

Minutes of the
Southwest Fire Management Board Meeting
Phoenix, Arizona October, 5-6, 1998
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Attendance

Frank Smith	New Mexico State Forestry
Al Alvarez	Bureau of Land Management - Arizona
Dan O'Brien	National Park Service - Intermountain Region
Mike Phillips	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Southwest
Region	
Charlie Denton	U.S. Forest Service - Southwest Region
Willie Begay, Jr.	Bureau of Indian Affairs - Albuquerque &
Navajo Area	
Bob Lee	Bureau of Land Management - New Mexico
Kirk Rowdabaugh	Arizona State Land Department
Carlos Yazzie	Bureau of Indian Affairs - Navajo Area
John Philbin	Bureau of Indian Affairs - Phoenix Area
John Waconda	Bureau of Indian Affairs - Albuquerque
Area	
John Schulte	U.S. Forest Service - Southwest
Coordination Center	
Jay Ellington	National Park Service - Southwest
Coordination Center	
Terry Long	Bureau of Land Management - Colorado
River Zone	
Stephanie Brown	U.S. Forest Service - Lincoln Zone
George Kleindienst	U.S. Forest Service - Northern Arizona
Zone	
Gary Loving	U.S. Forest Service - White Mountain Zone
Nate Shourds	Bureau of Indian Affairs - Central Arizona
Zone	
Jerome Macdonald	U.S. Forest Service - Albuquerque Zone
Jim Paxon	U.S. Forest Service - Training Committee
Richard Reitz	U.S. Forest Service - Prevention Working
Group	
Richard Dolphin	U.S. Forest Service - Fire Use Training
Academy	

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Chair, Frank Smith, called the meeting to order at 10:00, Monday, October 5, 1998. Agenda attached.

Topic 1: Nominations for S520 / S620

Discussion was deferred to Tuesday, in the hope that Van Bateman would be in attendance.

Topic 2: Communications - South Dike Fire Review

Al Alvarez distributed an *Operational Safety Review of the South Dike Fire* (attachment 1) and summarized as follows: there was a lack of communication during and after the fire, and crews were not given adequate briefings. The questions posed:

- ? -How to get crews to only accept assignments that they fully understand, to refuse assignments they don't, to ask questions, to back off until they get answers?
- ? -Is the *Standard Crew Briefing* developed and approved by the SWFMB a few years ago still available in the Mob Guide or SWFMB Handbook? Is it appropriate for the transition from initial attack to extended attack?
- ? -Are there still deficiencies in crew training? What more can we do to better prepare crews?
- ? -Are the skills and abilities of the fire management officers adequate? Do we need to get more experienced fire managers into those offices that are having rapidly developing situations?
- ? -Have all the Zones developed a cadre to manage extended Type III incidents? Should we use Type II qualified people (not an Type II Team) to manage more extended attack fires?

During the discussion it was noted that:

- There is already direction given to management and crews, the problem seems to be getting people to follow it.
- There are no easy answers, but it seems we must train and retrain people every year.
- Everybody has a responsibility to assure safe communications are in place.

-It seems to be getting better.

The final question was asked and answered: Is there anything the SWFMB needs to do now?
No, there is plenty of guidance available, we just need to make sure people are familiar with it.

Topic 3: Type I Crews for 1999 Fire Season

Charlie Denton led a short discussion on the Forest Service funding strategy for its Type I crews. In previous years crews were funded for 100 days/year from fire monies. Starting in fiscal year `99, these same crews may be funded 70 days from fire monies and 30 days from fuels monies. Because there are hard targets associated with the fuels monies, the availability of the crews for fire assignments could be reduced. The Forest Service is still considering its position and there may be no change in `99.

BLM is not considering any changes in the funding of its Type I crews at this time.

The Forest Service funding discussions raise questions about who National Resources (like Type I Crews) }belong~ to and how they will be allocated between wildland fires and prescribed fires and other project work? There are no answers to these questions at this time.

Topic 4: Use of Private Contractors in SWA

John Schulte reminded us that OMB Circular A-76 (policies for acquiring commercial or industrial products and services needed by the federal government) prevents the federal agencies from using private contractors for services that are }inherently governmental in nature~, such as spending federal money or supervising federal employees and that the federal agencies can not use contractors for }personal services~. The states, however, can. Therefore, any contractor wishing to provide personal services should approach the states. The federal agencies, in turn, can enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the states to secure reimbursable support, possibly from a state contracted resource, if needed.

There was some question regarding the qualifications of contractor resources and the need to rely on National Associations or other credible }out-side~ (not state or federal government agencies) sources to establish and maintain training and experience standards and records for contractors.

Topic 5: Training Committee Report

Jim Paxon presented an updated draft charter for a steering committee for the Southwest Fire Use Training Academy (FUTA). The managers of the training academy would still like the SWFMB to charter an interagency steering committee for FUTA.

The SWFMB has not changed its position from the last meeting. The Board does not want to charter another group at this time, but would prefer that the Fire Use Training Academy work with the existing interagency SWFMB Training Committee, rather than establishing a new interagency group to function as a steering committee. The Board wants }to keep it simple~ the next few years, and the agency representatives do not want to make any additional major commitments of money or positions to the Academy at this time.

There was some discussion about }marketing~ training course better, not just relying on the Internet for getting the word out. Jim will bring it up at the next training committee meeting. That meeting is scheduled for October 21-22, at Elephant Butte, NM. All eleven zones are expected to be represented. Issues to be discussed: 1) Committee Charter and what the SWFMB wants from the Training Committee. 2) What to do with the Fire Management and Leadership Course for agency administrators and Fire Program Management Course for fire management officers - attendance is down for both of these required classes. 3) Getting timely input from the zones for the VISIONS training catalogue.

Frank Smith will get a letter to all zone chairs about getting their training schedules to Rick Reitz ASAP, so the VISIONS catalogue can be completed and distributed.

The U.S. Forest Service will be requiring previously recommended training courses soon. These higher than NWCG standards will not affect interagency job transfers or fire assignments.

Topic 6: Exemption of Prescribed Fires from Fire Restrictions

Dan O'Brien expressed his concerns about what it means to the agencies when we issue restrictions on the public use of campfires or open fires. These restrictions are not intended to preclude agencies from conducting prescribed burning activities on their own lands, but we must do a better job of educating the public about what we are doing when we issue the fire restrictions.

Bob Lee is currently working on developing an appropriate message for the public to tie the prescribed fire message with the fire restriction notice; something like }you can't burn, but we can~ and would like the SWFMB to help. Bob will be attending the next meeting of the

Prevention Working Group, November 21, and will seek their help as well.

The discussion left unanswered two questions:

? - Should we use more restrictions? (They seem to have been successful the last few years.)

? - Should we use }pre-planned~ (e.g. put in place each June 1) restrictions?

Topic 7: Report on SWCC Operations for 1998 Fire Season

John Schulte distributed and summarized the statistics for the Coordination Center - see attachment #4.

The meeting was adjourned at 1700 and reconvened at 0800 Tuesday.

Topic 1: Nominations for S520 / S620 (Again)

Only five nominations have been received; two for Operations, two for Logistics, and one for Plans. It was decided that we would wait a few more days for see if any more nominations came in. A conference call is scheduled to discuss nominations on Thursday, October 22, at 1000 MST. The phone number is (505) 768-6911.

There was discussion about nominating non-agency (i.e. employees of rural fire departments or contractors) personnel to the course(s). There is concern about OMB A-76 restrictions regarding authorizing the expenditure of federal funds and/or supervising federal employees, and verifying the qualifications of non-agency personnel. Al Alvarez and Bob Lee said they would try and discuss the issue at BLMs national fall fire meeting. All nominations for the course, agency or non-agency, need to come to the SWFMB through a zone board.

There still is no replacement for Charlie Denton on the S520/S620 instructor cadre. No decision is needed until June of `99.

Topic #8: Length of Incident Assignments

The Federal Fire Leadership Council (NWCG minus the states), in response to the recommendations of the Tri-Data Study, has been considering limiting the standard tour-of-duty to 14 days - down from the current 21-day assignment. (See attachment #5.) It now appears that Minutes of the

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a decision may be deferred until more study on the consequences of such a change can be conducted and that no change may occur anytime soon.

The current policy, as presented in the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (NWCG Handbook 2, 12.6-2) provides for assignments longer than 21 days provided they have been requested by the incident and approved by the individual's home unit. It was also noted that the Southwest Area Mobilization Guide (23.9 b.) indicates that both the incident's justification for an extended assignment and the home units approval should be in writing and maintained in the final fire package. It was agreed that SWCC is not the home unit for any agency and that no agency was authorized to act as the home unit for another agencies' resources and/or personnel.

Topic #9: Northern Arizona Zone

NAZ would like the SWFMB to make its Type I Team selections before the 3rd week in January to help them with their Type II Team selections. It was noted that the SWFMB Handbook indicates that Type I Team selections are to be made by February 1, and that the SWFMB has already moved its selection meeting up to assist the zones, and that its difficult to move it up much more because of the holiday season. It was decided that we would try to meet the following time line:

- Select the ICs by November 1. Gary Loving will retire soon and a replacement IC is needed. SWFMB to discuss during 10/22 conference call.
- Team nominations due by December 1. This should allow the ICs sufficient time to review.
- Team selections January 20-21,1999, at next scheduled SWFMB meeting. John Schulte will make the arrangements for the meeting.

Frank Smith will notify all zones of this schedule by 10/22.

The NAZ also suggests having all Southwest incident management teams (Type I and Type II) in one (big) meeting in the spring of '99. Frank will solicit comment from the other zones in his letter to them and the SWFMB agreed to discuss further during the 10/22 conference call.

Topic #10: Fire Use Training Academy

Jerome Macdonald distributed handouts regarding the Academy's 1) training and project accomplishments (attachment 6), student roster (attachment 7), and instructor cadre (attachment 8).

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FUTA can provide agencies with assistance in planning, preparing and implementing prescribed fire projects and will take project requests through the end of the year. FUTA is different from the Florida experience: FUTA projects are typically more complex, and there is a greater emphasis on class room training (Rx and S courses), and FUTA offers students experience they can not get on their home units. College credits may be offered for FUTA. The next 8-week session will start in March.

Topic #11: Awards for Type I Team Members

There are 26 new team members this year. It was agreed that the ICs would determine what the awards would be; light jackets with logo were discussed. The Forest Service has funds set aside for purchasing awards and other agencies agreed to continue to contribute - amounts to be determined later.

Topic #12: Prevention Working Team

Richard Reitz presented a report to the Board (attachment #9) and the minutes from the Team's last meeting. Highlights included: 1) poor zone representation at the last Team meeting, 2) a name change to }Southwestern Interagency Wildland Fire Prevention Team, and 3) efforts to establish an interagency fire protection assessment (attachment #10).

Richard agreed to take up the earlier topic of developing a message for the public when fire restrictions are issued to inform them that the agencies may still be burning.

Richard also noted that the Fire Program Management Course is being offered at the Grand Canyon, December 1 - 10, and is not yet full. The VISIONS catalogue should be published and out by the end of October.

Topic #13: Texas Joint Powers Agreement

John Schulte has been in contact with the Texas Forest Service and Texas Interagency Coordination Center regarding their interest in having West Texas fires supported by SWCC in the future. It was noted that the sharing of resources could go both ways and there could be some benefits to New Mexico in developing a strong relationship with West Texas, but that a Joint Powers Agreement would need to be drafted to facilitate payments for fire support activities.

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It was agreed to let Bo Walker and/or Mark Stanford, Texas Forest Service, make a formal written proposal to the SWFMB (Frank Smith) expressing their ideas, hopes, and desires for a cooperative relationship with the SWFMB and we would study it at our next meeting. Frank will invite Bo to our next meeting to present his proposal.

Topic #14: Central Arizona Zone

Nate Shrouds reported that the CAZ fall meeting is scheduled for November 10. The Type II Team received good reviews for its North Carolina assignment. There is still some issue/concern about the team taking out-of-zone assignments.

Topic #15: Colorado River Zone

Terry Long reported that there will be an interagency meeting of agency administrators on November 18 to discuss a charter for the Colorado River Zone and organize a zone board.

Topic #16: Lincoln Zone

The next meeting of the Lincoln Zone Board is scheduled for October 23, according to Stephanie Brown. 1998 was a slow fire year in the zone. Guadalupe and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks are considering combining their fire staffs. There are a lot of new district FMOs on the Lincoln National Forest. BLM is considering changing its ordering procedures and have its Roswell District Dispatch Office go directly to SWCC, not the Lincoln Zone, for support resource orders.

Topic #17: Weather Working Group

John Schulte, representing Larry McCoy, indicated that the spin up of the new National Weather Service offices is going well, and that the Weather Service would like the Forest Service and other agencies to be involved in the certification of fire weather forecasters.

The Forest Service (R-3) will be getting a new Weather Bank Lightning Detection program and is hoping for improvements over last years product.

[Ron Melcher is looking over my shoulder and says that he, Larry McCoy, and Pete Lahm are meeting with NWS on 10/22 to discuss improvements in the fall/winter weather forecasts to facilitate prescribed fire activities.]

Topic # 18: SWFMB Responsibilities for Type I Teams

There is some concern about the Boards common practice of letting new ICs replace team members }in mass~. Willie Begay distributed data (attachments 11 - 15) illustrating that most of the Department of Interior team members were replaced last year. There is also concern that the ICs are able to make up a team that they are comfortable with and confident in. However, the wholesale replacement of existing team members the last few years may be one reason why we are having difficulty finding people interested in being on the teams now. The issue will be discussed further during the 10/22 conference call.

Topic #19: Southwest Interagency Aviation Safety Committee

Mike Ebersole presented a new draft charter for the Committee (attachment #16). Mike indicated that the committee members were hoping to get clarification about the scope and nature of their responsibilities. The SWFMB indicated that the Aviation Committee had broad latitude to address any issue so long as it related to fire/aviation operations. Committee members were recognized as often being in the best position to make this determination and issues did not need to be raised by the Board.

The Committee is currently working on developing an interagency Aviation Crew Briefing Guide and improving the D-310 course to offer more and better aviation dispatching training. The Incident/Accident Guide should be out in November.

The Board asked the Committee to assist in recruiting personnel for incident management team vacancies in the air operations branch.

The Committee's next scheduled meeting will be in Prescott (?) in March. Steve Rossiter will be the new chair, Kevin Hamilton the vice-chair. A complete roster of committee members was distributed (attachment #17).

Topic # 20: New Mexico Joint Powers Agreement

Frank Smith distributed copies of the new and improved, but still draft JPA for NM. The concerns of the BIA Navajo Area solicitor have been addressed and the NM Department of Energy (Los Alamos Labs) has been added as a cooperating agency. Agencies can expect a }final~ for signature in a few weeks.

Topic #21: Allocation of Resources

Charlie handed out the final report to the NWCG regarding the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy as regards to the Allocation of Resources (see attachment # 19). Apparently it was getting to be a long day; there was no discussion.

Meeting was adjourned at 1700.