



NWCG 2010 Annual Report

2010 Edition

August 29, 2011

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From the Executive Board Chair

As you all know, NWCG provides a national forum for wildland fire leadership to deliberate and collaborate on short and long-term wildland fire management issues. It initiates actions to improve coordination and integration of state, local, tribal, and federal wildland fire programs while recognizing individual agency missions. This forum also provides a venue for establishing, implementing, maintaining, and communicating policy, standards, guidelines, and qualifications for wildland fire program management. NWCG supports the National Incident Management System.

As you read through this summary of NWCG's major accomplishments for the fiscal year 2010, it is my hope that

the results of the many hours of hard work by our committees, subcommittees, workgroups, and Program Management Unit (PMU) staff have indeed made a difference in the wildland fire work environment.

In addition to his full time job as National Park Service Branch Chief of Wildland Fire, NWCG Executive Board (EB) Chair Bill Kaage represents NWCG at Wildland Fire Executive Council meetings, National Association of State Foresters Fire Committee meetings, and other meetings and events. His other NWCG duties include conducting NWCG Executive Board meetings, establishing subgroups, and interacting & collaborating with member agencies and partners.

Infectious Disease Guidelines are Issued

In early 2010, NWCG issued the *NWCG Infectious Diseases Guidelines* to assist incident management personnel with preventing the spread of infectious diseases and response to outbreaks should they occur during incident operations.

Although good personal hygiene is the single most effective means of infection disease prevention, the close living conditions on an incident contributes to rapid spreading of contagious microorganisms and outbreaks of "camp crud". Outbreaks of diseases have also historically spread from incident to incident as people are reassigned, challenging inci-

dent management teams. A workforce that has been infected impacts not only the work environment but personal and family life.

As a result, the NWCG Risk Management Committee developed the *Infectious Diseases Guidelines for Wildland Fire incident Management Teams* ([Link to document](#)) to outline how diseases spread and to develop protocol to effectively address an outbreak. The intent of the document is to help ensure incident medical episodes of infectious disease are prevented or contained and controlled through rapid intervention.

Leadership

We believe effective wildland fire management is the result of leadership at all levels, therefore, we will provide and promote leadership throughout all NWCG activities.

Dutch Creek Serious Accident Action Plan

On July 25, 2008, a firefighter working on the Iron Complex Fire on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in California died as the result of a tree felling incident. A Serious Accident Investigation Team studied the incident and an interagency Accident Review Board recommended eight corrective measures to be taken by wildland fire agencies to prevent similar accidents from occurring in the future. Those recommendations were outlined in the Dutch Creek Serious Accident Tasking Plan. NWCG was asked to address six of the recommendations and two were assigned to individual wildland fire agencies.

To respond to the six recommendations, the NWCG Executive Board assembled an interagency Dutch Creek Serious Accident Task Team (Task Team) in February 2010. The Task Team had representatives with expertise in risk management, operations, command, and dispatch. The Task Team

was tasked to develop a plan of action to resolve the findings from the Dutch Creek Serious Accident Investigation Report and Accident Review Board.

The Task Team recommendations were approved by the NWCG Executive Board. These recommendations provided direction in three main areas:

- Standardized Medical Emergency Procedures for Incident Management Teams (IMT) to include in their Incident Emergency Plans
- Standardized Communication Center Protocols
- An expanded ICS 206 Medical Plan to include emergency medical procedures that will be reviewed each Operational Period at the Planning Meeting.

The NWCG Executive Board recognizes that all IMTs place safety as their number one priority and are committed to caring for everyone assigned to incidents.

For background information on the Dutch Creek Accident, please visit [background information on the Dutch Creek Accident](#).

To view the Dutch Creek Serious Accident Investigation Report Response Memorandum visit:

[Dutch Creek Serious Accident Investigation Report Response Memorandum](#)

Geospatial Framework: A Nation Prepared

Geospatial systems are a critical component in managing federal, state, and local wildland fire programs and supporting wildland fire applications. As a result of rising demands for geospatial technologies to support decision making, NWCG developed an interagency wildland fire geospatial technology strategic framework. The framework provides a status of the interagency geospatial community, an assessment of current NWCG mission strategies and capabilities, and estimates of future requirements for wildland fire management related to geospatial technologies.

Most importantly, the framework includes recommendations for implementation and strategic governance of the wildland fire community's GIS program. The framework

can be found at [Link to NWCG Geospatial Strategic Framework](#). Considering the findings and recommendations, the NWCG Executive Board determined geospatial priorities and logical next steps to begin to implement the framework. For example, the new Geospatial Subcommittee, chartered under the Information Technology Committee (ITC), will lead the implementation of many elements identified in the framework over the next several years. In addition, the new Data Standards and Terminology Subcommittee, also chartered under the ITC, will guide NWCG committees through the process of developing and approving data standards and glossary terminology. Look for more progress on the Geospatial Framework in the future.

NWCG Strategic Plan/Tactical Actions Approved

The NWCG Executive Board validated and updated the NWCG Strategic Plan beginning in January 2010. The plan highlights NWCG's mission, guiding principles, and goals. Objectives, success assumptions, and barriers to achievement are identified for each goal. This revision also included the addition of Tactical Actions.

The Strategic Plan reinforces the NWCG's seven Guiding Principles. These principles are the foundation upon which we build our program and priorities. The seven principles are safety, cost effectiveness, interagency communication/coordination/cooperation, leadership, trust & integrity,

respect, and excellence.

In September, the Executive Board approved the Strategic Plan and Tactical Actions revision. This document will be used to guide the NWCG annual work plans. Not all actions or activities by NWCG groups are captured in the tactical actions. Most notably, ongoing work or routine maintenance type work may not be included. The Branch Coordinators will continue to work with committees to determine appropriate tactical actions for each committee to include in their annual work plans along with identification of ongoing and maintenance activities.

Excellence

We believe in excellence throughout all NWCG activities; therefore, we are deliberative in our decision-making process and are accountable for our actions.

Corporate University: From Hire to Retire

In the fall of 2009, NWCG established a design team of wildland fire experts to work with a contractor to produce a Corporate University Business Plan and Launch Plan. The Business Plan takes a more holistic view of learning and development "from hire to retire" for the wildland fire and aviation community.

The Launch Plan, delivered in October 2010 with the Business Plan, defines a phased approach to implementing the Wildland Fire Institute over a 10-year period.

The Wildland Fire Institute integrates the various training programs, courses, and technologies. It also places new emphasis on succession planning and accountability and addresses gaps in learning and development associated with incident and non-incident related skills and leadership. At the request of the NWCG Executive Board, the Program Management Unit is reviewing the details of the Launch Plan and will provide recommendations for next steps; this work is in progress.

Target Architecture Guides Wildland Fire Applications

To facilitate a strategic vision for the future regarding IT investments, the NWCG realized a need for a high-level framework of the existing applications used by the fire community and an evaluation of opportunities to consolidate and fill gaps into the future.

A contract to begin work on the framework, or target architecture, was awarded and started in December of 2010. The end product is a target architecture that presents a 5-year plan to proceed with IT investments to maximize the funds available for investments, consolidate investments to minimize the number of applications the field must learn, and fill any gaps in applications in the wildland fire community.

To develop the target architecture, the contractor worked with the existing wildland fire application portfolio of IT systems and researched the areas of wildland fire using those applications. The Wildland Fire Blueprint and Wildland Fire Business Reference Model, both of which offer a comprehensive and structured analysis of the state of wildland fire, were also used as a base upon which to build.

The NWCG target architecture is intended to be a living document which will be integrated at the Departmental level. The NWCG architects will continue to work with the IT committees to further analyze the applications in relationship to the business areas they support.

NWCG Training Branch

At the beginning of January 2011, the NWCG Training Unit was reorganized under the governance structure of the NWCG Program Management Unit. The Training Unit had previously been managed under the BLM Operations Branch. The Training Unit has been renamed to NWCG Training Branch.

Respect

We believe in mutual respect for the differences in member organizations' responsibilities, missions, and capabilities, therefore, NWCG decisions represent a consensus and are supported by all.

Partnerships...

Successful partnerships and collaboration are at the heart of NWCG business. Each year the NWCG organization looks for opportunities to forge new relationships to further enhance the NWCG mission. Over the last year, the Executive Board, Program Management Unit, and committees interacted with several new and established partners including:

- ◆ Australia/New Zealand Forest Fire Management Group
- ◆ Canada Interagency Forest Fire Centre
- ◆ Center for Disease Control
- ◆ Civilian Applications Committee
- ◆ International Association of Fire Chiefs
- ◆ Joint Fire Science Program
- ◆ National Association of EMS Officials
- ◆ National Association of EMS Physicians
- ◆ National Fire Protection Association
- ◆ National Integration Center, Federal Emergency Management Agency – Department of Homeland Security
- ◆ National Weather Service
- ◆ The Nature Conservancy
- ◆ North American Invasive Species Network
- ◆ Missoula and San Dimas Technology and Development Centers

Medical Units Share Minimum Standards

After years of hard work and good coordination by the NWCG Risk Management Committee (formerly the Safety and Health Working Team); the National Association of EMS Officials (NASEMSO); the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP); numerous outside organizations; and from individual medical unit leaders, the *Interim NWCG Minimum Standards for Medical Units* has been published.

The interim standards reflects a national approach focused on providing a coordinated, consistent, and comprehensive delivery of emergency medical services (EMS) and occupational health on federal wildland fires in the United States. The standards outlined in the document are designed to be utilized

as minimum expectations for EMS personnel and services associated with federal wildland fire incidents. However, medical directors of various programs and agencies may identify alternative standards for use within their jurisdictional purview, therefore if questions or discrepancies are found, consult the appropriate medical director or state EMS authority.

Annually or when deemed appropriate, the NWCG will update the procedures, guidelines, supplies and equipment identified within this document. The most recent version of the document is posted on Risk Management Committee's website [Link to Incident Emergency Medical Policy and Guides](#).

Rhabdomyolysis Epidemiological Study

The NWCG Risk Management Committee (RMC) has initiated a study with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to look at the occurrence of Rhabdomyolysis in the wildland firefighting community. Rhabdomyolysis is a condition characterized by the rapid destruction of skeletal muscle due to muscle trauma or strain. It can be brought on by physical, chemical, or biological factors such as excessive physical exertion and dehydration. Rhabdomyolysis can result in permanent disabilities.

Concerned with the number and severity of

reported cases of Rhabdomyolysis in the wildland fire community, the RMC and the CDC will study and assess the existing risk factors associated with arduous-duty firefighter job duties and recommend Rhabdomyolysis prevention measures. The study findings will also result in educational materials and could lead to subsequent studies.

The initial study was concluded in April 2011. Guidance for Rhabdomyolysis prevention was issued in May and is posted at [Link to guidance for Rhabdomyolysis prevention](#).

Incident Management Organizations: Succession Planning

Participation on national interagency incident management teams (IMTs) has been on the decline over the last several years and recent studies such as the interagency *Quadrennial Fire Review, 2009* demonstrate that the current workforce will not sustain the current IMT model and demands for the future. The NWCG Executive Board chartered and tasked a National Incident Management Organization Succession Planning Project Team to analyze and provide alternatives for future incident management of national wildland fires.

The team, whose membership includes people with an extensive leadership and incident management background, developed and unveiled, for consideration by the

NWCG Executive Board and all stakeholders of wildland fire, a set of seven organizational models. In 2011, the IMOSPT will wrap up months of stakeholder engagement sessions and on line interactions. The stakeholder engagement was designed to get feedback and comments from a broad audience about the organization models under analysis. The comments received will be used to develop a preferred organizational model for the Executive Board. The model to be implemented in the coming years will likely include aspects of multiple models. For additional information, visit [Link to Incident Management Organization Succession Planning](#).

NWCG & FEMA, Working Together

The NWCG Executive Board has established ongoing collaboration and dialogue with FEMA National Integration Division. Areas of mutual interest, such as training and position qualifications, have been identified and coordination between NWCG

Committee and FEMA Working Teams established. Both agencies will continue to identify these areas of mutual interest to reduce redundancy and enhance response to national incidents.

Safety

We believe safety is our core value, therefore, public and firefighter safety is our first priority in all wildland fire management activities.

Interagency Communication, Coordination, & Cooperation

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Fire Policy Terminology Gets an Update

Consistency and simplicity in terminology is essential to promote greater understanding by units and teams managing fires, as well as the interested public. The revised *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2009)* brought a paradigm shift in how agencies respond to federal wildfires. This shift resulted in a need to update terminology used by NWCG agencies to communicate about wildland fire to internal and external audiences.

A list of terms that changed or deemed obsolete as a result of the guidance can be found at [Link to Memorandum of Terminology Updates Resulting from Release of the Guidance](#). Use of existing terms within agency policies, guidance, plans, publica-

tions, brochures, exhibits, et cetera is acceptable. These documents still have good information and requests for immediate updates may be unnecessary; rather wait until current stock is exhausted and/or revision is planned.

For internal and external audiences, the focus should be on telling the story versus getting caught up in explaining the terminology differences. The simplest approach is to explain to cooperators, regulators, and the public what is being done operationally, why the actions are being taken, and how these actions affect firefighters and other stakeholders.

The NWCG glossary will be updated with the new terminology definitions in 2011.

New NWCG Web Portal Being Developed

In September 2010, a contract was awarded to design, develop, and implement a new Web Portal for use by the NWCG organization, its partners, and other interested parties. The new Web Portal will replace the existing NWCG website and the 'www.nwcg.gov' internet domain name will be retained for the new web portal.

The NWCG Web Portal Project is a two phase project. Phase I is development of the stakeholder analysis, business requirements analysis, and web portal design. Phase II is the web portal development/

implementation and delivery of all supporting documentation. As part of the design phase, the contractor met with stakeholders to determine business requirements and capabilities that could be included in the new web portal. The requirements document is under review to determine if it is complete and correct. The next steps will be for stakeholders to review use cases for each business area, review the portal design and begin prototype testing. The design and development work is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2011.

Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Agreement Update in Progress

The NWCG Executive Board and the Incident Business Committee have provided comments and support to the update of the Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Agreement template. The agreement template will improve efficiency by facilitating standardized input, coordination, and exchange of personnel, equipment, supplies, and services among agencies. The updated

agreement template is in the review phase in the DOI and Forest Service Washington Offices. Until the new agreement is signed, the existing agreement template should continue to be used. This is an important document for all of the wildland fire partners and NWCG will remain engaged.

NWCG Budget Process is Improved

The NWCG budget process is intended to provide a system to fund NWCG projects in a cost-effective and analytical manner. The budget process was reviewed at the end of fiscal year 2010 to incorporate new guidance from the NWCG Executive Board, user feedback, and lessons learned throughout the year. In fiscal year 2011, NWCG subgroups received approximately \$2.83 million for 45 projects.

To be considered for NWCG funding, committees, subcommittees and other NWCG sponsored programs are required to submit annual budget requests for new or on-going work, including training and information technology. Only projects that are within the scope of NWCG and meet the NWCG Areas of Emphasis are recommended by the PMU and Budget Advisory Unit to the Executive Board for funding. In

2011, projects were funded that supported the NWCG Strategic Plan, were part of the subgroups annual program of work, or moved NWCG towards the future. Projects include support for fire weather, fire behavior, predictive service programs that enhance the agencies' ability to use and manage data; training course revisions, publications, the NWCG web portal development, and health and safety for firefighters.

The budget process will continue to be revised in order to gain efficiencies and to meet the NWCG objectives. The future budget process may include the development of a database that will automate the budget process by tracking prior year budget requests, quarterly and end of year accomplishment reports.

Wildland Fire Investment Evaluation Board

The Wildland Fire Investment Evaluation Board (WFIEB) is a review board that evaluates wildland fire related information technology investments. The membership of the WFIEB consists of the agency fire directors or their representative, the PMU Program Manager, and the NWCG Portfolio Coordinator. The branch coordinators, architects, and agency fire information technology (IT) leads act as consulting members of the Board. Through the WFIEB, wildland fire IT investments are vetted through NWCG committees for their feedback.

The WFIEB evaluates the investments by considering the merits of the investment to the wildland fire community, committee feedback, PMU technical analysis, and Information Technology Committee input.

The result of the process is improved coordination of IT investments, timely interagency technical review of proposed field-developed applications, prioritization of the limited investment funds, review of new ideas, and the ability to forecast future funding requirements. In 2011, the PMU and Information Technology Committee will refine and document the Investment Evaluation Board process.

A portfolio of wildland fire related IT investments has been created and is constantly updated for the WFIEB. The review process will continue to be refined based on stakeholder feedback, interaction with DOI and FS investment boards, and forecasting future needs that are not currently being met.

Cost Effectiveness

We believe the wise and efficient use of funds is a high priority; therefore, we will consider and evaluate the costs associated with implementing NWCG's objectives.

Trust & Integrity

We believe trust and integrity are inherent to the success of the NWCG, therefore, deliberations will be open and transparent and we will honor, respect, and support the decisions of the NWCG.

NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

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Visit us on the web at:
www.nwcg.gov



NWCG Committees Receive Support Services

Early in 2010, the NWCG committee chairs and the Program Management Unit (PMU) collaborated to identify and prioritize committee needs for support services including meeting management, communication support, note taking and geospatial work. The intent of finding support for committees is to reduce the administrative workload on committee

chairs and to increase the efficiency of committee meetings. Through an interagency outreach process, assistance was provided to committees to address their highest priority support needs.

The NWCG PMU will continue to monitor and evaluate support services needs for committees and subgroups into fiscal year 2011.

Operating Principles and Guidelines for NWCG Revised

The *NWCG Operating Principles and Guidelines (PMS 900)* is the document that provides consistent and uniform guidance to the NWCG organization for use in conducting NWCG business. The document provides the foundation for consistent and repeatable business practices shared by all NWCG groups to eliminate inefficiencies of each group developing its own processes.

The original version of the document was released in October 2009, and has been

updated periodically to include new processes, definitions, and guidance for NWCG business practices. A revised version was released at the end of 2010. It is posted at [Link to NWCG Operating Principles and Guidelines](#). Many of the updates clarify or expand existing processes; other modifications provide new information. A few of the notable changes between previous and the newest versions include revised NWCG logo use policy, the budget guidance, and the investment review process.

Collective Efforts Improve Records Management

In August 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding for the Coordination and Cooperation for Management of National Wildlife Coordinating Group Records was signed. In the agreement, partnering agencies agree to work together and support each other in the national effort to make improvements in the filing, maintenance, use, and archiving of records created as a result of the collective efforts of the Executive Board of NWCG

and its subgroups. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) established a new 'Record Group: 583' for the records of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. The Schedule of Disposition is currently in review status and is anticipated to be provided to NARA for their review and approval in the fall of 2011.



Photo courtesy of National Park Service

*Do you have a comment or suggestion for NWCG? If so, please contact
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