



The NWCG Smoke Committee (SmoC) held a meeting in Seattle in March 2011. It was a three-day meeting covering three major topic areas: Revisions to the 1998 EPA Air Quality Policy on Wildland and Prescribed Fire (Interim Policy), SmoC Strategic Objectives, and Technical Topics.

Day 1 – Revisions to the 1998 EPA Air Quality Policy on Wildland and Prescribed Fire (Interim Policy)

SmoC spent the first day discussing revisions to the 1998 EPA Air Quality Policy on Wildland and Prescribed Fire (Interim Policy), formulating ideas that we as a group thought should be included in the Policy. SmoC can provide a unique and comprehensive perspective on the Interim Policy because we are comprised of state/local air quality members representing air quality needs, and federal, state and private land managers representing the ecological needs of fire. Topics discussed ranged from definitions (planned and unplanned ignitions), communication & collaboration, inclusion of air quality concerns into the wildfire decision making process, health and safety (both fire fighter and public), and level of detail that should be in the Policy. Key outcomes were:

- **Policy Goals:** The original Policy had two good goals: (1) maintain natural role of fire in the ecosystem (2) protect public health.
- **Planned and Unplanned Ignitions:** The definitions of planned and unplanned ignitions as set forth in the Federal Fire Implementation Guide leads to a natural split between how wildfires and prescribed fires are addressed in the Policy.
- **Wildfires – Communication and Collaboration, Safety:** Much discussion centered around how to address air quality during wildfires, with communication and collaboration between air quality specialists and land managers being emphasized along with fire fighter safety.
- **Prescribed Fires – BSMP/SMP/ESMP Approach:** For prescribed fires, the three-tiers of basic smoke management practices (BSMPs), to smoke management programs (SMPs) to enhanced smoke management programs (ESMPs) was discussed as each tier reflects increasing stringency and management intensity.
- **Flexibility:** For both wildfire and prescribed fire, flexibility in the Policy should be maintained to address smoke impacts in the manner most effective for the particular State/region.

Day 2 – SmoC Strategic Objectives

The second day we worked on formulating our strategic objectives for SmoC and looking to the future of what we envision addressing.

- **Intent Document:** We worked on crafting our NWCG Intent document which captures our Vision/Purpose/Mission, the scope of what we are responsible & accountable for, our organizational structure, and details about our membership. SmoC is unique to the Committees under NWCG because our membership includes agencies outside of NWCG (NACAA, NRCS, TNC, and DoD in the near future). We have a vision of balancing air quality and fire objectives to allow fire to play its ecosystem role while protecting health, safety, and welfare.
- **Subcommittees:** Three Subcommittees operate under SmoC: the Training Subcommittee, the Smoke Managers Subcommittee (email list of approximately 140 people/agencies), and the Technical Smoke Topics Subcommittee. The decision was made to establish an Emission Inventory Working Group under the Technical Smoke Topics Subcommittee which would actually be comprised of two groups; a technical group and a policy group.
- **Communication/Messaging:** One thing we are struggling with as a Committee is communication and messaging - How do we get smoke messaging out to the field, other NWCG committees, NWCG and agency leadership, our agencies, and the public? This has been



brought to NWCG's attention and another working group is being pulled together to address this. One method of communication being pursued is hosting of periodic webinars to inform interested people and agencies about our current activities and/or to address a particular topic of interest.

- **Current and Upcoming Topics/Issues:** Finally, we discussed issues that we are currently tracking and issues that we see for the future, which are: Emission Inventories, Greenhouse Gases, SMARTFIRE2, Monitoring, Communication Challenges, Smoke Management Guide revisions, EPA Smoke Policy, PM NAAQS, Black Carbon, Ozone NAAQS, AQI changes that will come with the NAAQS, Implementation guidance that comes out with the NAAQS, the National Air Toxics Assessment, Exceptional Event Rule issues, General Conformity implementation, SMP revisions/implementations (CO, NM, KS currently), and Federal Fire Policy implementation. A briefing paper summarizing these issues is in process.

Day 3 – Technical Topics

On the third day we had presentations and discussions on the following topics, with invited speakers: 2008 EPA National Emission Inventory (NEI - Tesh Rao (EPA)), Emission Inventories/SMARTFIRE (Dr. Sim Larkin (FS), Dr. Tara Strand (FS)), Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS – Dr. Tom Zimmerman (FS), Marlena Hovorka (FS), Tami Parkinson (FS)), WFDSS Air Quality Portal (Miriam Rorig (FS), Dr. Tara Strand (FS)), Joint Fire Sciences Program (JFSP) Smoke Science Plan (Dr. John Cissel (BLM)), and SmoC Training Subcommittee discussions.

Emission Inventories: With both Tesh Rao and Sim Larkin present we were able to discuss EPA plans for the 2008 NEI (which SMARTFIRE is being used for) and the spinning up of a NWCG Emission Inventory Working Group. Both Tesh and Sim are willing to participate in the working group and Tesh is going to identify others from EPA for inclusion (EPA research via ORD, and the EPA GHG group). SMARTFIRE was developed as a daily fire activity and smoke impacts tool, not as a retrospective emission inventory tool, thus there have been difficulties adapting it to EPA NEI needs. The EPA NEI is also being used for the EPA Black Carbon report to Congress.

Wildland Fire Decision Support System: Tom Zimmerman's group gave a presentation of WFDSS and how it is being used in wildfire decision making. Miriam Rorig then followed up with a presentation of the WFDSS Air Quality Portal - tools that give land managers air quality and smoke information that can be used stand-alone or as part of WFDSS (<http://firesmoke.us/wfdss/>).

JFSP Smoke Science Plan: Smoke gets approximately 12% of JFSP funds. Some of the air quality/smoke topics funded thus far are: ozone, atmospheric transport, public perceptions of smoke, black carbon transport/deposition, megafires, and field experiments. The Smoke Science Plan has 4 drivers/themes for smoke research: smoke emissions inventory research, climate change and smoke, fire and smoke model validation, and smoke and populations (ecosystem and human health). Discussion occurred about how the following topics fit into the Smoke Science Plan: fire fighter smoke exposure and transportation problems, fire/smoke/GHG emissions and ecosystem carbon cycle, in-plume chemical and physical processes, and smoke plume/atmospheric feedback processes. JFSP was identified as a Strategic Partner for inclusion in the SmoC Intent document. Robyn Heffernan (NWS) was also present for this discussion and she related that smoke is one of the two areas which the NWS has identified for future growth (climate being the other). The NWS was identified as another SmoC Strategic Partner.

Acknowledgements: Primary author Susan O'Neill (Natural Resources Conservation Service).

Contact: Pete Lahm, SmoC Chair, US Forest Service // 202-205-1084 // plahm@fs.fed.us, pete.lahm@gmail.com
For additional information on SmoC go to: <http://www.myfirecommunity.net/Neighborhood.aspx?ID=279>