

**In attendance:** Rita Chandler(chair), USFS; Chris Barth (vice-chair), BLM; CT Camel, CSKT; Ashley Juran, MT DNRC; Kristin Sleeper, MT DNRC; Jennifer Russell & Jenna Rollins – IDL; Jennifer Miller & Dan Muir-IPNF; Aubrey Davis-ND; Chris (CJ) Johnson-SWMT with Andi Colson, Anna Henderson, Anna Bateson, USFS & Jordan Koppen, MT DNRC; Shannon Bonney-BLM; Forest Ford-SCZ;

**Conference in:** Larry Elder- BLM; Tam Kolar, MTDES; Michael O'dell-NDFS; Jeff Moyer-BIA; Kevin Weaver-BIA; Keith VanBroeke-NWMT; Deana Harms-BLM; Ernie Mace-MT DNRC; Domo Woodham-MSU

*(Italics/highlighted items are actionable items to move forward)*

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**Review of Action Items from Fall 2019 (these are located on NRCG website)**

1. Spring 2019 meeting or conference call – Action not completed.
  - Update was given to NRCG Board February 2019.
2. Firenet.gov – Action cannot be completed. This is going away because both USDA and DOI CIO offices do not readily support the current Google environment due to growing security concerns. Additionally, there is a concern about the long-term cost of the current licensed environment being too expensive to support as an independent service indefinitely.
  - Results are new action: We need to look for a different platform for interagency collaboration. Follow-up in spring 2020.
3. Fire Restrictions Survey-Action completed.
  - Consider using with NRCG Restrictions Ops Plan 2020
4. Standardizing best practices for Evacuation Standards and Terms-Action completed
  - Crystal sent out MT Standards – language used is Evacuation Warning and Evacuation. Idaho defers to each County Sherriff, but uses Ready, Set, GO.
5. NRCG Strategic Fire Prevention Plan – Action completed- relayed no need to update to board
6. Solicit comments on NRCG Strategy on Restrictions and Closures Procedures – Action completed
  - Results were received handful of comments = New action update authorities & contacts- these are to be returned to Rita by Dec. 31, 2019. Assigned by agency contact.
  - Restrictions Website – Action completed by CJ for Guide update (draft format).
    - Action follow-up-everyone needs to review-feedback to CJ by Nov. 1, 2019.
7. Parcel Assessment course for the geographic area-Action completed
  - Two NFPA courses held (in Kalispell and Missoula)

**FOLLOWUP ACTIONS TO CONSIDER WITH PARCEL ASSESSMENTS:**

- Need to identify a path forward.
- How to engage community members in a Fire Adapted Community (FAC) setting? Shifting emphasis from the science to community engagement. Practitioners attended.
- Is there an interest in having course in other parts of the MT?
  - Idaho? In a rebuilding phase (between Forestry Assistance and Fire Protection)  
Collaborators = Idaho Firewise
  - North Dakota? Not sure.

**Other Ways to collect Parcel Assessments:**

- S-215 (Fire Operations in the Urban Interface) – Structure Assessments, Situation Analysis Montana. Structure Assessments using Collector.
- Three methods: Situation Analyst Montana (SAM), Paper Assessments, & Collector

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- Potential Recommendation (put forth by CJ):
  - Putting structure assessments into delegations of authority into Incident Management Teams to get SAM portal populated (one state issue and doesn't consider whole region).
  - Realize it is burdensome to IMTs – Do we want all this energy and effort gone toward structure assessments during the season to be lost?
- Question: SAM – how widely is it being used in MT? How does it meet operational needs?
- TASK GROUP: Risk Assessments and Structure Triage

**Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network presented by Ashley Juran – MT coordinator**

What is a fire adapted community?

- FAC Circle Diagram (from National Network)
- Key components to sustaining a FAC: Plans & Regulations, Wildfire Response, Resident and Community Mitigation, Safety & Evacuation, Wildfire Recovery, Public Health, Community Engagement, Landscape Treatments
- Members in the national network come from all over the U.S.
  - Other State networks: Colorado, Washington, Oregon (coming soon), Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada
- Project highlights:
  - Blackfoot Challenge – Prescribed Fire
    - RX Fire on private lands – started a RX Fire Working Group. Burned 87 acres on TNC land, 2 additional projects did not have the appropriate weather window.
    - Moving forward on how to use this tool in their watershed.
    - The Network has connected the RX Fire Working Group Coordinator with a group in Humboldt County California. Sharing lessons learned and increasing collective knowledge to more effectively create Fire Adapted Communities.
  - Big Sky Fire District – Engaging New Partners
    - Needed to connect with builders and developers about planned developments (“Tsunami of Building”)
    - Building for Wildfire Summit completed– September 18, 2019
    - The Network helped support the event by providing meeting space and networking opportunities by providing food. Travel costs were also supported for Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network members.
    - What did we learn from this type of approach? How can we make this work in other communities?
    - Link to MT Architectural Community Conferences
- Resource Library – Hosted by Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network
  - Podio Workspace and Bimonthly calls
- Q&A
  - Have you had any other communities ask about capacity to burn/put RX fire on the landscape?
    - Members have been looking at the Blackfoot Challenge to see if they succeed. We've had folks look to Lewistown and how can we learn from them?
    - Focus on RX Fire and how to use that tool on federal and private land.

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- How can this be an asset to the USFS?
  - Forest (USFS) thinking about reaching out to local developers and architects to consider these issues with development/growth opportunities.
  - For the Summit, did you reach out and include developers? Yes.
  - In Idaho, HOAs can be a barrier as well as covenants (i.e., cannot cut down trees, etc.)
- Was there any talk about awards? Recognition for homeowners?
- How can we highlight 'every home'? How do you pick out different pieces?
  - Next steps – Think about builder recognition opportunities. Parade of homes replica that addresses wildfire resilience.
- *Recommendation on wording: use FIRE ADAPTED not FIREWISE terminology.*

**Review FPEC Charter (no action to update at this time)**

- Mission statement edits: "...the promotion of **wildfire** prevention messages and measures."
- The Central Zone does not have a Zone Representative. *Liaison will get back to Chair on this.*
- NRCG Board Liaison – Mike DeGrosky (also serves as Chair of the NRCG Board)
- David Hamilton – new Training, Safety and Workforce Development Program Manager for the DNRC, will be replacing Tim Crosmer as the FPEC Training Liaison.
- **Current ask from the NRCG = Fire Restrictions Survey next steps. Outstanding Action Item.**
- Chair and Vice Chair representation – Rotation
  - No National Park Service representation on FPEC. Former member retired.  
Carry Forward to NRCG Board Liaison  
Question: Who is National Park Service Representative?  
Answer: *Liaison will notify chair of contact when/if available.*
- Other representatives missing:
  - Fire Wardens Association
  - Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association
  - Fire Chiefs Association

Carry forward to Board Liaison about continued engagement of these groups given non-responsive participation:

- Question: Do we continue to include these groups?  
*Answer: YES - leave them and they will participate when can.*
- Question: Should we add a bullet about Liaisons/Coordination to other NRCG Committees?  
*Answer: NO, The NRCG Board Liaison will recommend who to contact when need arises, encourage to go direct to committee of concern or need to coordinator with.*

**Discussion of changes with chair and new vice-chair**

- Chris Barth, BLM will assume Chair on January 1<sup>st</sup> (Two-year term)
- Leave Vice Chair vacant until we get clarification on the National Park Service
  - Jennifer Russell, IDL willing to assume Vice Chair on January 1<sup>st</sup>

Question: Meet semi-annually? Meet annually?

- CJ – Consider how can we combine FPEC meetings with other, relevant events? Workshop every other year (Biannual workshop)

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- Virtual meeting spring? – led by Vice Chair
- Needs analysis – completed in the Fall
- Chris – Let's get innovative!
- Action Item: Chair and Vice Chair will work together to plan a FPEC event in the Spring focused on Fire Year 2020.

**Fire Restrictions strategy dialogue (CJ) Chris Johnson**

**Fire Restrictions [website](#) and user guide**

– Presented updated draft Guide

- CJ is the point of contact for firerestrictions.us
- Stage 1 or Stage 2? Uniform 1 Stage Restrictions?
  - Single Stage restrictions was the overwhelming response SWMT.
- MT uses Firerestrictions.us; Idaho uses <http://www.idahofireinfo.com/>
  - SW Zone brings in a Prevention Team before going into Restrictions
  - SW Zone has the ability to train up Prevention Team members
- Action Item: Identify Firerestrictions.us Web Master or identify path forward (e.g., Story Map) – **TASK GROUP [ON HOLD]** – Members: CJ, Chris B, Anna Bateson, Kristin Sleeper, Jennifer Russell
  - Age of technology (firerestrictions.us) – nexus with ESRI Story Map?
  - Discussion on the future web platform for fire restrictions
  - Concerns: Ease of use, maintenance, public accessibility and funding
  - EGP Portal?
- Action Item: Review Firerestrictions.us User Guide-give feedback to CJ [by November 1, 2019]

**Larger Restrictions Discussion and NRCG Plan – next steps**

Question: Should this group recommend a single restriction stage process? *We aren't there yet.*

- [Plan Revision – Due by 2020](#)
  - Language is inconsistent with the law (authorities)
  - What does it take to revise the plan? *Answer: NRCG Board Approval*
  - Contracts/Agreements tied to the language in the “Plan”
  - Step 1: Are authorities and contacts accurate (MCA, CFR, etc.)?
    - Action Item: Rita to take the lead on the Draft Operating Plan. Legal consultation (by Agency) due 12/31/2019.
    - Timeframe – Before NRCG Board Meeting in April.
  - Step 2: Restrictions process/future vision – **TABLED FOR NOW.**
    - On-the-ground implementation of restrictions is difficult to implement (especially when going from Stage 1 to Stage 2 in the same year).
    - Educating the public and educating our agency folks is ongoing need.
    - SW Zone goes from prevention team to Stage 2 directly, skipping stage 1.
    - Criteria to go into restrictions – Is it in need of revision?
    - It is challenging to monitor the effectiveness of restrictions.
      - Data collected but inconclusive
      - InFORM? (New reporting platform-more to come)
- *We have to ask: Are we restricting the right things?*

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- *The things that are causing human-caused wildfires we are NOT restricting (e.g., ag equipment use, dragging chains, shooting).*
- ***This group should think about elevating/put some thought forward with this.***

- Problem (at large): Restrictions are a collateral duty for everyone

**Address from Mike DeGrosky – NRCG Board Liaison, Chief of the DNRC Fire Protection Bureau**

The NRCG tends to get very focused on operations and response. It is very important that we round out the work of NRCG in all areas.

- Questions for Liaisons answered – see answers under Charter notes above:
  - NPS – Not assigned, not participating. In line to be Vice Chair.
    - Conclusion: *Mike will call Dan – will ask if he wants to fill Vice Chair or defer to IDL to assume duties. Need to participate.*
  - Similar for concerns for U.S. Fish and Wildfire Service.
  - Fire Wardens Association, Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, and Fire Chiefs Association – Not participating or responding.
    - Conclusion: Will be on the next conference call agenda.
    - Clarify language of the charter if someone is unwilling or unable to participate.
    - *Mike will strongly encourage people to fulfill their obligation.*
- Question for IMT Delegations of Authority to include archiving data for Structure Assessments
  - It would be very valuable.
  - It needs to be assessed at the NRCG Level and the Incident Commander meeting.
  - NIFC Standardizing the Structure Triage Template in ArcGIS.
  - Conclusion: Will be proposed for discussion at the NRCG Fall Meeting.
- Restrictions Review Task from the NRCG
  - Are restrictions having any effect? Are restrictions effective?
    - Restrictions are a large workload. Brings agencies in conflict with the public.
    - Are there other mechanisms to prevent fires?
  - Re-task: Are we restricting the right things?
    - Historical fire causes are restricted, not sure we are targeting the major cause categories in the Northern Rockies.
    - Debris Burning is a major cause
  - What should this committee do to make restrictions effective?
    - Fire Restrictions Survey (2017)
    - Question: What should we be restricting?
  - What does the data look like?
    - Analysis needed – e.g., operations fires.
    - **Action Item: [Question – What should we be restricting in the future? Task order coming from NRCG Board] Look at fire causes in Northern Rockies. Take a hard look at fire occurrence data. Mike will email to Rita as Chair.**
      - **Task will be oriented around recommendations proceeds.**
    - Caveat: Just because it is a fire starter, does not mean it is going to be included in restrictions (e.g., equipment fires)
    - Goal: We are restricting things for a reason. Not restricting things for a historical reason.
    - Inform the restrictions regime with data.

- Questions remain regarding data analysis and how it can/should be completed?

### **Wildland Prevention Spatial Analysis Program System (WPSAPS)- presented by Anna Henderson**

WPSAPS is a strategic planning model to assist managers in program decision making.

- RAMS became unsupported. WPSAPS developed 2016
- Can demonstrate avoided/averted costs.
- It is NOT telling you how to do your daily operations. Does not replace what we know about a particular area/polygon. It merely provides SUGGESTIONS.
- Consistency with adjacent ownerships/boundaries.
- <https://egptest.nwcg.gov/wpsaps/#/login>
- Training will be tentatively available in the spring in Montana
- Hoping to go live in Spring 2020.
  - Assessment of designated area: Prevention units & Communities
  - Prevention actions: General, Specific & Community
  - Planning includes when and how
    - Accomplishments document actions taken or not
- 20 years of fire data in the program. Over 15 layers to help determine prevention needs.
- EGP based so it suggests that it is compatible with SAM

### **Zone Report Out**

- South Central Zone (Forrest/Domo) – Still assessing the landscape. No assistance needed at this time. Position vacancy at the Bozeman RD. Working a lot of prevention events in Park County. 3 Smokey Bear birthday events. Wildfire Book Club (March and April) – Wildfire on the Landscape and the Big Burn.
  - Posters available related to Wildfire Preparedness/Wildfire Response and Recovery (Agricultural areas).
- North Dakota (Aubrey/Michael) – Outreach and Education Staff, TR National Park (RX Fire in coordination with NPS and USFS), Thinning in the SW Corner of the State. No assistance needed at this time. Zone meeting after NRCG meeting. More information coming.
  - Education – Campfire safety program with Smokey; STEM Girl Scouts Event (Fireworks program from USFS); Sponsor an NDSU Football Game; Press Release with DES/State Fire Marshall for Fire Prevention Week [Facebook Live with Smokey]
- Northwest Zone (Keith) – Continuing to work on the data layers for the restrictions site. We did update our Zone Plan (Restrictions Plan and Prevention Plan). Wetter year prevented the need for restrictions. No dedicated prevention staff on the Flathead NF. A lot of coordination between USFS and DNRC. Ali Ulwelling does an outstanding job supporting the Forest Service.
  - Era of Megafires road show – 20 showings in the NW Zone, very effective.
- Southwest Zone (CJ) – First time in 9 years they did not go into restrictions. Area plan due to be updated next fire season. Continue to outreach to counties about using and proclaiming burn bans and how best to implement a burn ban. Smokey Bear balloon for the 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday.
  - Extremely effective multi-pronged campaign at lower cost (billboards, Fuel MT ads, One Less Spark Toolkit)
  - Lots of exciting projects ongoing: Wildfire Adapted Missoula, Smoke Forecasting, etc.



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- Consolidating two programs: Match Safety (1<sup>st</sup> grade curriculum) and Puppet Show (Kindergarten curriculum)
- Eastern Zone (Shannon/Deana/Larry) – NE MT Wildfire Education Day in May. Looking for new presentations! School programs being offered can tailor to the needs of the school.
- CKST – 21 human-caused for the year (25 less than normal). Linked in with MCFPA. Home assessments being input into SAM – it would be nice to have WPSAPS linked with SAM. 7 parades. Very engaged with Missoula County.
- IPNF – Youth education program – matches, lighters, get out, 911, etc. 9 parades. Smoke house. Kootenai County Fair. Successfully received 3 Grants (FM Global – Insurance Company Grant, New Smokey Suit, Collapsible buckets and shovels, “Keep it green, keep it clean” – Trash bags handout). 120 Detail for a Fire PIO.
  - *Need – Share fire prevention plans. Trying to get theirs rewritten.*
- Neighborhood Ambassador Program – CJ and Chris Barth have information.
  - **Action Item: Chris will send out Ambassador Program Guide with Meeting Notes.**

### Agency Reports

- DES – Purchasing boots for National Guard members. Also, purchasing equipment: practice fire shelters, packs, and shovels. Trainers identified for Guard School. Pack Test being administered.
- BIA – New prevention staff onboarding (Cheyenne, Crow, Fort Belknap, Rocky Boys, Blackfeet) – focused on school programs and end of year accomplishment reports.
- DNRC - Continuing to push our staff to utilize all prevention messaging avenues before going into restrictions. We participated in PSAs with our federal partners on the northern news network, did targeted advertising in our northeastern region for ag equipment fires, and issued a paper PSA with the BLM on hunting season fire safety. Home Assessments are ongoing, and we are focusing on our efforts to build the capacity of our local government and fire service partners. Supporting Fire Adapted Montana Learning Network and stressing that everyone plays a part in creating a more fire adapted Montana. Keep Montana Green is about to kick off the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Art Contest.
- IDL – Idaho is the recipient of a landscape scale restoration grant that will try to create a fire adapted state parks program. Bringing the infrastructure in state parks into compliance with becoming more fire adapted – plus an educational campaign along with.
- BLM – There have been 13 human-caused fires (36%) and 23 lightning-caused fires (64%) on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management as of September 10. Human-caused fires resulted in 683 acres (9%) burned; whereas lightning-caused fire resulted in 6,576 acres (91%) burned.

Where the BLM has protection responsibility, there have been 11 human-caused fires (23%) and 37 lightning-caused fires (77%). There were 580 acres (60%) burned by human-caused fires and 389 acres (40%) burned by lightning-caused fires where BLM had protection responsibility.

Other - A number of Smokey Bear events supported Interagency Radio PSAs through NBS. New fire trespass plan in draft. Gnome Knob Timber Sale – We collaborated with a local business to develop an innovative solution for small log utilization on a hazardous fuel reduction project in the wildland urban interface.

- USFS – Fire Hire technicalities; PDs erroneously classified resulting in having to wait for HR to make determinations before we can hire primary firefighter Prevention Techs. Secondary can be filled.
  - Kudos to the restrictions coordinators this year with their efforts. No one went into restrictions this year. Counties did burn bans.

#### **Action Items for 2020**

- See **Yellow Highlighted** above.
- Rita will send a report to the NRCG Board (Accomplishments, Current Project Status, Tasking/Tasking Status, Questions or Concerns for the Board)
  - Home risk assessments by IMTs
  - Participation by FWS/NPS/Fire Wardens/Sheriffs/Chiefs
- *Every agency as assigned will check their authorities for accuracy in NRCG Restrictions Plan with response back to Rita by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019.*  
Rita Chandler-USFS; Chris Barth-BLM; Kristin-MT state and county; Jennifer Russell-Idaho; Aubrey Davis-ND; CT Camel-SKCT; Kevin Weaver-BIA; **Mike DeGrosky will get to Rita a name for NPS from Dan Warthin and for FWS from Mike Granger**

#### **Schedule Spring Meeting**

- NRCG Spring Meeting – April 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>
- IMT Meeting – TBD, John Thompson's Team
- Looking at end of February/End of March
  - Workshop/Summit/Event
  - WSPAPS Training in coordination?
- If zone rep cannot be here – send someone from the Zone.

#### **Bin Items**

- InFORM – will collect additional, detailed information about fire causes; which will assist with fire prevention campaigns/efforts.
  - Will learn more about this as it becomes available and how it may be useful to FPEC.
- Consider how WSPAPS may be a useful tool with answering some of our questions about where we do work and how.