



Wildland Fire Leadership Council Meeting

June 13, 2018, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Hotel Eleganté, Centennial Room

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

Council Members or alternates: Jim Cason (DOI), Dan Jiron (USDA), Vicki Christiansen (USFS), Louis Rowe (NPS), Erik Litzenberg (IAFC), Vern Stearns (ITC), Grant Beebe (BLM), Paul Steblein (USGS), Jim Kurth (FWS), Patti Blankenship (FEMA/USFA), Kim Van Hemelryck (BIA), George Geissler (NASF), John Suthers (NLC), Mike Zupko (Executive Director)

Partners and Support Staff: Harry Humbert, Jeff Rupert, Gary Wood, Brett Lacey, Shawna Legarza, Jim Durglo, Ann Walker, Bob Eaton, Erin Hornsworth, Kelsey Delaney, Laura Schweitzer, Troy Timmons, Chelsea Nagley, Matt Struzziero, Ed Kleiman, Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Tom Welle, Shawn Stokes, Katie Lighthall, Dave Celino, Brian Cottam, Lowell Ballard, Jason Kean, Jonathan Bruno, Larry Mastic

On Phone: Meg Nakahara, Gary Schiff, Eva Karau

MEETING SUMMARY:

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Jim Cason (DOI), Dan Jiron (USDA)

- Announcement that the character of the meeting will change, effective next meeting. Rather than brief snippets, the group will focus on 3 – 5 topics with time for robust discussion. This will allow the opportunity to talk about issues, understand perspectives and identify collective actions.
- Participants made comments about the previous day's tour including: being impressed with the ability to get insurance companies, builders, HOAs, and homeowners all involved in the solution of preventing fire and realizing the opportunities to address and share long-term risks. Shows how we can bring stakeholders together and reiterates the doctrine of the Cohesive Strategy being played out on the ground.



Agenda Review and Administrative Items

Mike Zupko (WFLC)

- The agenda is focused on a theme of being out in the field and taking advantage of local and regional knowledge. The afternoon will be used to dig into priorities with more specific focus at the next meeting.
- The minutes of the November 2, 2017 and March 5, 2018 meetings were approved unanimously by the membership.

Local/Regional discussions

Objective: Intended to help set the stage and provide input as to how priorities are being addressed at the regional and state level.

Discussion:

- Western Governors' Association – States' perspectives on natural resources issues in the West – *Troy Timmons, WGA Director of Strategic Initiatives*
 - Western Governors' Association includes 19 western states from ND to TX and west and 3 US territories with an effort to coordinate policies among governors concerning forest and rangeland management and practices. 48 recommendations (18 legislative and 30 administrative) have come from a series of workshops and seminars on how to improve forests and range management. About a third were enacted with the appropriations bill – an impressive accomplishment. Governors are personally engaged to a degree that hadn't been seen before. Nine of the nineteen governors are termed out this fall, thus there will be a large turnover in WGA membership.
- Intertribal Timber Council Large Fire Review – *Vern Stearns and Jim Durglo, ITC*
 - Referenced the latest study and follow up from 2016 report on large fires in 2015 and federal funding requirements and priorities. Tribes suffered \$521 million in timber losses and are working on reforestation. Tribal lands are underfunded and understaffed and need continued support from the federal government to sustain their lands. ATTACHMENT I
- State Perspective on Integration of Technology – *Mike Morgan, Director, Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire Prevention and Control* – Unfortunately, Director Morgan was called away to deal with ongoing fires in Colorado and not able to participate.

Next steps:

- Mike Zupko will continue working with WGA on opportunities for intersection with WGA's various initiatives and specific recommendations that touch WFLC issues including, but not limited to: Good Neighbor Authority, Endangered Species Act, economic development opportunities to support active management, workforce



challenges, federal/state relationships, infrastructure and existing authorities that could be tweaked to see greater impact on the ground. Zupko will continue to provide feedback to WGA on behalf of WFLC on all current and future initiatives of relevance.

- Jim Cason and Dan Jiron both offered opportunities to meet with ITC membership further when in DC to dig into some of the specifics that are more of a government to government issue than a WFLC issue. There was also discussion on how to make the Tribal Forestry Protection Act nimbler and less cumbersome.
- Zupko will stay in contact with Director Morgan and look for any future opportunities to engage and to learn from the structure the state of Colorado has built around technology in the wildland fire system.

Regional Cohesive Strategy Implementation Activities and Engagement Points

Objective: To hear from each of the RSCs to understand current activities that support WFLC priorities and the goals of the Cohesive Strategy. WFLC will consider opportunities for further engagement at the regional and local level to support national and regional priorities around CS core goals.

Discussion: NERSC, SRSC, and WRSC are thriving and conducting a variety of activities to implement the Cohesive Strategy. ATTACHMENTS II, III, IV

- NERSC Highlights (*Dave Celino, Chair*) – Recently held a meeting jointly with state fire supervisors and are working through several work groups on regional priorities – risk assessment/mitigation planning, prescribed fire, resource sharing/barriers and local engagement. Concern with liability related to resource sharing continues to be a big issue in the NE.
- SRSC Highlights (*Gary Wood, Coordinator*) – Fire year started right at the first of the year in the SE. A facilitated learning analysis occurred last year, and another is being planned due to a recent fatality. Prescribed fire continues to be an active tool.
- WRSC Highlights (*Katie Lighthall, Coordinator*) – Focusing on networks and reaching people at the ground level. Learning labs continue to be successful as was the recent face to face meeting in Utah that brought together a large group to talk through regional issues and learn from success on the ground.

National Legislation informing wildland fire and land management

Kelsey Delaney, Western Forestry Leadership Coalition and Gary Schiff, NASF (on phone)

Objective: To hear a consistent and straightforward overview of recent legislation and proposals at the national level that will influence wildland fire and land management.



Discussion – ATTACHMENT V was distributed.

- A deep overview of the wildland fire and land management portions of the recently enacted Omnibus was presented, including the wildland fire funding “fix” that will go into place in 2020.
- There are multiple opportunities within GNA and stewardship contracting to increase the pace and scale. There are also future opportunities to consider expanding some of those authorities to additional federal agencies.
- There was discussion on further exposing Congressional staffers and other key staff in DC to issues of importance to WFLC. (E.g. Zupko has been working with NGA on the potential of a field tour near DC for governors’ staff to participate.)

Next Steps:

- Key components of the conversation will carry over to specific priority initiatives in the afternoon discussion.
- Zupko will continue to look for and build opportunities to help educate key staff in DC on issues of importance to WFLC members (e.g. NGA tour and potential Congressional field tours).
- WFLC members will continue to consider opportunities to further utilize existing authorities to expand pace and scale of work on the ground.

Work Environment

Vicki Christiansen, USFS, led the discussion

Objective: WFLC will collectively work to frame the issue across agencies and organizations and learn from one another’s best practices and opportunities to enhance engagement going forward.

Discussion:

- Christiansen began the discussion by explaining recent and current work that the Forest Service is leading around work environment including: working on agency values for the past 18 months, understanding needs and concerns of employees over the past few months, putting a focus on humility, empathy, respect and straight talk. And currently (the same week of the WFLC meeting) FS was hosting “stand up for each other” week where every unit, over 35,000 employees, will be down for one day to have anti-harassment training given by agency leadership.
- Other WFLC members shared recent enhancements in this area including: the new DOI anti-harassment policy, creation of a code of conduct (Forest Service), confidential surveys and facilitated sessions (NPS for specific instances), opportunity for the Safety Leadership Council to engage on this discussion across agencies, how to reach seasonal employees and how to ensure issues are consistently handled between organizations when the harassment occurs between employees of different organizations.



Next Steps:

- WFLC alignment of intent – Zupko has distributed several drafts of a work environment letter for all WFLC principals to review and sign. He will finalize with the last feedback and distribute for signature soon after the meeting and will work with each agency and organization to facilitate individual signature processes.
- Determining a streamlined method to work across agencies and organizations (federal, state, tribal and local) on issues dealing with work environment. Jeff Rupert to take the lead and reach out to NIFC to understand the current process in place and identify gaps and next steps, if necessary.

Active Management and Improving Forest Condition

Paul Steblein introduced the discussion and was followed by Eva Karau (USFS) then Brian Cottam (Utah DNR, Division of Forestry) and Lowell Ballard (Timmons Group).

Objective: To increase awareness of data, tools and support available to promote active management and identify gaps and opportunities that can be jointly addressed to further impact on the ground.

Discussion:

- Steblein presented the background and overview of the topic reiterating there are many ways (and justifications) for how risk can be determined but understanding how each agency and organization views risks and hazards is important and can help facilitate better coordination across partners in reducing risk across the landscape.
- The Forest Service highlighted one tool they have funded recently called the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW) program and some of the short-term successes at the community level. This shows the interface between federal land and local jurisdictional boundaries and how to approach collectively.
- Cottam and Ballard presented the work Utah is doing to pull all land management partners together using a singular tool in a programmatic way (CAT FIRE and the UWRAP program). Additionally, they discussed how a feedback mechanism is an integral part of the success of the program by making sure both land disturbance and activity on the ground is remapped on a continuous (currently proposed annually) basis.
- There was discussion across WFLC members as to how we can collectively create a “dashboard” and way to collect joint successes and do storytelling to further our issues and needs across the wildland community.
- Rupert led a brief discussion on policy opportunities to both expand current authorities to other agencies/departments and considerations of additional initiatives to help further the ability to expand the use of active management to reduce catastrophic wildland fire potential.

Next Steps:



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- Two next steps were proposed (USGS is taking the lead to coordinate):
 - Better defining the gaps in data and propose methodologies for capturing proposed and implemented treatments (primarily on federal land, but potentially on state and tribal).
 - Development of a national map with wildfire potential, what it means across partners, and potential mechanisms to address and reduce potential (hazard and/or risks).

There is potential with both items to consider pilots projects as well as a communications angle to help better capture the story and message opportunities and challenges. Zupko to work with Steblein on the non-technical aspects for consideration.

- Zupko and Rupert will continue to socialize potential policy solutions to help further the use of active management as an avenue to reduce wildfire potential.

Mitigating Post Fire Impacts

George Geissler opened the discussion, followed by Jason Kean (USGS) and Jonathan Bruno (Coalition for the Upper South Platte)

Objective: Gain an understanding of current research to better understand post-fire risk before wildfires as well as needs and opportunities for better coordination after a fire, especially on non-federal lands.

Discussion:

- Kean presented a brief power point on recent work of USGS to model post fire risks before a wildland fire occurs. This allows managers an additional tool when allocating risk reduction funds for mitigation before a wildfire.
- Bruno elaborated on some of the work CUSP is doing locally in Colorado as well as a network of other practitioners that is coming together (Burned Area Learning Network) to build upon successes of one another while creating methodologies for communities impacted by wildfire to quickly respond and hopefully mitigate post fire impacts.

Next Steps:

- Shawna Legarza, Zupko and Bruno will work with a small team (Zupko will pull from the existing sounding board group he has assembled) to evaluate an organized way to understand post fire risk. Utilize the BALN and USGS to help set up. There is an opportunity to beta test around Colorado Springs.
- Bruno will compile a list of lessons learned and mistakes made (opportunities for improvement) that he will share with Zupko to share with the full group.



Integration of Technology and Data Across Wildland Fire Organizations

Jeff Rupert led the discussion

Objective: Learning from one another and exploring opportunities to better integrate and develop systems to share information, data and tools.

Discussion:

- Several specific updates were given to the group (Wildland Fire Information and Technology (WFIT) 5-year strategy, Landfire update and remapping status and opportunities for expanded use of equipment).
- Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) – Harry Humbert discussed the recently rolled out call-when-needed contract opportunities for use of the DOI UAS fleet. There was discussion as to how access to other equipment may follow suite.

Next Steps:

- Specific to WFIT, there will be a briefing on specifically what systems have been retired and what are next steps to make various processes more efficient. Rupert will coordinate with the leadership of WFIT.
- Patti Blankenship will coordinate with FEMA on additional opportunities for integration of technology, including risk mapping and risk determination modeling.

Brief Updates

- Smoke Management and Air Quality – *Cason, Jiron and Zupko* updated the group on several recent meetings with EPA and Department of Commerce (NOAA/NWS) and the opportunity to expand the working relationship and policy support from both organizations. Zupko will continue to facilitate the follow up directly from both meetings.
- Year-Round Workforce Challenges – *Legarza* discussed the need to begin considering different models in how wildland fire is approached with the fire year stretching 12 months of the year across the country. Her discussion was intended as a teaser for consideration going into the future.
- Veteran Hiring – *Rupert* gave an overview of the current status of veteran hiring, both in process and in opportunity. Cason expressed interest in further understanding how the federal agencies can be more aggressive in hiring veterans into the workforce. Rupert, Legarza and Zupko will connect and pull together considerations as to what an expanded or new initiative may look like.
- National Fallen Firefighter Foundation (NFFF) framing on work safety and “Everyone Goes Home” application to wildland – ATTACHMENT VI – *Erik Litzenberg and Patti Blankenship* gave a brief overview of the recent listening sessions and report out and relayed the current high-level findings. Zupko has also been in contact with the NFFF leadership on this project about a more in-depth presentation to WFLC with the potential



to utilize in defining next steps within a workplace safety and workforce initiative. Zupko will continue to coordinate with NFFF and others to define next steps.

- Local Authorities Reducing Risk - Cross Boundary Engagement – *Mayor Suthers and Brett Lacey* updated the group on discussions from a small team that has been convened since the March WFLC meeting to discuss this issue. Two items were identified:
 - Producing a white-paper clearly defining the issues and opportunities to expand the use of local authorities in reducing risk across boundary
 - Production of a “best practices” paper to help communities understand how they may better engage on cross boundary issue when working with federal and state land managers in their local area.
- Fire Year Messaging – joint message and steps forward – *Zupko* briefed the group on the final document and relayed he would be working directly with each WFLC member to identify key communications staff and ensure they have at the least received a copy of the briefing paper, but most likely Zupko will spend time with each discussing the intent and potential use/infusion of the term in to ongoing messaging. ATTACHMENT VIII

ROUND ROBIN

Discussion:

- Patti Blankenship discussed the *WFLC Strategic Alignment Report* that was completed by WFLC’s National Strategy Committee in 2016 to compile all Cohesive Strategy related documents to date and look at potential next steps and implementation methodologies at the national level. She provided a hard copy of the report. ATTACHMENT IX
- Christiansen discussed the opportunity to collectively work on issues related to empowering landowners to complete work on non-federal land to reduce risk.
- Legarza discussed the potential for one system to be utilized beginning in 2019 for collective qualifications.
- Erik Litzenberg discussed two items specifically related to IAFC:
 - A recently released position statement on utilization of local resources. He will provide a link or copy once it is finalized within IAFC.
 - The Wildland Fire Policy Committee is currently constructing a “Leadership Guide” for the fire service on wildland fire. Intended as a primer to help leadership in departments who either don’t realize they have a wildland fire problem, or do, but don’t know where to start in considering next steps. Once completed, he will share with the Council.

Next Steps:

- Zupko will work with each WFLC member above to determine potential next steps or to better define the opportunity for collective WFLC consideration.



Public Comment

- No public comment was made.

Next Steps and Closeout

- Zupko briefly reviewed the action items identified during the meeting and discussed potential paths forward for each.
- Zupko will follow up with each principal as to agency/organization priorities to help build the more focused next meeting agenda and to secure signatures for the final work environment letter that will be distributed within the next week or two.
- The next meeting is tentatively planned for late September or early October, in Washington DC. Zupko will work with the members to determine the specific date.