

Southwest Fire Management Board

Minutes

November 3-5, 1997

SWFMB Members Attendance:

Frank Smith (NMS, Chair)	Cliff Chetwin (NPS)
Al Alvarez (BLM/AZ)	Charlie Denton (USFS)
Bob Lee (BLM/NM)	Willie Begay (BIA)
Mike Phillips (FWS)	Kirk Rowdabaugh (AZS)
John Schulte (FS/SWCC)	Jay Ellington (NPS/SWCC/Secretary)

Guests:

Scott Hunt (AZS/PHX)	Amos Coochyouma (USFS/CNF)
Dan Oltrogge (NPS/GCP)	

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Cliff Chetwin at 1300, November 3, 1997.

OLD BUSINESS

All-Risk Agreement - All of the Federal land management agencies in the SWA, except BIA, have signed the SWA All-Risk Agreement. Willie to find out by the Nov 7 where the document stands with BIA signatures.

Cooperative Agreement with Tribes - The current Cooperative Agreement with the Tribes document remains with the BIA lawyers. No further action until returned from the lawyers.

Joint Powers Agreement with New Mexico - The Board reviewed a letter that was sent from the BIA Solicitor to the NAO pertaining to the New Mexico JPA. Willie to follow-up on behalf of the Board requesting NAO to forward a letter to NMS stating the changes that the BIA Solicitor noted in his letter. Frank will let the Board know if new signatures are needed once the request for changes have been received.

Joint Powers Agreement with Arizona - The Arizona JPA is still in the transition phase. Some questions remain to be answered with respect to all-risk agreement, indirect rates, initial attack responsibilities, National Weather Service, etc. Kirk will have more on the status of the JPA by the February meeting.

Update to Fire Policy Implementation Plan - Cliff requested all Board members review the Implementation Plan for changes, successes, etc and give to Frank. Frank will forward responses to the national group by January.

Prescription for Health - The Board reviewed the 14 action items from the Prescription that was completed in September 96. Discussion revolved around progress of the plan, team mobilization, resource allocation, loss of personnel, age of work force, MAC Group decision-making, etc. Frank will write and distribute to each agency an Executive Summary and Status Report.

Team Awards - John Schulte to provide the Board with a list of those individuals who completed their first year on a Type I team. Any costs associated with purchasing the awards will be shared among the agencies.

Smoke Management Position in NM - NMS is coordinating with the NM Environment Department to create an interagency Smoke Management position within the Department. Discussion revolved around filling two hats (i.e. Air Quality and

Water Quality), funding, and FTE. The Board decided to see about developing a cooperative agreement with NMS, checking on FTE status with USFS, and to split funding 50 percent each by DOI and DOA. More discussion was followed-up in the meeting with the Agency Administrator representatives (see below).

Incident Management Trainee List - Changes were made to the current listing. The latest update will be attached to the minutes of the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Transfer of Board Chair - Frank Smith assumed the duties as Chairperson for the SWFMB from Cliff Chetwin. Frank will be in the position for a period of two years. Bob Lee was selected as the new Vice-Chairperson.

MAC Group - A discussion was held by the Board on the purpose of the MAC Group, direction to SWCC, allocation of resources to suppression fires vs fires allowed to burn to meet resource objectives, effect of El Nino on the '98 season, and SWCC being informed about what type of incident exists when resource orders are being handled.

Fire Management Assessments (Interagency) - Frank requested Board members to check with their agencies on the use of GIS and to share their data with other agencies. Discussion revolved around the use of e-mail, conversion to lat/long, and generating data.

Use of Fuel Treatment Funds - Frank asked the Board if any agencies were prioritizing resources in the urban/wildland interface (i.e. East Mountains, Ruidoso, etc). The Board reconciled that there is no statewide approach to date and that preparedness is generally done within the agency.

Dispatchers Workshop - John Schulte reported that the Dispatchers Workshop will be held January 26-30, 1998 in Phoenix, AZ. The theme for the Workshop is "Communication and Service." The Board agreed to provide funds through the requisition/agreement process to cover some of the cost for speakers.

Weather Concerns with National Weather Service (NWS) - Mike Phillips distributed a letter and an addendum titled "Chronology of Events" that was sent from Roger Erb, Vice-Chairperson for FFALC, to Brigadier General Jack Kelly of the NWS. The letter was responding to the dramatic changes that are occurring in the NWS pertaining to the Fire Weather Program. The Board decided to send a letter of support and re-affirmation to Roger with reference to the need for dedicated positions in fire weather within the NWS. Frank to write and forward letter.

BLM-Arizona Strip Field Area - Al stated that the BLM-Arizona Strip Field Area is pulling out of the SWA and becoming a part of the Eastern Great Basin Area. However, no formal letter of intent/agreement has been received by the Al or the Board.

'98 Fire Management Priorities for MAC Group - Charlie led the Board in a discussion on the need for revision and/or understanding of resource allocation under the new fire policy and the need for new language for the preparedness levels. Discussion revolved around taking risks (i.e. current language curtails prescribed fire activity), wait for NIFC to complete and print their preparedness levels, broader language to accommodate agencies that have management plans completed, suspension of ignition for prescribed fires, importance of training, especially for Fire Management Leadership for Land Managers, impact of resources on wildland fire when being used to manage fires under resource objectives, various codes being instituted in '98 (i.e. P-Code, T-Code, G-Code, etc), and changing language in PL-3, PL-4, and PL-5.

The Board decided to change the wording in PL-4 under Zone Fire Management Board from "... in the prescribed fire plan." to "... on the unit." and to review wording in all of the preparedness levels to accommodate new policy (i.e. remove PNF, etc) terminology.

Use of NM Structural Fire Departments in Wildland Fire - The NM Structural Firefighters Association has forwarded a letter and an informational package to the Board requesting acceptance on the part of the wildland fire community for assistance from local fire departments. The Board reviewed the package and decided to include the Structural Firefighters recommendations with reference to (1) communications, (2) support, recognition, and attributes, and (3) management on large incidents. The recommendations will be incorporated into the '98 SWA Mob Guide.

ADO/CO Meeting - The ADO/CO group will be discussing the use of tribal personnel on prescribed fire at their next meeting. Willie to follow-up and let the Board know what was agreed upon.

SIPY - The Southwest Indian Polytechnical Institute requested Willie inform the Board and the fire community that its' facilities are available for training purposes. They have satellite transmission capabilities, Internet, and computer equipment for use during training sessions. A faculty member will make a presentation to the Board at the February meeting.

Hazardous Waste - The SWA Fire Cache's continue to receive hazardous waste (i.e. gas in chain saws, fuel cans with fuel still inside, etc) when items are returned to the cache. The Cache's request that all Board members inform their respective personnel about the problem and to take steps to correct.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Type II Crew Committee Report - Amos Coochyouma (CNF) presented the Committee's report to the Board. Amos stated Roger Jensen (ZUA) has been selected as the Chairperson, the Committee meets twice per year, has been focusing on marketing the committee (i.e. charter, purpose, etc), that no issues have been brought before the committee to date, and that the Committee would like to be included in the SWFMB Handbook.

The Board requested the Committee look into a Region 8 product currently being written on "crew searches" and report the results to the Board at the February meeting. In addition, the Board requested the Committee look into seeing what kind of trends (i.e. increase/decrease) exist in the number of SWFF crews.

The Board also discussed ID cards for SWFF crew members. Due to airline requirements, it is imperative that all crew members have some form of identification. Charlie and Willie will check with their respective agencies to see if ID Cards can be included as a requirement of "Conditions of Hire." Each will provide a response to Frank within two weeks.

Training Committee Report - Dan Oltrogge, Chairperson, stated the 'Visions' document has been distributed and that the training schedule is also posted on the SAC's and the Internet. Dan went on to discuss that the Training Committee is committed to the prescribed fire training program, there seems to be some problems in filling 400-level courses, that the Zone Training Coordinator is not always in the loop to make follow-up after completion of a course, and standards are being revised for the Crew Representative (CREP) course.

The Training Committee is concerned about the change in tenure policy for the Type I teams. The concern comes from the possibility of newcomers moving up and into a team position. The current policy allows an individual on a team to stay

aboard for an indefinite period of time. This means the newcomer could possibly lose an opportunity to move up. The Board decided to re-visit the tenure policy at the February meeting with the IC's present.

Another concern of the Training Committee is the issue pertaining to power saws and fallers. Apparently, there is real concern in the field with the experience of power saw operators vs fallers. Charlie stated the USFS is currently working on standards and proficiencies for operating saws. The Training Committee requests the Board recommend a set of standards for all agencies in the SWA. Dan will bring a written, formal concern about this issue to the February meeting.

Dan's tenure as Chairperson ends soon. The Training Committee will recommend a new Chair to Charlie (Training Committee Liaison) before the end of the year. The new Chairperson will be in place by the February meeting.

Aviation Committee Report - Cliff presented two issues to the Board on behalf of the Committee. The first issue pertains to the current charter. The Committee would like to broaden its' purpose from aviation safety issues to include other issues under the aviation umbrella. The second issue pertains to a draft document developed by the Committee titled "Aviation Incident/Accident Response Guide." Discussion revolved around adopting the document, loose leaf, target group, electronic form, maintenance of document, contact list, notification checklist, etc. The Board decided to not to adopt the document in its' current form.

Al Alvarez was selected to be the new liaison for the Board to the Aviation Committee.

Weather Committee - John Schulte reported that the Weather Committee met in September to discuss a various weather related topics including an NFDRS Workshop, ERC Chart, and Arizona Fire Weather reports. The Board informed John that a new charter needs to be completed in order to keep the committee functional. In addition, the Board requested that the Committee look into adding Smoke Management/Ventilation information to the afternoon forecasts and to continue looking into new weather related technologies.

AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS MEETING

On Tuesday November 4, from 0800-1200, the Board met with the following Agency Representatives to discuss several issues currently facing the wildland fire community.

John Waconda (BIA/AAO), John Philbin (BIA/PAO), Rich Whitley (BLM/NM), Gary Bauer (BLM/AZ), Toby Martinez (NMS), and Paul Johnson (USFS/R03)

Smoke Management Position - Discussion revolved around being proactive, FTE, liaison between state and federal agencies, Air Quality vs Water Quality, and use of the AZ position. Charlie stated the NM Forest Supervisors have decided to provide an FTE for a position in the NMS Environmental Department, but it will be dedicated to working Air and Water Quality issues pertaining to the USDA Forest Service only. Several alternatives were also discussed including (1) the State provide a person and the Agencies provide funding and (2) State Forestry provide an FTE and the Agencies provide funding.

Rich Whitley stated that he would approach all Agency Regional/Area Directors to see about a meeting in December to discuss this and other issues.

Prescription for Health - Cliff provided the Representatives with an overview of the "Prescription." Discussion revolved around requesting Agency assistance in

supporting employees in fire, recruiting, use of fire as vegetative management tool, re-introducing fire into agency programs, litigation, experience levels available today, and transferring positions from BIA to tribes.

Accelerated Applications of Prescribed Fire and Fuels Treatment - The AA Representatives were presented information on some of the issues related to the charge directed at fire management related to prescribed fire and fuels treatment. Discussion revolved around total figures (i.e. 3 million acres for DOA), rotation of burns, skills, planners, people to get the job done, smoke standards, burning during the fire season, use of SWFF crews, and AD authority.

Limited Fire Resources - A discussion was also held by the Board and the AA Representatives on the use of fire resources under the new wildland fire policy. Charlie drew a diagram on the board to show several decision points in the wildfire vs prescribed fire model. The Board decided the MAC Group would have to work closely together to prioritize fires and resources during the coming years.

The SWFMB Fall meeting was adjourned at 1100, November 5, 1997.

The next meeting of the SWFMB will be February 3-7, 1998 (backup date Feb 17-21) in Tucson, Arizona.

Frank Smith
Chairperson SWFMB

Jay Ellington
Board Secretary