



Wildland Fire Leadership Council Meeting
September 17, 2018, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Washington DC
Department of Agriculture
Whitten Building, Room 104A & 104B
Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Council Members or alternates: Jim Cason (DOI), Jim Hubbard (USDA), Vicki Christiansen (USFS), Rick Obernessor/Louis Rowe (NPS), Erik Litzenberg (IAFC), Vern Stearns (ITC), Brian Steed (BLM), Anne Kinsinger (USGS), Jim Kurth (FWS), Keith Bryant (FEMA/USFA), Jim Karels (NASF), Mike Zupko (Executive Director) Pete Wakeland (BIA), Patrick Holmes (MT), Mark Goeller (NGA), Dan Shoun (NACo), Maureen Sullivan (DoD)

Guests, Partners and Support Staff: Dan Kaniewski (FEMA), Elizabeth Bettis, Bill Wehrum (EPA), Clint Woods, Harry Humbert, Jeff Rupert, Shawna Legarza, Jim Durglo, Patti Blankenship, Bob Eaton, Erin Horsburgh, Craig Leff, Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Shawn Stokes, Katie Lighthall, Joe Stutler, Dave Celino, George Geissler, Jeff Whitney, Rick Patrick, John Tippet, Trisha Sanborn, Kaili McCray, Chris Topik, Bill Kaage, Sonya Germann, Steve Manthei, Paul Steblein, Tami DeFries, Patti Hiram, Pete Lahm, Laura Schweitzer, Cecilia Clavet, Kevin Cann, Jonathan Shuffield, Sarah Swanson, Meg Nakahara

On Phone: Gary Wood, Larry Mastic, Ann Walker, Lisa Ellins

MEETING SUMMARY:

Welcome, Opening Remarks and Agenda Review

Jim Cason (DOI), Jim Hubbard (USDA), Mike Zupko (WFLC)

- Congratulations to Jim Hubbard on his Senate confirmation to USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment.
- Mike Zupko worked with WFLC members to set an agenda that reflects highest priority items with fewer topics on the agenda to allow for more discussion of the membership.

FEMA DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR

(Dan Kaniewski)

- FEMA appreciates the support from all agencies. Acknowledges Chief Bryant, Patti Blankenship, and the positive feedback resulting from a visit to NIFC.
- DHS Secretary Nielsen wants to make wildland fire management a top priority for DHS in order to reduce losses ahead of time and reduce future consequences of wildfire.



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- The majority of FEMA mitigation dollars are only accessible after the disaster. Congress is proposing to move more money up front to allocate across all 50 states in a risk-based approach.
 - FEMA is asking WFLC to become a partner and help them navigate the wildland fire arena.

Discussion:

- FEMA needs to enlist partners to educate Americans on the value of insurance. FEMA is reaching out to the insurance industry to carry a unified message forward. The insurance industry is willing to collaborate.
- The messaging around insurance needs to change, i.e. any home can flood, even outside of flood zone or in a thousand-year flood zone.
- The immediate steps the wildfire community can take are:
 - Gain awareness of the programs
 - Take part and give input on alert and warning systems
 - Assist in pushing the message out
- DOI, USDA, and FEMA can collaborate to redefine mitigation and work on new legislation related to mitigation and risk.

Next Steps:

- Zupko will follow up with the Deputy Administrator and key FEMA staff and continue to strengthen the relationship between WFLC and FEMA leadership.

Increasing the Use of Active Management

Objective:

To collectively determine methods to increase the use of active management across all-lands (federal and non-federal / shared stewardship) with the intent of reducing hazards that contribute to the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

Discussion:

- Paul Steblein presented the status of joint data and tools to support active management (ATTACHMENT I).
- The fire community is often focused on putting fires out quickly, which leaves significant fuels behind for the next fire. Fuel buildup is a constant issue for both DOI and USDA. Proposed questions: Where are we in terms of public policy? Are we aggressive enough with fuels treatments? Should we be doing something differently?
- Options on the table are: pushing back on public policy with the fire community, more forest management, creating a system of strategic “utility corridors”, better prioritization of /strategic approach to fuels treatments and increasing grazing areas.
- Both Secretaries Perdue and Zinke have called for more active management but there is more area that needs treatment than can be accomplished.



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- Scalability is an important concept in the streamlining process. Projects designed at the WFLC table are too broad, while projects designed in the field are too specific. We need to be strategically looking at scale.
 - The conversation about FEMA moving funding to the front end was encouraging, and it's a step in the direction of funding fuels management at the same level that we fund suppression.
 - 84% of US fires are human caused – education needs to go along with prevention and mitigation. We need to educate the public and there needs to be more federal/state/county collaboration.
 - Montana is having success with their Forest Action Plan. They are sharing all tools in one program of work among federal, state, local authorities. They are taking the same collaborative approach to fuels that they take for suppression. They are engaging Montana's 12 Tribal nations to determine what their needs are and to take a seamless "all – government" approach.
 - Washington State is very excited about the Forest Action Plan and the 20 year Forest Health Strategy. They'll complete the new Forest Action Plan by 2020 and are taking steps to identify everyone who should be at the table. Local partners are on board and the next step is meeting with federal partners.
 - Question posed: Do you think that we could do better if the federal government worked with state partners and developed state-based plans on fire risk?
 - Experience shows we know how to work together; we know exactly what treatments are needed but things are too episodic right now. How do we take that and make it the responsibility?
 - The State Forest Action Plan is the vehicle for scalability and collaboration. It's getting easier for states to work with different federal agencies but it takes leadership.
 - The Cohesive Strategy is successful, but we need to dig deeper into the framework of creating resilient landscapes. We need to be adaptable to issues at the right scale. The foundational documents of the Cohesive Strategy are sound. Looking at the body of work should happen before any attempts to re-write it or create something new.
 - An implementation plan needs to be developed to tie in to the Cohesive Strategy.

Next steps:

- Zupko will create a WFLC game plan around active management and incorporate the ongoing opportunities to bring the wildland fire community closer together. To include:
 - Shared WFLC Vision
 - WFLC nexus with current initiatives
 - WFLC engagement points and next steps
 - Mapping products
 - Direct tie to FEMA planning and programming
 - Increased joint messaging opportunities across WFLC members
 - State level leadership through Forest Action Plans and similar tools
- Zupko will work with the RSCs and a small team to identify potential additional actions and engagement points that have previously been identified through the development of the Cohesive Strategy framework. (Utilize Strategic Alignment Report and other documents.)



Smoke Management and Air Quality to Support Landscape Resiliency

Objective:

To create a joint framework with EPA and other agencies and organizations to collectively work to minimize air quality impacts from wildland fire over the long-term; Improve the resiliency of landscapes to wildfire; and, increase the health and safety of communities, firefighters and the public by using fire as a land management tool.

Discussion:

- Zupko briefly mentioned the Wildland Fire Assessment Framework being worked on across multiple partners that will be a way to show comparisons from impacts of different types of wildland fires. It stems from discussions and gaps identified during previous WFLC discussions. (ATTACHMENT II)
- Pete Lahm (FS) presented a PowerPoint presentation (ATTACHMENT III)
- EPA Assistant Administrator Bill Wehrum gave an EPA perspective on smoke and discussed engagement points between EPA and the wildland fire community.
 - EPA is in the business of managing air quality and understands that prescribed fire is a very important tool. We do get some smoke from that activity but are in 100% support of the idea of using prescribed fire. Interagency collaboration is imperative.
 - The Clean Air Act is designed to focus on things we can control; to create plans and implement the plan. A legal conversation necessary to have is to allow for exceptions. We can't turn a blind eye to the fact that this is pollution. We're trying to be proactive. For the Clean Air Act, state or local jurisdictions have authority and the EPA has oversight in some situations. Part of what we're planning is guidance to revise ozone and particulate matter pollution standards that would include consideration for exceptional events. The revisions will be finalized by 2020. Engagement with states is crucial.
- Question posed: Do public health groups understand the tradeoffs of air quality reduction during prescribed fire?
- Everyone sees the issue differently. It seems common sense that if you don't address the problem with prescribed fire you will get bigger problems. The distinction is still one that we're working on, bringing everyone to the table to discuss.
- The EPA is about to roll out prescribed fire guidance within the Exceptional Events Rule. This is an opportunity to spread awareness.
- When EPA releases national policy, implementation falls to the regions. Step one is to roll out guidance proactively through the regions. Step two is to create ties with state, local, and tribal groups.
- People want information. Communication and education about portable monitoring, and characterizing what's happening in and around fire events is important. The Airnow.gov website shows current fires and is widely used.



Next steps:

- Zupko, Lahm and others will continue to participate in the Wildland Fire Assessment Framework development and report back to WFLC as appropriate.
- There was a commitment by EPA to help promote prescribed fire and to work jointly with the wildland fire community on messaging and engagement through regions and states through leader's intent.
- EPA, DOI and USDA will work internally on finalizing prescribed fire/smoke guidance in the upcoming Exceptional Events Rule (EER). Once released, EPA will work with WFLC on joint communications, regional implementation and messaging at the state, tribal and local level.
- There was commitment by leadership to continue interaction, as appropriate, with EPA on policy discussions to understand how to collectively work towards increasing the ability to use prescribed fire as a management tool while reducing impacts from smoke.
- EPA, DOI and USDA will follow up from the previous discussions with WFLC leadership held Spring and Summer 2018.

Understanding & Overcoming Workforce Challenges in Wildland Fire

Objective:

1. To identify 3-4 key challenges in the workforce arena that can be collectively addressed across the WFLC membership.
2. To understand distinct challenges each partner faces within the workforce arena and describe how other WFLC members can support.

Discussion:

- John Tippett shared a PowerPoint presentation on "Everyone Goes Home" initiative which was created based on 6 listening sessions within the wildland fire community. (ATTACHMENT IV)
- Thirteen strategic and tactical recommendations are included in packet (ATTACHMENT V). There are also sixteen wildland firefighter lifesaving initiatives.
- Everyone should embrace this. WFLC support will be necessary.
- Questions posed: How do the 13 recommendations fit in? Is this part of the Cohesive Strategy? Is it separate? How do we plug it in? Does the group unanimously think this should be embraced?
- Have the recommendations been socialized enough that we can act? Is there anyone else we need to reach out to for discussion first?
- All WFLC members have seen and agree with the general recommendations. The next step should be socializing within everyone's respective organizations. WFLC acceptance would be a good start.
- It was discussed to evaluate the priorities from the recommendations for the January WFLC meeting.



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- Four NFFF rollout sessions are planned between January and April. Wildland advocates will be doing beta testing at rollout sessions and we'll be adapting some online programs to be more inclusive. The rollout sessions are in FL, ID, AZ, and SD.
 - The recommendations should be run parallel and aligned with the system already in place.
 - Instead of taking all 13 recommendations – pick top 3 or 4 in areas you think this community could move ball forward.

Next steps:

- Mark Goeller will work with Zupko to utilize the NWCG Risk Management Committee and identify their 3 or 4 highest priority recommendations from the EGH, socializing them, then identifying what a path forward jointly for WFLC and NFFF may look like.
- Zupko will work with John Tippet to outreach with each WFLC member for their direct input on the recommendations.
- Zupko, Rupert and Legarza will evaluate the formation of a work group to explore how enterprise risk management would work across the wildland fire system.

Integration of Technology Across the Wildland Fire System

Objective:

To identify challenges the wildland fire community can utilize technology to overcome.

Discussion:

- Steve Manthei gave a PowerPoint presentation on WFIT (ATTACHMENT VI).
- WFIT is an enterprise and a community. Wildland fire projects are jointly developed and jointly managed by the wildland fire community.
- There are 38 applications that are directly managed and funded, and another 50 or 60 that are solely funded.
- The ultimate goal is to have the right information in the right hands at the right time.
- Technology moves so fast that we need a central location to get the same information quicker. There's been amazing work with UAS this summer, including real time information we're bringing to incident command posts. There is even more that the team hasn't tapped into yet.
- Getting Intel to fire fighters on their mobile devices about local information sooner is a major priority.
- Integrated Reporting of Wildland Fire Information (IRWIN) with authoritative data sets is essentially what the whole data management team is working on right now.
- The main challenge is for WFIT to stop thinking as agency and more as an enterprise. Amazing strides have been made so far and it's a big community. Another challenge will be the design phase.

Next steps:

- No assignments given.



ROUND ROBIN

Discussion:

- Anne Kinsinger and Paul Steblein discussed the JFSP Annual Progress Report. https://www.firescience.gov/documents/2017_JFSP_ProgressReport.pdf
- Erik Litzenberg addressed the workforce challenges of training, recruitment, and retention that were not touched on at the meeting but should be discussed further.
- Dan Shoun acknowledged his last meeting and thinks all items on the agenda fit together. Active management is important for long term success.
- Joe Stutler mentioned about the 3rd Annual Cohesive Strategy Workshop which will be held in Plymouth, MA in Fall of 2019.
- Vicki Christiansen, on behalf of the group, thanked Dan Shoun for his professionalism and involvement while serving on WFLC over multiple years.
- The minutes from the June WFLC meeting were unanimously approved with no comments.

Next Steps:

- Zupko will finalize the WFLC work environment letter along with introductory messaging that can be utilized by WFLC members for the purposes of distribution.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment was made.

NEXT STEPS AND CLOSEOUT

- The next WFLC meeting is proposed for the week of Jan. 21st to coincide with the International Wildland Fire Information Exchange in Daytona Beach, FL. WFLC members will have the opportunity to interact with the international community on a field tour.
- Jim Cason thanked attendees for coming, providing input, and accepting assignments.
- Jim Hubbard thanked the group and is looking forward to continuing to utilize WFLC as a forum to find collective solutions.