

Southwest Fire Management Board Meeting

May 31, 2001

Board Members present:

Bob Lee (BLM-NM), Kirk Rowdabaugh (AZS), Willie Begay (BIA), Jeff Whitney (Acting FWS), John Schulte (SWC), Bill Waterbury (USFS)

Others:

Van Bateman (AZ-COF), Ed Hollenshead (AZ-PNF), Bill Astor (AZ-NAO), Guy Massey (AZ-NAO), Larry McCoy (AZ-COF), Jay Ellington (SWC)

The meeting was begun at 1300.

Type 2 Team Management

Ed Hollenshead, on behalf of the Central West Zone Board and Type 2 team, requested clarification from the Board on ordering Type 2 long or short team configuration, and availability for assignments including all-risk. Questions arose from events that occurred during the 2000 fire season, including deciding against assignments, non-emergency assignments, use of short team, etc. After a lengthy discussion, the standard policy of the Board is to refrain from being involved in Type 2 team configuration, assignments, or mobilization within the Zone. However, the Board felt it should be involved when a Type 2 team is assigned to an incident outside of the Zone and the Southwest Area. A decision was made to draft a letter to each Zone Board re-emphasizing the policy of the Board, and to discuss the Boards relationship to management of the Type 2 teams.

John Schulte pointed out that Type 2 team guidelines were developed in the early 1990's, but seem to have been misplaced. John will look through the files back in the USFS Regional Office to see if they can be found, then distribute to the Board. Language from the guide will be placed in the Board Handbook and the SWA Mobilization Guide.

Navajo Area

Bill Aster gave a short presentation on the activities occurring on the Navajo. The Type 1 crew is in the process of coming together, but may be several years away from being a certified Hotshot crew. He stated a number of members are getting training assignments with the Fort Apache and Geronimo Hotshots. There's been an increase in the number of Navajo Scout crews for this fire season. He's not sure why the increase, but it most likely linked to employment elsewhere. A re-organization of the Navajo Area Office Fire Management section is well underway with a number of new hires. NAO really wants everyone to know they are a player and would like to be an integral partner in the wildland fire community.

Crew Certification

Over the past winter, the Hotshot Guidelines were published and distributed throughout the fire community. As a result of the guidelines, a lot of discussion is revolving around Hotshot crews and Type 1 crews (i.e. is there a difference?). The Board learned that it (i.e. Board) is now responsible for certifying Hotshot crews, something the Board has not been involved in the past. Several questions still remain: What is the submission process? Is there a re-certification each year? Is there a difference between a Hotshot crew and a Type 1 crew? The Board decided additional follow-up is need. Bob Lee to address at next national GACG meeting.

Zone Board

A discussion was held on coordinating prescribed fire activity within the Zone pertaining to high fire danger levels, neighboring agency review, concurrence, and notification. Bill Waterbury introduced the topic of Boundary Fire Protocol. Notification must be made and should be part of the WFSA process. The Board decided to send a letter to Zone Board Chairs emphasizing coordination of prescribed fire and wildland fire activities, with copies to the REC, SW Strategy, & Board members. Bill will make copies of the Boundary Fire Protocol, written in the Northwest, and send to each Board member.

Zone and SWFMB Relations

A discussion was held on the relationship between the Zone Board and the SWFMB. It appears there is a perception that Zone Boards report upward to the SWFMB. Although not the case, the Zone Boards are not clear on what their role is with respect to SWFMB decisions and discussions. The Board decided it is time to more formalize the relationship by providing stronger invitations to the Zone Boards to attend SWFMB meetings, look into Zone mentoring, develop better communications, and to provide outreach. In addition, the Board decided to work toward holding future meetings at Zone office locations.

Type 2 Crews

Several problems have already popped up this fire season pertaining to Type 2 crews. It seems several crewmembers have been placed in jail, some fighting among crewmembers, and several threats have been made to supervisors. Alcohol and open camps are primary contributing factors. The discussion revolved around the need for stronger action, possibly drastic measures (i.e. send no more Type 2 crews out-of-area), policing crews better, weeding out the few bad apples, addressing the issue with the home unit, exploring ID concept, and a strong letter from the Board stating the Board's expectations and actions with respect to discipline. The Board decided to move toward the ID concept with the possibility of issuing cards through the Mobilization Center, if feasible. The first step will be to assign the Type 2 crew committee to come up with procedures, process of issuance, database, and card design. The committee will reply to the Board by July 1.

Weather Committee

Larry McCoy discussed the results of the SWA Weather Committee and the Meteorologists-In-Charge for each of the National Weather Service Forecast Offices throughout the Southwest that was held at SWCC on May 24th. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the two meteorologist positions being advertised for SWCC. Several questions arose during the meeting, but the two issues created the most discussion. These were site-specific forecasting and IMET assignments. The committee recommended changing some of the language written in the current PD's or at least let new hires know that some duties may be different. Both the site-specific forecast and IMET issues will have to be discussed at the national level since this is a mission of the NWS. The general consensus of those in attendance felt that there is enough program management work that the person will be constantly utilized as an IMET or forecaster.

A question arose about a GS-13 Meteorologist working under the direction of a GS-12 Center Director. However, legally this should not present a problem. The Board decided to write a letter to the NWS in support of their role and working together cooperatively to make the program work for both the Land Management agencies and the NWS. Larry to draft a letter for the Board's signature.

WIMS

Larry also requested that the Board assist in seeking out a means to hold a three-day WIMS course for dispatchers and fire managers. The Board decided this would be a major function of one of the Meteorology positions once hired.

Zone Boundary

Jeff Whitney raised a question about the process for changing boundaries. Jeff would like to see some FWS units located within the northern portion of the Gila Zone to be moved under the Albuquerque Zone. No formal process exists within the SWA. The Board asked Jeff to sit down and discuss the possibility with the Center Managers and Zone Board Chairs from the Gila and Albuquerque Zones.

Use of Wildland Fire resources for Prescribed Fire

A discussion was held on the possibility of holding resources that have been previously assigned to an incident for the purpose of conducting a prescribed fire. The reason the question has arisen has to do with the current push to conduct prescribed fire. The Board decided this is not exactly the purpose and intent of using national resources. However, if it can be worked out with the sending unit and initial attack is covered, then the Board has no problem with it.

NWCG Meeting

Bob asked Board members to provide him with questions and concerns that he can present at the NWCG meeting to be held later in the year. Some topics the Board brought up include problems associated with decisions made by the National MAC Group during 2000 and decisions made without conversation (i.e. Ready Reserve, Helicopter Managers), geographic area meteorology positions, hotshot and Type 1 crew differences, setting national priorities for air tanker/lead plane when two or more GACC's are in competition, and a review of NICC and coordination support.

Other topics of discussion

FS Line Officer's Guidebook is on the SWA website. Look on the Fire Management page.

National Contract for Contractors will be out for review shortly.

New discussions on activating Military Battalions. Possible adopt a Battalion concept for each GACC.

Arizona Interagency Coordinating Group. Responsibility statewide, coordination with National Fire Plan, proposed charter. Next meeting 6/14.

The next meeting of the Board will be July 9, 2001 in Silver City, NM.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30pm on May 31st.

/s/
Bob Lee
Chairperson, SWFMB