area teams – should not be afraid to ask for help – we need to set them up for success, not failure
- NIMO teams looking for those folks that are not committed to GACC Teams
- Need to identify roadblocks
- Need to be adaptable, i.e. cost containment
- Type 3 Incidents – will have to request a team due to support functions going away at local units (FS)
- What are our capabilities – do some futuring – set ourselves up for the best mix that will buy ourselves the most
- Pools consist of Agency, ADs, R-9 – what if something happens to one of these pools like R-9 plays with someone else
- Shared T2 team in R-9 – big interest from all partners to get T2 team in EACC –
- More Specific T2 team dedicated to all risk, fire use
- Where is our greatest risk from a safety standpoint?
- Heavy in some positions – need to channel those folks into needed positions – but need agencies to support this
- Barriers: IFPM; Buying teams – challenge ASC to form buying team
- Every employee required to participate in fire – make it requirement like it used to be
- Short Type 2 Team – IC capable of fire use with mostly federal folks to begin with but leave door open for State folks should things change for them
- Commitment to Northern Rockies before we staff any positions on NIMO team that we will staff here first and make it known nationally
- Proposal – nationally preference is we don't lose Type 1 teams – reality is different

Proposal: 2 Incident Management Type 1 Teams; 4 or 5 Incident Management Type 2 Teams (includes R-9/R-1 team); 3 Incident Management Short Teams (includes 2 Fire Use Teams) solid teams

- **Action Item: Develop a short letter to team members clearly communicating recommendation -- explaining this new recommendation and the point that things may be shuffling around – also touch on fact that local units are trying to put together strong T3 teams together and they could have opportunities – mention shared R-9/R-1 team/seasons; long-term**
- **Action Item: Group (Bob Lippincott, Bob Fry, Doug Turman, Kathy Elzig, Jess Secrest, Bill Cowin) formed to flush out team concepts and produce a range of alternatives to share with the NRCG BOD and the rest of the interagency line officers. Group to meet at the AFD on Jan. 10 at 1000. ICs to provide holes in their teams to Bob Lippincott by Jan. 5. After Jan. meeting will provide to Tracey alternatives and then Bob will present to NRCG BOD on their Jan. 16 conference call**

At the Forest Service Regional Leadership Team Meeting this week, the Line officers committed themselves to focused recruitment on Incident Management Teams.

Strategic Action Committee – Tim Murphy/Kevin Erickson

- First draft of 2007 water handling solicitation is out – finalize in Jan. - open solicitation in Feb
- Question for equipment committee – need a way to handle extended shifts – Ops committee recommends payment of hourly rates
- MOU with pvt contractors for ADs for training
- Working with FS grants/agreements and legal staff on MOU equip inspection and training verifications – hope to have finalized by end of Feb. No cost to govt – contractors would pay
- Scussel exploring private sector willing to host managing AD workforce

NRCG Board Update – Tom Corbin

- Tom Corbin is the new chair
- Thanked Ops Committee for all hard work
- Don't tie your hands – leave all options open – bread and butter is T2 Teams - put fire use into conversations right along with T2 teams
- We don't want to send teams out that are not whole – different fires need different things
- T3 Teams – Ops Committee gave NRCG paper with alternatives – did address it – approach still leave it in the hands of the zones
- Discussed recruitment situation – NRCG going to put some effort into doing some things – we have to involve everyone in order to come up with the little solutions in order to get to the big solution – opportunity for local government is really there
- Line officers keep telling us to tell them what we need – are we really doing that – if you know of folks who want to participate and have difficulty getting there, the agency administrator will help out
- Sharing resources, like we did in fire season 2006, will continue in the future

S420/S520 Selections

- S420 and 520 selections were made.
- Proposal to the NRCG BOD – (Mark Grant) Operations Section Chiefs/Safety Officers/PIO's – can't change this year – need to explore options to facilitate moving the backlog of S-420 candidates through the course. Options to consider could include: redesign 420 to allow simulation to include 2 safety and 2 pios, copy system used by NW GA of assigning S-420 team w/cadre to going fires, or some other combination of ideas – spring agenda item – need to do a white paper (maybe jointly with Training Committee) to NRCG Board by spring with a proposal
- Need to have signature of supervisor/line officer for commitment of attendees to attend this course. What process can we use for 420 that we get a line officer support? Suggestion to incorporate into the selection letter.

- **Action Item: Cunningham will draft a selection letter and provide to Lippincott.**
- **Action Item: White paper to NRCG BOD to proposing to redesign 420**

Bob Cunningham proposal – when you become an IC, that their agency needs to identify 2 weeks during the off season committed to care and maintenance of that IMT –

2007 Team Information – Kathy Elzig

- Teams meeting April 9-12, 2007 at the Holiday Inn in Missoula, MT
 - Theme – Relationships
 - Need to know who needs to be invited (speakers), agenda items, etc.
- NMAC/GMAC Meeting
 - Getting lax in our team rosters as far as when teams go that there are more holes and we haven't really been sharing that information with the ordering end – bottom line and agreed to this year, right up front when a team is ordered, share what holes you have and what the status is so that the ordering end knows what holes there are. IC, or whomever IC delegates, need to communicate with the Team Coordinator if mobilization is in area and the NRCC for out of area assignments.
- Type 1 Staged Teams – \$30,000 to stage a team; if Boise has a team staged out west, for the next T1 team assignment, discussions will occur and the staged team will be given high priority; if we have a staged T1 Team here in the NR, there would be discussion before Boise would take our staged team.
- Type 2 Staged Teams - unless there are overriding circumstances for going around the staged team, the assignment will be the staged team
- Holes in teams – any time teams go out of area, despite configuration we have, T2 teams have to go by what is positions are listed in the Mobe Guide.
- NIFC working on an agreement with GSA for procurement positions – beta testing this coming year.
- Until we get all nominations in, we need to be specific and follow our team operating plan how many shared positions we are agreeing to take with our teams – at what point is a team not a team with too many shared positions?
 - **Action Item: ICs and Ops committee need to think about the number of shared positions within the C&G staff. Decision needs to be made at team selections meeting.**

Next Operations Committee Meeting – Feb. 14-15 0800 – Missoula