

Southwest Area Coordinating Group
November 25 - 26, 2002
Phoenix, Arizona

The meeting was called to order by the Chair (Kirk Rowdabaugh) at 0900, 11/25/02. Unfortunately, not many SWACG members were in attendance until 1000, and some never did make it (Pam and Frank).

Suzanne Romero asked the SWACG to adopt (or push for our respective agencies to adopt) standard Position Descriptions for Fire Prevention and Mitigation Specialists (GS - 4 through GS- 13) for those engaged in fire prevention activities in the Southwest. It was noted that BLM already has standard PDs for GS-9,-11, and-12 Prevention Specialists and Fish & Wildlife Service has similar standard PDs for GS-7 and -9 positions. A document addressing Interagency Fire Qualifications and Standards (or “core competencies”) is being developed now and may affect the Prevention PDs as well. After much intelligent and vigorous discussion, the SWACG decisions were as follows:

Yes - the SWACG thinks it’s a good idea to have National Interagency Standards for Prevention PDs and,

(1) asks the Prevention Committee (Suzanne) to compare the draft standard PDs with the “core competencies” currently being developed and,

(2) to present her final draft PDs to the SWACG at our next meeting. (See “Next Meetings”.)

Wendell Peacock made a brief presentation on behalf of the Prevention Committee. Wendell will be the next Chair of the Prevention Committee - hoping to fill the big shoes left by Bequi Livingston (the current Chair). Wendell pitched the upcoming PRIME Training Session being held in Albuquerque, at the Fire Use Training Academy, the last three weeks in January, ‘03. Interested parties may go to the “homepage” of the Southwest Area’s website for more information. { It should be noted that at least one SWACG member, me, was impressed by the corse title, PRIME, an anachronism that actually means something related to the subject - PRevention, Information, Mitigation, and Education. }

The SWACG then made some very important decisions regarding the proposal to have an Executive Secretary assist the ‘CG with our business activities - they are as follows:

- We agreed to establish an Executive Secretary (X Sec) Position for the SWACG.
- We will not task the X Sec Position with MAC Group activities. We might, however, use the same individual in these two different roles.
- We will use Article IV from the NWCG X Sec Contract for our list of X Sec duties.
- The federal agencies that are members of the SWACG will pay for a contract X Sec. The Arizona State Land Department will let the contract based on the following budget:

	120 Hours of meetings per year
	<u>180 Hours of pre- and post-meeting “home work” per year</u>
	300 Hours of contract work per year
X	<u>\$ 30 per hour worked</u>
	\$ 9,000 per year
+	<u>\$ 1,000 per year for related travel expenses</u>
	\$10,000 per total contract costs

- Kirk will draft a M.O.U. with the federal agencies to facilitate the transfer of funds.

Bill Waterbury and Bob Lee briefed the SWACG on the “Lessons Learned” meeting they attended on our behalf in Boise in November. It was so riveting that I (apparently) was unable to take any notes - except that I am suppose to

call Sue Vap and get a copy of a National MAC memo regarding their Delegation of Authority for control of all firefighting resources. { Which I have done, and I am looking forward to hearing back from Sue at any minute. }

Next was an energizing discussion regarding the vacant SWCC Center Manager Position , which led to the following:

- Dave Boyd agreed to fill the vacant position after Vern Ely retires in early January, until it is filled “permenantly”.
- SWACG agreed to advertise the Vacancy Announcement ASAP, to keep it open for 45 days, to issue it Government-wide, and to accept applications for either the GS-12 or GS-13 level.
- Bob Lee agreed to develop a Coop Funding Agreement for the federal agencies, and to pay the change-of-duty station (transfer) costs for the selected individual.
- Bob Lee will hold the vacant vice Brian Lee position “open” until after the funds for the interagency funded SWCC Center Manager Position are received from the cooperation federal agencies.
- Willey Begay says BIA funding for the SWCC Center Manager is “iffy”.
- Bill Waterbury says he will advertise for the soon to be vacant Vern Ely position soon.

Then there was prolonged discussion on a bunch of unrelated topics, so we wouldn't have to deal with the M.O.U., Handbook, and Operating Plan. It went something like this:

- » I was to contact Toby Martinez and get a name for Frank Smith's replacement on the SWACG. I have done that and expect to hear back from Toby any minute now.
- » All the federal agencies agreed to give Vern Ely \$1,000 (each), so Vern could purchase and distribute “thank you” pins for everyone who helped out with our 2002 fire season.
- » Bill Waterbury agreed to get a “silver polaski” as a “thanks for all you've done” award for Frank Smith - the only 12 year survivor of the SWFMB.

Type I Team Configuration captured our attention next and some hard hitting decisions followed:

- a) As a minimum, all 33 positions identified in the National Mobilization Guide must be filled on the T-I Teams.
- b) If a position is filled with an “AD” employee, then an agency trainee in that position must also be assigned to the T-I Team.
- c) T-I Teams may carry no more than 10 trainees for assignments in the Southwest Area.
- d) T-I Incident Commanders may negotiate with Agency Administrators for a different Team configuration on a case-by-case basis.
- e) Positions filled with employees from outside the Southwest Area must have the prior approval of the employee's supervisor and the other GACG.

And with that we had spent a full day successfully avoiding any discussion of what we were actually supposed to be doing - finishing the M.O.U., Handbook, and Operating Guide. Which takes us up to the morning of November 26 - when Jim Payne informed us that we were on thin ice when it came to the First Amendment Rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and that we'd better :

- ⊕ have the SWACG Information Committee present this issue to the Southwest Strategy Public Affairs Committee at their next meeting (12/10/02).

- ⊗ have the SWACG Information Committee draft some “media protocols” for all agencies and all wildland fires in the Southwest, and present them for our review at our next meeting (See Next Meetings),
- ⊗ so that we might present our final recommendations to the Southwest Strategy at their February ‘03 meeting, and
- ⊗ distribute to all field office - as draft guidelines - prior to the fire season ~~in Boise~~ so that we might all try ‘em out during 2003.

Kori Kirkpatrick spoke to us about the Arizona Wildfire Academy. The first of these interagency Academies will be held March 11-16, in a fire camp-like setting, near Prescott. Many of our agencies are co-sponsors and providing instructors - positions are available for students from all SWACG agencies and rural fire departments in the Southwest.

Somehow, in spite of our best efforts, we actually finished our redraft of the M.O.U., Handbook, and Operating Guide. The final draft(s) will be posted on the SWCC website. Please review and comment to Bill Waterbury ASAP. In addition the following assignments were assigned:

- ☞ Bill Waterbury will attach a copy of the MAC Group Operating Guide as Chapter 70 of the Draft Handbook when it is posted for review.
- ☞ Bill Waterbury will draft some “Roles and Responsibilities” for the SWACG.
- ☞ Brian Swift will provide (to Bill W.) the structure used by the Northern Rockies CG for their meetings
- ☞ We will use this information, along with a facilitator, at our February meeting to help develop some “meeting management guidelines” for future SWACG meetings.
- ☞ Each and every SWACG member will get a copy of the Committee Charters and Committee Membership Lists for which they are the Group / Committee Liason and provide it to Bill Waterbury ASAP, so they can be included in the final Handbook.
- ☞ Bill Waterbury will distribute a final M.O.U. to each SWACG member, so we can brief our respective bosses prior to the next Southwest Strategy Regional Executive Committee Meeting.

Next Meetings:

January 24, 2003 - 0800 - Arizona State Land Department
 Type I Team Selections
 Final Review of M.O.U., Handbook, and Operating Guide

February 25-27 - Type I Team Meeting - SWACG Members are invited to attend

March 24-25 - Arizona State Land Department
 Prevention Team / Standard Pds
 M.O.U. for X Sec Contract
 Rating Criteria for selecting SWCC Center Manager
 Media Guidelines

May 6-7 - Southwest Coordination Center - Agenda to be announced.

And that should be enough to convince all of you that we can't get an Executive Secretary soon enough! Kirk.