



Wildland Fire Leadership Council Meeting
January 9 – 10, 2020
Tall Timbers Research Station
(13093 Henry Beadel Dr. Tallahassee, FL)

Meeting Minutes

MEETING INTENT: To view, understand and build from on-the-ground successes that support WFLC priorities and the goals of the Cohesive Strategy; to discuss leaders' intent and build strategic opportunities to encourage additional successes; to further the WFLC policy priorities; and to give strategic direction to the Regional Strategy Committees, workgroups and agency and organizational leadership.

Goals for Meeting:

- 1) Understand and provide leadership on key items related to the following WFLC priority issues:
 1. Smoke Management and Air Quality
 2. Cross-Boundary and Active Management Coordination
 3. Fire Year Strategic Engagement and Planning
- 2) Develop solutions and set WFLC policy agenda around priority issues.
- 3) Provide guidance to task groups and the WFLC Regional Strategy Committees for moving strategic opportunities forward.
- 4) Serve as a forum to exchange information, views and advice relating to the integration of wildland fire management activities.
- 5) Capture outstanding issues and opportunities for WFLC consideration.



ATTENDEES:

Council Members or alternates: Jim Hubbard (USDA), Susan Combs (DOI), Vicki Christiansen (USFS), Mike Zupko (Executive Director), Johnna Blackhair (BIA), Keith Bryant (USFA), Anne Kinsinger (USGS), Grant Beebe (BLM), Vernon Stearns (ITC), John Suthers (NLC), Rich Elliot (IAFC), Cynthia Martinez (FWS), Louis Rowe (NPS), Kevin Cann (NACo), Troy Timmons (Gov. Bullock), George Geissler (NASF)

Guests, Partners and Support Staff: Anne Idsal, Wayne Cascio, Erik Svendsen, Jeff Rupert, Chris French, Cecilia Clavet, Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Jiann Yang, Amber Wells, Kristie Mackzo, Greg Norton, Leon Ben, Jim Karels, Jim Durglo, John Phipps, Rick Patrick, Ed Christopher, Gary Wood, Mark Melvin, Jonathan Bruno, Clarren Nilsson, Dave Celino, Katie Lighthall, Brett Lacey, Laura Schweitzer, Bill Hahnenberg, Pete Lahm, Matt Thompson, Paul Steblein, Lowell Ballard, Kevin Heirs, Morgan Verner, Rod Lin, Scot Goodrick, Ann Walker, Paul Orbuch, Karen Zirkle, Amanda Lockwood

MEETING SUMMARY:

JANUARY 9 - FIELD TOUR OVERVIEW:

The field tour highlighted the challenges, opportunities and successes associated with the management of wildland fire and cross-boundary landscapes across North Florida and the SE. The impact of Hurricane Michael from 2018 was discussed and explored along with the challenges faced due to the destruction of forested landscape as it relates to both wildland fire and the ability to manage the land post hurricane. The group gained an understanding and respect for the extensive use of prescribed fire throughout the Southeastern United States, the public acceptance of that culture and the impacts as well as several firing techniques utilized to conduct a prescribed fire. Additionally, smoke management and air quality considerations were discussed and the relationship with public health officials (CDC, EPA, state and local officials) explored making the overall process positive for all parties involved. Further, managing the landscape across a variety of ownerships showed the collaborative nature in which managing the local landscape is a necessity and has been occurring for a long time.

ITINERARY

- Hurricane Impacts to Wildfire and Land Management (Calhoun County / Highway 69 – Florida Forest Service)
- Coordination of Response and Management Across Boundaries and Multiple Jurisdictions including private land challenges (Bristol VFD and USFS Bristol Office)
- Prescribed Fire Use, Public Acceptance, Smoke Management (TNC Apalachicola Bluffs Preserve)
- Smoke Management Monitoring Techniques and Challenges (Tall Timbers Research Station)



SMOKE MANAGEMENT AND AIR QUALITY TO INCREASE THE USE OF PRESCRIBED FIRE FOR LANDSCAPE RESILIENCY

Objective:

To collectively identify methods 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 and explore the concept of preparing communities for smoke.

Discussion

Erik Svendsen (CDC), Anne Idsal (EPA), Wayne Cascio (EPA), and Mark Melvin (Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils) all presented a variety of topics around prescribed fire and smoke management opportunities. Discussion with the WFLC members followed with the Council coalescing around the following four opportunities.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Overarching Data Needs: The DOI Office of Policy Analysis with assistance from Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils, the DOI Office of Wildland Fire, and FS Fire and Aviation Management will assemble a persuasive data set to support the use of prescribed fire to combat catastrophic wildland fires, with the understanding that issues such as the NAAQS and smoke inhalation have been an obstacle.
2. Develop joint messaging, talking points and opportunities for joint communications – Develop Leaders' Intent that includes the scope and overall goal for the expanded use of prescribed fire to guide the subsequent development of focused, public communication and joint messaging that relates the benefits to public health and safety of prescribed fire versus wildfire. It was noted by Idsal, Svensen and Cascio that the material available doesn't capture the type of health effects from wildfire versus prescribed fire. The net health effect of the actual biomass burning emissions may be the same (although Cascio noted some species and combustion phases seem to have greater effects than others - Eucalyptus and Pine versus others and flaming versus smoldering). Study and support for 24-hour and annual PM 2.5 effect versus shorter term was also mentioned as a need. The overarching data needs, deliverable 1, will be used to inform this effort.
3. SIPs recognize Rx fire as part of baseline/background contributor - The revised Regional Haze Rule (RHR)(2017) and recent RHR Guidance (2019) provides an opportunity for States to include prescribed fire in the natural visibility endpoint. The endpoint addition is a similar process as used by contribution of international emissions to visibility

impairment whereby the addition is approved by the EPA Administrator. Most Class 1 areas have made greater progress than is required by the RHR towards the 2064 natural background goal without addition to the endpoint of either international or prescribed fire. It is important to establish the presence of prescribed fire contribution for the upcoming 2021 submittals as future periodic submittals will be more challenging to demonstrate reasonable progress towards the natural background goal and utilization of this clause of the RHR needs to occur in order to insure its use in the future.

4. Health impact assessments built at a national level - EPA-ORD and CDC-NCEH both suggested that a national Environmental Health Impact Assessment could be conducted which considers the effects of wildfire and prescribed fire on firefighter and public health. Public health would be considered in the broad definition of environmental health so it will be considerably broader than just air quality and could include water quality and quantity, climate effects and post-fire effects. The power of this approach is there is a process for this type of analysis that ties back to NEPA. Understanding that some modicum of funding would be needed and that the push from EPA leadership necessary to include engagement by ORD, the development and buildout of this process will be critical for WFLC membership to understand.

(Further detail can be found in WFLC Meeting Deliverables 1/09/20 and 01/10/20 document.)

REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD TOUR

Discussion

Chair Combs facilitated a round-robin discussion of the WFLC members to gain perspectives and insight from the field tour earlier in the day.



JANUARY 10 -

WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS

Susan Combs (DOI) and Jim Hubbard (USDA), Jim Karels (FFS)

- Combs, Hubbard and Karels welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Hubbard introduced and welcomed Secretary Sonny Perdue to the meeting.

USDA SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE INSIGHTS

Secretary Perdue offered his insights on active management, wildfire fighting, and prescribed fire.

Chief Christiansen (US Forest Service) and Mark Melvin (Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils) reviewed some slides around the current state of prescribed fire including challenges and opportunities to expand the use of prescribed fire.

AGENDA REVIEW AND ADMINISTRATION

- Zupko reviewed the agenda and key objectives.
- The minutes from the July 26, 2019, meeting in Washington DC were unanimously approved.

POLICY PRIORITY SHORTS - REPORT OUTS, CONCURRENCE AND NEXT STEPS

Objective:

*To present opportunities, draft deliverables, next steps and gain concurrence for two current WFLC policy priorities: **Mitigating Post Fire Impacts and America Burning: WUI.***

Mitigating Post Fire Impacts and Draft Roadmap

- a. Draft roadmap
- b. Navigator concept
- c. Policy opportunities

Discussion:

Troy Timmons and Zupko discussed the current status of the initiatives ongoing around mitigating post fire impacts and reviewed **ATTACHMENT I** (Disaster Response – Mitigating Post Fire Impacts) a December update of the activities related to mitigating post fire impacts as well as **ATTACHMENT II**, an overview of WFLC Post Fire IMTs opportunities for further engagement.

NEXT STEPS:

- ROADMAP – TIMELINE: May WFLC meeting. Targeting a “short-version/emergency kit” by the March WFLC call.
- NAVIGATOR CONCEPT – TIMELINE: similar to above.
- UNDERSTANDING POLICY GAPS/OPPORTUNITIES – TIMELINE: Targeting the top 5-6 potential gaps fleshed out with recommendations by March WFLC call.
- EXPECTATION OF ICs AND AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS TO CONSIDER POST FIRE IMPACTS (IMT Integration) – 11-07-19 briefing paper distributed before the meeting. TIMELINE: FS and DOI are starting integration of core areas as described in the paper.

USGS provided several attachments of pertinent information. ATTACHMENT III

America Burning: WUI (*Chief Bryant*)

Chief Bryant gave a brief update on the status including a Call to Action paper that was completed last Fall **ATTACHMENT IV** containing 9 issue buckets that is setting the stage for an executive policy document that Congress can utilize. He also discussed USFA has been working with FS and DOI to fund a contractor that can be lead on compiling and writing the America Burning: WUI document. They are hopeful the posting will come out in FedBiz in early February.

(Further detail can be found in WFLC Meeting Deliverables 1/09/20 and 01/10/20 document.)

LEADERS’ INTENT AND FRAMEWORK FOR CROSS-BOUNDARY AND ACTIVE MANAGEMENT COORDINATION *Presenters: John Phipps and Chris French (FS) and Lowell Ballard (Timmons Group-DOI)*

ATTACHMENT V – Leaders’ Intent and Framework

Objective:

To understand tools and opportunities to better engage across jurisdictions in active management and fuels reduction and to develop a framework to initiate through agencies and organizations to increase cross-boundary activity.

Discussion:

- Phipps and French shared how tools and technology can help facilitate cross-boundary active management and how it is being integrated into FS decision-making processes. Ballard shared some of DOI’s work in Washington State and how the state is integrating in with their state forest action plan along with working closely with DOI on joint planning across boundaries.



NEXT STEPS:

1. Leaders' Intent, including framework, to be utilized by agencies and organizations for consistent expectation of cross boundary engagement at the local level.
2. Process constructed in which to identify local geographies that can test and help enhance the framework and rules of engagement for coordination.
3. Facilitation and development of best practices stemming from engagement of a discreet set of local geographies that may be selected to engage in the process.

(Further detail can be found in WFLC Meeting Deliverables 1/09/20 and 01/10/20 document.)

LEADERS' INTENT ON FIRE YEAR STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING

Presenters: Matt Thompson (Forest Service) and Jeff Rupert (DOI)

ATTACHMENT VI – Leaders' Intent for Strategic Engagement Across Jurisdictions

Objective:

Develop leaders' intent within WFLC member agencies and organizations to better coordinate before each fire year on land and fire management issues at the local level.

Discussion:

- Thompson and Rupert presented several training and engagement opportunities through technology and tools available for use at the local level and discussed successes over the past year through best practices and lessons learned.

NEXT STEPS:

- Leaders' Intent to be utilized by agencies and organizations for consistent expectation of strategic engagement between all local partners before each local fire season.
- Distribution strategy to include how agencies and organizations can utilize and increase expectation for robust local engagement before each local fire season.

(Further detail can be found in WFLC Meeting Deliverables 1/09/20 and 01/10/20 document.)



REFINE SOLUTIONS AND JOINT POLICY AGENDA

Jim Hubbard and Susan Combs

Hubbard and Combs asked members to please provide comments to Zupko on both the Leaders' Intent for Cross-Boundary and the Leaders' Intent on Fire Year Strategic Engagement. He will roll up the feedback, then produce a final draft for review and concurrence by WFLC principals.

(Further detail can be found in WFLC Meeting Deliverables 1/09/20 and 01/10/20 document.)

REGIONAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE UPDATES AND IMPLEMENTATION INSIGHT TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- a. Northeast Regional Strategy Committee – Dave Celino presented ATTACHMENT VII.
- b. Southeast Regional Strategy Committee – Gary Wood presented ATTACHMENT VIII.
- c. Western Regional Strategy Committee -Katie Lighthall presented ATTACHMENT IX
- d. Cohesive Strategy Workshop feedback and opportunities – Each of the RSCs offered perspective on the workshop from this past October and plans for the upcoming year.
- e. Cohesive Strategy 5- year Report – Zupko and Hall-Rivera gave an overview of the draft report, as required by the 2009 FLAME Act. FS and DOI will be working through their internal channels to deliver the report to Congress as appropriate.

ROUND ROBIN

Each member was asked to share policy items that WFLC could work together.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment was requested.

NEXT STEPS AND CLOSEOUT

- Mike Zupko, Jim Hubbard, and Susan Combs shared their final thoughts.
- Chair Hubbard officially transitioned the WFLC Chairmanship over to DOI and Susan Combs as lead.
- Zupko will compile a listing, including next steps and workgroups, of WFLC meeting deliverables to be distributed in the next couple weeks.
- Zupko will reach out to the membership about setting a date for the next couple meetings/calls.
- Appreciation was again expressed to Tall Timbers and Florida Forest Service for hosting the meeting.