

Arizona Interagency Coordinating Group

Meeting Notes: November 09, 2005

In Attendance were: Lorene Guffey USFWS, Curtis Heaton USFWS, J.T. Bizaro BIA-Nav, Leon Ben BIA-WR, Don Van Driel USFS, Bill Van Bruggen USFS, David Behrens AZ State, Mark Fitch AZ State, Susan Lee USFS, Bob Lineback USPS, McKinley-Ben Miller BLM

AICG chair, Lorene ... Called the meeting to order at 0912 hrs.

Agenda item 1: AICG Charter status

Susan Lee announced that the charter is now signed. Copies of the document were circulated to all attendees. A recommendation was made to post the AZ and NM charters on the Southwest Fire Coordination Center (SWCC) website pending their approval to provide this service. Bob Lineback suggested that all of the basic Group business i.e. notes etc., be located on this site. All members were in favor of this suggestion.

Agenda item 2: Pre-season zone meetings

There was a mid-summer AICG meeting hosted by Kirk Rodabaugh (AZ State) to discuss and potentially prioritize planned projects from all agencies. Supported by the desire to have a central repository for such information, AZ State GIS services were in attendance demonstrating the then current state of the AZ Firemap project. A recommendation was made to have the Zones work on projects & priorities at the Zone level. This Zone task should aggregate projects that are at least one year out. The mid-summer AICG meeting generated the realization that discussing current year projects did not provide the anticipated opportunity to modify project priorities, since each agency had their projects already arranged and scheduled. Changes in most cases was not seen as a viable option. There were letters distributed & approved by SWCC which requested that local coordinating fuels groups assemble interagency projects & report them to the AICG. There was a concern that all parties may not have been aptly informed. This generated a recommendation to re-send the letter. The intent is to have the Zones deliver a list of all approved projects to the AICG by April 1, 2006. The AICG will review and look for opportunities to identify projects that might be combined/coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries. Susan Lee passed out CD's of NFPORS projects of the USFS with recorded project maps. She also presented a letter to Kirk Rodabaugh regarding hazardous fuels treatments on non-federal lands.

Agenda item 3: Closure and restriction coordination

Kirk Rodabaugh would like all local line officers & managers to meet and spearhead the coordination of area closures and fire restrictions. A final decision to carry out this recommendation is deferred until Kirk can be present at the next AICG meeting. Attention was given to a document written by Mr. Ken Palmrose, fire information officer BLM entitled: Suggestions for improving restriction/closure notification efficiency for the 2006 fire season. Copies of this document were distributed to all in attendance. A future AICG agenda item of receiving an update on the progress of the AZ Firemap project was requested.

Agenda item 4: Interagency Smoke Management Agreement

Susan Lee announced that the document is now almost fully signed. The only agency left to ratify it is the BIA.

Agenda item 5: Hazardous fuels treatments on Private Lands

Dave Behrens highlighted that State district foresters will assist private landowners with fuels treatments. He also presented a summary of community assistance grants and state fire assistance grants approved over the past year. He also noted that the BLM has been very active with coordinating projects with adjacent private landowners. It was also noted that the Pine/Strawberry communities are currently herding goats among the houses there to reduce chaparral and juniper encroachment. The goats apparently have an affinity for eating junipers.

Agenda item 6: Firewise initiatives & projects

Cliff Pearlberg, AZ State firewise coordinator arrived with copies of the new AZ edition of the "Living with Wildfire" publication. The State is looking to appoint local firewise advisors and assessors.

Agenda item 7: Update on Arizona DEQ Smoke management issues

Mr. Mark Fitch, the AZ smoke management program leader, remarked that the smoke mgt. program is running smoothly with only minor objections from some local residents of the Prescott area.

Mark introduced a draft letter to the group spelling out the State compliance requirements and the need to assure that annual burn registrations are submitted to his staff in a timely fashion under a current deadline of January 31, 2006. Mark will add language highlighting the need to address and register non-burning Emission Reduction Techniques (ERT's). The group approved it's distribution and determined that it may be best to initially circulate this letter under an agency information bulletin (IB) or agency memo through each agency program leader. If compliance remains an issue, the next step may be to request that agency line managers reinforce the need to fulfill Agency obligations to abide by the requested reporting requirements.

The smoke mgt. program is currently working on an on-line project reporting system. He estimates that in 1 to 2 years, local offices should be able to submit activity information electronically. Montana and New Mexico already use an on-line process to submit their project information.

Mark is still the co-chair of the Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP). He highlighted the value of AZ to participate in this important coordination group.

Finally, Mark has been tasked with finalizing an "Annual Work Plan" budget so Susan Lee can prepare the necessary FY 2006 document as outlined in the approved AICG charter. Of significant discussion was the assistance Mark and Ron Sherrod have provided to local agency offices to arrange and/or maintain local project smoke monitoring equipment. A determination of monitoring responsibility has yet to be clearly defined.

When the subject turned to accomplishment reporting, Mark noted that outside of the Arizona Strip area, the number of submitted accomplishment reports was rather sparse.

Mr. Curtis Heaton will be representing the FWS and complete the 2yr tenure as AICG Chair.

The next AICG meeting date was set for March 08, 2006.

The meeting was adjourned at 1230 hrs.