

Southwest Fire Management Board

Minutes

February 9-11, 1998

SWFMB Member Attendance:

Frank Smith (NMS, Chair)	Al Alvarez (BLM-AZ)
Bob Lee (BLM-NM)	Charlie Denton (USFS/R3)
Kirk Rowdabaugh (AZS)	Willie Begay (BIA)
Dan O'Brien (NPS)	John Morton (USFW for M.Phillips)
John Schulte (SWCC/FS)	Jay Ellington (SWCC/NPS/Board Sec.)

Guest Attendees:

Hunter Wistrand (USFS)	Rich Kvale (USFS/SEZ)
Lori Hildebrand (BLM/GLZ)	John Waconda (BIA/AAO)
Ricky Smith (USFS/LNZ)	Louie Casaus (NMS/SNZ)
Al Defler (USFS/R3)	Gary Loving (USFS/WMZ)
Van Bateman (USFS)	Al King (NPS/ABZ)
Nancy Neskauskas (NMS)	Paul Mondragon (USFS/TAZ)
Bill Russell (USFS)	Jim Paxon (USFS/GNF/Training)

The meeting was called to order by Frank Smith at 1300, February 9, 1998.

Tactical Aerial Resource Management Study (TARMS) - Hunter Wistrand made a presentation to the Board detailing the latest information on TARMS. Highlights of the presentation included configuration changes in aircraft platform, workspace in aircraft, criteria changes, computerization (human-aided computerization) of the cockpit, increase of aircraft efficiency through the use of new technologies from NASA, plus more. The TARMS proposal and report is due to the field by March 1, 1998.

BLM Arizona Strip - BLM Arizona Strip has requested a change in Geographic Area participation from SWA to Eastern Great Basin. Al Alvarez states EGB has no problem with ASD making the move. A question arose as to the flow of fire intelligence. Will it continue to flow through SWA or move to EGB? John Schulte to follow-up with GCZ. A question also arose pertaining to "what does the SWA lose?" (i.e. team members, intelligence, cache support, etc). Board decided to accept the request for transfer from SWA to EGBG. Al Alvarez to draft a letter for Frank's signature on behalf of the Board.

Type II Crews - Willie Begay discussed the current status of using the pack test for SWFF crews, the authority recently granted to utilize type II (BIA) crews on Rx fires (can't be done under AD, but can be done under "contract"), BIA is formally supporting type II crews with a "Type II Crew Program," all BIA type II crew members must have passed the pack test to be available for outside dispatches starting with '98 season, type I IHC's (BIA) crews will have 2 additional slots for trainees (questions on this range from 'how to deal with 2 extra slots' such as "crew is now 22 members," '20 members with 2 trainees,' 'swapping out 2 at a time,' etc... Board requested additional clarification from BIA), and ID cards for '98 season.

AZ Joint Powers Agreement - Kirk Rowdabaugh stated the AZ JPA should be completed and out by the end of February. He also stated the "all risk" aspect previously discussed in the November meeting has not been included.

NM Joint Powers Agreement - Frank Smith stated the NM JPA has been signed by all

agencies except BIA. Thus, NMS is working to clarify and make the necessary changes requested by BIA. Frank anticipates getting the NM JPA to Board members by the end of February.

Type I Team Awards - Team awards have been distributed. Funding provided by USFS for this year.

Central Funding - John Schulte made a request/suggestion to the Board to set up a central funding account at SWCC/FS supported by all agencies to cover costs that arise throughout the year, such as speakers for dispatchers workshop, team awards, etc. The Board decided that in lieu of a central account, that each agency should be contacted separately or on a rotating basis for funding specific projects, etc.

Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review - Frank stated that the annual responses to the Fire Policy and Program Review were forwarded to NIFC in January. The Board spent some time reviewing the action item responses that were sent to NIFC.

SWA Preparedness Levels - Dan O'Brien entertained a discussion on the wording in the SWA Mobilization Guide on Preparedness Levels. Dan's concern with some of the wording in PL 4/5 could be mis-interpreted to sound slightly too restrictive. Discussion from the Board revolved around resource allocation, wildland fire policy, restrictions, NPS interpretation, etc. In the end, Dan was satisfied with how the Board interpreted the PL's. Thus, no new changes were introduced. Only change for '98 fire season is in PL 4 (Zone Fire Management Board #3) where it will read "on the unit." in place of "committed in the prescribed fire plan." at the end of the first sentence.

SWA Mobilization Guide - Jay Ellington presented to the Board those items submitted to SWCC from the field pertaining to changes to the Mob Guide for '98 season. The Board reviewed the changes and with some discussion accepted the requested changes.

Travel at Night - Charlie Denton brought a request from the Northern Arizona Zone to change the wording in Section 23.9 of the SWA Mobilization Guide to "stipulate no travel after 2200 or before 0400." The Board discussed the wording and decided the current wording in the Mob Guide was sufficient.

Allocation of Resources - Charlie Denton led a discussion pertaining to the allocation of scarce resources when wildfires, wildfires managed for resource benefit, or prescribed fires are occurring. A lengthy discussion of the topic included sharing resources between suppression fires and Rx fires, strategy plans for Rx fires, develop less labor-intensive strategies for suppression fires, losing acres, managing better, point at which a MAC Group is pulled together, cross-billing, paying dispatchers indirect costs for Rx fires, finalizing funding issues before submitting resource orders, etc. The Board decided there is no single answer to many of the allocation questions at this point, but will work together to make decisions as efficient and expeditiously as possible when the time arises. Charlie stated that he will be attending a NWCG meeting on this topic in the near future.

Federal Fire Forum Video Teleconference - The NWCG is sponsoring a national interagency satellite teleconference on Fire Policy implementation on April 8, 1998. John Waconda stated the BIA is coordinating with the Southwest Indian Polytechnical Institute in Albuquerque to host the satellite feed. More information will be distributed as soon as possible. All fire management

personnel are encourage to attend.

Center Director Delegation of Authority - John Schulte stated to the Board that on occasion decisions have to be made which need the Boards approval, but it takes time in order to pull the Board together. He requested that the Center Director be given a 'Delegation of Authority' to act on behalf of the Board. The Board requested that John thoroughly review the Mob Guide and SWFMB Handbook to see if the delegation isn't already covered. If there is a conflict, John will bring the subject before the Board in the next meeting.

Initiate a Prevention Committee - The Board has received a request from folks working in Fire Prevention to institute a Board sanctioned Prevention Committee. Discussion on the subject included "working group" vs "committee," charter, objective, an ongoing committee vs exceptional years, Zone function, step by step plan, and activation/coordination of exceptional years of a working group. Bob Lee will follow-up on behalf of the Board.

Southwest Strategy - Al Defler requested the Board to be aware of the Southwest Strategy signed by the Secretaries (DOI and USDA) and to see if the Board should be a participant in the Strategy. The concern is that the fire community is not getting it's message out to the public with respect to Rx fire, that the fire community is going to be behind the power curve in next five years if initiatives are not undertaken. Discussion of this topic included hitting the public hard, Fire Information staff at BLM-NIFC, getting representation on the group running with the Southwest Strategy, establishing a Board contact, and the internal means for getting the right information to agency personnel about Rx fire. Overall, the main concern is to be out in front rather than behind the curve five years from today. The Board decided that each representative would approach their Agency Administrators to see how the Board can get the fire story to the members of the Strategy or get representation on the Strategy.

Availability of Personnel - Al Defler wanted the Board to note a concern he has with the loss of personnel available for fire assignments. Al stated he feels there should be a coordinated effort to make sure Agency Administrators are aware of this problem. Discussion included the need to obtaining the best figures available on the current and future problem, large scale problem vs agency problem, aging and shrinking workforce, keynote speaker for Fire Management Leadership for AA's course, and selling and maintaining the program over the long run. The Board decided to meet on March 26 in ABQ to develop a strategy to formally present to the AA's at a later date. John Schulte to coordinate arrangement for meeting.

SWCC Operations for '98 Season - John Schulte stated SWCC will be hiring three new seasonals and one detailer, sending SWCC personnel to the field at the request of a Zone in the early stages of significant fire activity, personnel to act as Coordinator for one week periods, designated personnel as leads on each desk, and no major changes to the SWCC Operations Plan.

Zone Office Study - John Schulte ask the Board about additional personnel support for Zone Offices (i.e. bring staffing levels up). Discussion on the topic included Work Study Analysis; reducing the number of Zones; 3-tier vs 4-tier; specific issue which needs addressing; John Burton worked on this in the past and their should be documentation on file; All-Risk; Rocky Mountain Area study; and/or Dispatch Steering Committee project?. John will check with RMA about the results of their study, locate Burton's work; and bring information to the next Board meeting.

Type I Team Selection

Type I Team Selections - Gary Loving and Van Bateman presented to the Board their respective team selections. Discussion during the team selection presentation included (1) both Gary and Van feel the IC's need more than 3 days to pull a roster together, (2) Board needs a better marketing strategy for getting people interested and involved in type I team participation, (3) process of sending nomination forms through the Zone Board vice direct to SWFMB, (4) the concern with the number of people available for staffing 2 type I teams and numbers left over to fill type II teams, and (5) trainees.

The Board spent time looking over each position on the rosters presented by Gary and Van. After a fair amount of discussion and time, the Board accepted the rosters. Team members will be contacted by either Gary or Van over the next week. Team meetings were tentatively scheduled for March 31 and April 1 in Safford, AZ.

A question arose during the team selection process pertaining to replacements should a standing team member become unavailable. The Board decided that SWCC will coordinate with the team member, Zone Office, etc. to fill a position immediately and disseminate the replacements name to the IC and respective Zone.

A question also arose pertaining to the nomination process dates. The Board decided to move up the selection date for the type I team IC from a date in December to a date in November and to move up the type I team members nominations from a date in January to a date in December. The Board also decided to drop the Deputy IC position from the roster for assignments in the SWA. However, when a type I team is called to an out-of-area assignment, the DPIC will be filled if the assignment warrants a position.

The question of type I team **tenure** came before the Board for discussion once again. In September '96, the Board decided to drop the 5-year tenure policy (i.e. "limit of 5 years' continuous performance in one position on the team"). Since that date, a lot of discussion throughout the fire community has evolved about the change in policy and it's ramifications. After a short discussion, the Board reversed it's position and decided the 5-year tenure policy is back in effect.

Zone Reports

Lincoln Zone - Ricky Smith represented the Zone. LNZ's last meeting was held the week of January 26; Brian Power (LNF) is the new Zone Chairperson; a performance plan is being initiated for each Zone Board member for the '99 fire season; staffing at the Zone Office is changing; fair share funding for Zone Office; Rx Fire schedule being developed; LNF/MEA helicopter in operation; a lack of aviation resources in the Zone; and an Interagency Readiness Review proposal is in the works.

Southeast Zone - Rich Kvale represented the Zone. Tom Warfield (AZS) is the Zone Chairperson; working on a new Zone Charter/Ops Plan; SEZ/WMZ type 2 team; lots of training; funding for Zone Office support; and the Zone Board meeting in March to look at Rx fire activity and smoke management.

Taos Zone - Paul Mondragon represented the Zone. Several BLM units considering moving into the Zone; seasonals being provided for the Zone Office; and Zone

units working into a new fire organization.

Albuquerque Zone - Al King, Zone Board Chairperson, represented the Zone. Harry Phillips (formerly GNF) is now the Zone Center Manager; looking at type III organizations; Rx fire for tracking resources and smoke; and identification of training needs for '99.

White Mountain Zone - Gary Loving, Zone Board Chairperson, represented the Zone. AZS providing fair-share funding for Zone Office; initial attack dispatching for AZS units; several training courses dropped, looking at changing approach to recruiting; and Zone preparedness tracking.

Gila/Las Cruces Zone - Lorie Hildebrand represented the Zone. Gary Benevidez is the Zone Board Chairperson; USFS and NMS providing a dispatcher for the Zone Office; number of dispatchers for Zone Office is down; Rich Watts (LCD) transferred to Oregon; Butch Wilson is the new FMO for LCD; Socorro Field Office remaining a part of the Zone; and the Zone Board is looking at dividing the Zone into quarters for purpose of smoke management.

Santa Fe Zone - Louis Casaus, Zone Board Chairperson, represented the Zone. Zone Board is currently updating their charter, signatures anticipated before fire season; Chairperson rotation on a two year basis; type II nominations forwarded; and looking at type III extended attack organization.

Flagstaff Zone - Frank Smith highlighted the minutes from the Zone's last Board meeting.

Committee and Working Group Reports

Weather Working Group - Larry McCoy, Chairperson, presented the Working Group's report. Larry stated there are numerous changes in the National Weather Service including downsizing, loss of Fire Weather Forecaster, and adding the Core Forecaster as the primary. Nationally, the NWS is looking at developing a standard forecast format.

In the most recent meeting with AZ NWS, Northern Arizona Zone fire managers worked out a format for fire weather forecasts. The product will be provide to the Board in the near future. In general, the NWS is looking for direction from the fire community indicating those items needed most in fire weather forecasting. At the same time, the NWS is working to balance or parallel the Fire Weather Zones with the Public Zones already established. Some Zones may get 3 forecasts, the main one from PHX and two additional ones from different offices in training. Each NWS office will maintain an IMET (3 in AZ), looking at long range forecasts (3-5 days out), smoke management information in forecast, and proposal for red flag warnings. The intent is to implement the results of the meeting by the '98 fire season. The next meeting is schedule for February 19th.

Larry went on to state spot forecasts will be completed by a NWS forecast office, but the turnaround time will be slow. Recommended sending request to NWS by FAX and follow-up with a phone call or FAX.

New Mexico forecast's will not change for the '98 season. Chuck Maxwell (NWS-NM) and Bob Berkovitz (NWS-AZ) are working together to produce one operation plan for the Area.

In other news, Larry stated the Weather Working Group is working on the development of a NFDRS Operating Plan. Students attending the NFDRS course at NARTC in March will start the process.

Aviation Safety Committee - Al Alvarez stated the Committee has no major issues it is working on. He also stated that he has received only one response from the Board members pertaining to the Aviation Accident Response document presented at the last Board meeting.

Dispatch Steering Committee - Ricky Smith, Dispatch Steering Committee Chairperson, stating there seems to be some confusion in the new codes being established by USFS, especially for part-time and detail dispatchers. The Committee hosted the SWA Dispatchers Workshop during the week of January 26. Over 100 participants for each day of the Workshop. A big thanks to the Board for their assistance in being available and providing funding for several speakers.

Training Committee - John Paxon is the new Chairperson. The Training Committee will be meeting in Tucson, March 24th and 25th.

/s/
Jay Ellington
Executive Secretary, SWFMB

/s/
Frank Smith
Chairperson, SWFMB