

Minutes: FUWT November 6 - 8, 2007

Facilitator: Dave Mueller

Note Taker: Max Schwartz

Attendance: Dave Mueller BLM, John Dickinson, Ed Brunson TNC, Dan Buckley NPS, Tony Mediati CDF/CALFIRE, Mary Taber BIA, Kim Van Hemelryck FWS

Tuesday November 6,

Opening Business

1. Agenda overview, additions
2. Today, 0900 conference call with IOS WT
3. NWCG FUWT Task List Update
 - a. Overview of NWCG governance structure. Old NFAEB groups are now pulled out of NWCG structures, are separate groups that report directly to respective Fire Directors.
 - b. NWCG determining how many WT are really needed; some may be combined or removed. Task list is supposed to show the value of each team.
 - c. Need to find out whether or not PMS 824 is completed. Also possible that this issue could be passed on to the Fire and Air Issues Coordination Group.
 - i. **Action: Dave Mueller will contact Pete Lahm from FAICG in order to clarify smoke/fuels responsibility issue. (Include RX-410, PMS 420-2)**
 - d. PMS 814 is complete.
 - i. **Action: Tim Sexton will distribute new work by Riverside Firelab on Chaparral moisture when completed.**
 - e. Goals, objectives and strategies are referenced back to the official goals of the new NWCG. ID'ed by Dave Mueller.
 - i. **Action: Dave Mueller will send out the NWCG strategic plan and goals document so that FUWT members can check against the FUWT activity and strategic plan spread sheet**

FIRB, Command and Operations Position Task Books

1. BLM created a position called FIRL, similar to strike team leader. Began discussion: should FIRB position be eliminated, and its tasks incorporated in command and operations positions? (All fires should be managed for objectives, whether RX fire or WF or WFU.) At the same time as this discussion was happening, all task books were moved away from tasks to competencies. Also moved toward tiered task books (tiered off of previous task books). Certain competencies and behaviors are new for each position, while some are carried

through every position. As part of this effort, NIFCG tasked FUWT with incorporating FIRB into command and operations.

2. Once these task books are finalized, they will not be reviewed for another five years. Which is more problematic: doing this project under a very quick time frame or waiting until the next revision happens in five years.
3. Our job: we need a clear proposal about whether or not to recommend this move to the IOSWT. If we do this, where exactly do the tasks go; what levels of operations do these tasks move to?

IOSWT Conference Call: Jim

1. IOSWT sees a lot of confusion in the field over this effort. People have a different idea of what the FIRB position actually does. Burn boss can move from an ignition specialist all the way to a semi- IC like position. Without a clear vision of the position, and without a clear vision of the changes, people are confused over what to do. Another concern: there are very few FIRB positions ever ordered through ROSS. (This might be voided because people don't use the ordering system in an Rx fire, and on a WF, the need comes up on an ad hoc basis, don't often have time to make an order). Other logistical concerns: A) fitness level—do the new positions (Single Resource Boss) that take over the FIRB tasks all become arduous fitness level positions (or do the people who had moderate fitness as FIRBs now have to have arduous fitness)? B) Once Single Resource Bosses get FIRB trained, it becomes a stepping stone towards ICT4 and other operations position. When we remove FIRB, then can people just use other skill positions to rise too quickly without fireline experience?
 - a. Note—no system can prevent this problem completely. But concerns still exist.
2. Pace of revision issues. A compromise: include competencies of FIRB into the operations positions without eliminating the FIRB position quite yet. Concerns: some FIRB competencies would be very difficult for a operations level position to achieve, so we'll need to have some flexibility on how people could show competency. Also, need to re-word policy to allow for both uses of FIRB/FIRL position as well as the acceptable operations-level position with the FIRB/FIRL competencies.
3. Another concern is avoiding bottlenecks at certain positions (e.g. firing bosses with no other skills, or in ops where people can't pick up certain firing competencies). If the programs depend on those people, then we could have problems. Could this restrict certain agencies from training more people into ops positions?
4. Certain resources only get their experience on suppression events, where some firing tasks are extremely rare. Could competency be demonstrated outside of

any incident? Using the “Rare Task” designation could allow for people to talk through certain competencies, but IOSWT is concerned that without any hands-on experience, there won’t be true competency. IOSWT would rather err on the side of caution, even if this causes a bottleneck in the attainment of ops positions.

5. On WF, FIRB were never used for complex firing procedures. There wasn’t time to order them on an ad hoc basis, so ICs just use their most competent ops person to lead that operation.
6. **Proposal:** add firing competencies to ops positions—but still retain all current FIRBs, and allow people to become FIRBs. Eventually, (hopefully) we’ll get to a point where we can eliminate FIRBs entirely.
7. Impersonal hiring: we are trying to encourage people to order resources without needing a personal connection to the resource—but adding the competencies to the ops positions might make the impersonal ordering process more difficult, because firing skills will not necessarily have a specialist position.
 - a. **Action: Prepare a draft white paper to present to the IOSWT next week in Boise. Mary Taber or Dan Buckley will present to IOSWT.**

Thursday, November 8,

RX 301, 341 Updates and Discussion

1. Test (beta) courses have been offered in Fairbanks Alaska and New York State. Suggested that a third course should be offered in an area where more Rx burning occurs. Both courses still need clarification and corrections. We need to add the changes from the IA. Biggest detriment to the classes is the lack of understanding of fire modeling (e.g. being able to run BEHAVE or BEHAVE+). Need more than just the self study course that we offer now. Possibility to offer a refresher so that we don’t have to rehash things for people who already understand the models, but don’t have to spend the time explaining the model during the course. Right now, proficiency in BEHAVE is a prereq to the course—maybe that needs to be emphasized more.
 - a. **Action: Kim will write a straw man white paper on BEHAVE in 341, circulate to FUWT. Our recommendation: reconstitute a fire modeling (BEHAVE or some other model) refresher course for people before RX 341. Kim will have ready by mid-December.**
2. Spring meeting of FUWT should be a joint meeting (or have some joint component) with FENWT.
 - a. **Action: Dave will make sure that there is an FENWT rep at our next meeting.**
3. 301 has as students both Burn Bosses and resource people—sometimes people in 301 didn’t have any business being in the course. We could offer another beta

course in the Great Basin Training Unit. Hold off the publishing until after the January course at theGBTU.

a. Action: Dave Mueller will follow up, make sure that 301 isn't published until after the January course. Follow-up: RX301 will not be published until spring. NWCG training allowed some 341 and 301 courses to be scheduled for this winter. Both courses will be sent out for field review in January/February with a publishing date of this spring.

4. Beta course didn't always incorporate what was learned in the alpha courses—because of failures by the SMEs. Any beta course in Boise should be as close to shelf-ready as possible.

Follow-up: RX341 is shelf ready. Comments from the New York beta test are positive enough to not require another test, however 341 will be sent out for field review in January/February

5. Prerequisites for Burn Boss: RX 301, with RX 341 suggested. People are concerned that if they have already taken RX 300 they would have to take 301 as well. FWS requires S 390 as well as RX 301 and RX 341 for RxB3s. BLM has talked about requiring RX 301, not sure about 341 for RxB2s. USFS will require RX 301, would like to see everyone take 341 but will not require it. Do the states have problems with requiring RX 301? Last time this issue came up, states opposed requiring the old RX 300 course.

- The states seem to be somewhat outside the NWCG training sphere. Many states use their own training system. There is a provision that states that certain course requirements can be waived if some one can prove that they have equivalent training. The states could waive RX301 if they give an alternative training (e.g. South Carolina's burn boss class). Because the states are somewhat outside this training sphere, there shouldn't be a problem to require RX 301 for burn boss (RxB2). The states can just exempt their people if needed.

a. Action: Dave Mueller will put together a white paper on RxB2 quals, route it around to FUWT. Paper will then be sent as a recommendation to the IOWT.

6. Instructor quals: preferred that the lead instructor is a RxB1, the unit instructors must at least be a RxB2. Maybe we should eliminate the physical fitness requirement we have currently. Also, because RxB2 is good for five years, should someone who hasn't burned recently be allowed to teach? Maybe the unit instructor guide is good enough to make up for the lack of currency. Don't want to limit the regions—there may be good instructors who aren't current, or who don't have the fitness requirement.

a. Decision: Unit Instructors for RX301 must be qualified RxB2s, less currency.

7. 341 quals: Instructors must have Rx fire plan writing and review experience. Recommended that they be qualified RxB2s. Local units will find the best people they can get. Therefore, the fewer requirements we put on people the better.

- a. **Decision: Lead instructor for RX341 should be a qualified Rxb2, less currency.**

ACTION: Dave Mueller will instruct NWCG training to reflect these decisions.

RX 310 Review

1. RX310 SME group looked at a revision of the coursework, but they have not finalized all of the coursework. Still working to get some group members on board. First field test will be in N. Arizona or Zion NP in January. SME group will be the primary cadre. Going to teach fire effects monitoring based on an AMR approach. See briefing paper. Hope to have the course “on the shelf” in May (not February as originally planned).
2. The way the course is structured in the plan puts some pressure on the instructors to do more prep in order to keep the course flowing from the AMR perspective. The framework is constant, but there is a lot of latitude in the course for regionalization and local expertise to modify the course—this also puts the onus on instructors to maintain the basic focus even while modifying the course.

FIRB White Paper

1. See draft white paper.
2. More modifications were made to the STL/TFLD and CRWB/ENGB PTBs. Multiple tasks were condensed to single tasks, and the tasks in the STL/TFLD were put standardized with the CRWB/ENGB tasks.

FEMO PTB and Position

1. We use FEMOs to do what FOBS do—and they are out without additional supervision, something we don’t allow anyone else at the SRB level. FOBS have to be a SRB first, while FEMOs only have to be a FFT2.
2. Developed originally by the NPS when they didn’t have the operational capacity, but things have changed, and now the operational capacity exists to make FEMOs part of the ops hierarchy.
3. Adding FEMOs to SRB PTB means that S-390 and command of a squad of firefighters is the prerequisite for any type of unsupervised field work on a fire.
4. Both FEMOs and FOBS only have moderate physical fitness requirements, but maybe they should have arduous requirements if they are doing unsupervised

field work. If a FEMO/FOBS was once an FFT2, then they once had arduous fitness, and if they maintain that qualification.

5. Concern—an FUM needs to have two FEMOs, and if we bump the requirement up to SRB, do we lose FEMOs on FUM and disqualify FUMs. Modules can be revised—though if they can't make the SRB qual, then they will just use unqualified people, and not call them FEMOs, but have them do FEMO work.
6. What a FEMO does: provides real-time (or after burn) feedback to the burn boss on fire characteristics, smoke, weather, etc. Observe and record the fire condition. Similar to what a FOBS does, but they have more skill in relation to fire effects.
7. Possible proposal: reduce requirements for FOBS, recommend that FOBS take RX 310, and recommend that FEMOs are always supervised when they are in the field. Do we want to add the SRB common tasks (minus those related to supervision) to the FOBS task book? At the same time, we would slide FOBS downward, so that the prerequisite for FOBS would not be SRB, but would be FFT1 instead. This has no effect on plans or situation unit, because either way we do things, people looking to move into plans or situation would have to become a SRB, just the order of attainment would change.
8. Proposal #2 could work in a similar way to above. Would that be a better way to integrate fire use/Rx and suppression? Also, would not remove the ability to use FEMOs at lower levels, predicated on having enough supervision.
 - a. **Decision: FEMO remains as a position, at least in the short term.**
9. As AMR becomes more important, FEMOs will also become more useful and there will be more opportunities for FEMOs to get themselves into trouble. So we need some direction for the future will at least begin to mitigate that increased risk.

Conference Call with Colin Hardy: Fire Research Brief

1. Rocky Mtn research station is in the middle of restructuring. Research has been reorganized in the 24 states they operate in. Used to have 26 programs, which are now consolidated into 8. Colin is program manager for Fire Fuels and Smoke Science program at Rocky Mtn station. Colin is also the national lead for a couple of other programs, including the Core Fire Science Portfolio.
2. The National Fire Plan allocates dollars for fire research. Fire plan \$ started in 2001, ended in '05. Started at \$30m, now funding is down to \$22m. Been using the money on an ad hoc basis.
3. CR makes problems for fire research, because in the CR didn't allow for the use of Fire Plan money for research, so Colin is going to be broke in a few weeks. Hoping to get Fire Plan \$\$ reinstated soon. Hampers their ability to make any long-term agreements/partnerships because they can only spend a quarter at a time.

4. External peer review is beginning for each program (required by OPM). External peer review team met in June and looked at ASFS programs. Chaired by Norm Christiansen from Duke. Submitted recommendations to the Washington office for a response.
5. Joint Fire Sciences Governing Board invited the Core Fire Science Portfolio to submit a proposal to develop a comprehensive plan of work to advance fire behavior knowledge.
6. Need to avoid duplication of effort with the Joint Fire Science team; Tim will make sure that Colin is tied in with that.
7. 2009 Quadrennial Fire Review: Brookings Institute is going to prepare the review. Had a forum in DC this week to begin the process. Colin is on the research advisory panel for the review. DOI did not participate in the 2005 review, 2009 review is not funded as a line item right now. Al Hine (sp??) is the lead from Brookings.
8. WFDSS: Rocky Mtn is doing outreach for new positions for further WFDSS development. Rocky Mtn is developing other applications for the WFDSS suite, maybe there are some problems with integrating the training?
 - a. DOI is having trouble with the training??
9. WFDSS pilot software doesn't exist yet. Tim has heard that the pilot software comes out in June of '08, with agencies beginning to use it in 2009. WFDSS could be affected by the move to integrate WFU with other fires (AMR changes).
10. Zimmerman is WFDSS program manager, and is the contact for WFDSS stuff.

FEMO/FOBS Continued

1. Side note: memo clarifying what AMR is was unclear to Tim. We're not sure if it came from the AMR review group or from somewhere else. NFAEB memo was supposed to come out in September, but we're not completely sure whether it was distributed out nationally. This was a briefing paper and so there was no request for comments.
 - a. **Action: Dave Mueller will send out a memo clarifying AMR to FUWT.**
2. FOBS task book falls directly to the IOSWT without any advisory role for any other WT. FUWT needs some advisory role with the FOBS PTB if FOBS start taking over some FEMO competencies.
3. We need a briefing paper that proposes the merger of FOBS and FEMO, with an open ended timeline. FUWT would then take on an advisory role with the new FOBS/FEMO position. We need to test the waters with the IOSWT. Resistance might come from the field—too many UTFs in the FOBS position already, a merger with the FEMO position could make it more difficult to be a FOBS.
4. Incrementalism: we can create a briefing paper that shows the first steps, and proposes that we flesh out the whole process at our next meeting, with FUWT in an advisory role. Really three issues here: policy, task books, and training. Policy

issue is preventing using the FEMOs inappropriately, which is something that IOSWT or TWT can't do anything about.

- a. **Action: Dave will send information to IOSWT, TWT indicating the beginning steps of the FOBS/FEMO merger proposal, and to indicate that we would like to take more steps at our spring meeting (possibly joint meetings with IOSWT?).**
 - b. **Decision: choosing the no action alternative for next week, but the eventual plan is to merge the positions, working from both ends (increase effects monitoring of FOBS, increase independence of FEMO). Will work through IOSWT, TWT leading up to and at the next meeting.**
 - c. **Action: Mary Taber will work up a straw man proposal on integrating FEMO and FOBS (or beefing up fire effects in FOBS). Be ready for possible NetMeeting in January.**
 - d. **Action: Dave Mueller will set up a MyFireCommunity.net neighborhood for FUWT.**
5. Dana Cohen's summary was consulted in the creation of Dan & Mary's paper.
 - a. **Action: Dan will send Mary "email editorials" on original FOBS FEMO paper.**

Reggie Blackwell: NRCS Cost-Share Program

1. Side note: fuels treatment effectiveness in SoCal. Harris fire effected 174 treatments and ~1,000 homes, only four burned; the four that burned were burned by embers that bypassed the fuels treatment.
2. NRCS: Handout shows the difference between FY06 and FY07 fuels treatments. In general, there were very big percentage increases in all effected states. Reggie thinks that this is a consequence of CRPs. Eastern increases probably came from CRP croplands, not fuels reductions on forests, explaining the 300% jump in acreage. Total treatments in two years: ~600,000 acres.
3. NRCS is not tied into what the other land management agencies are doing in fuels reductions or other fuels treatments. NRCS program is a stand-alone program, not connected to USFS or DOI.
4. FUWT needs a short briefing paper re: NRCS cost share program. NRCS is treating a huge amount of acreage, but FUWT members in general don't know anything about it and want to route some of that information out to local units. All of this is outside of the National Fire Plan, and it is a significant number of fuels treatments going on.
5. Reggie's needs: understanding and skills need to be brought into line with NWCG for Rx burning. NRCS doesn't even have a physical fitness requirement. Some NRCS people are taking S-130/190 and the pack test of their own volition, and helping out FWS with Rx burns.

6. Reggie is looking for opportunities for NRCS employees to participate in training with USFS, DOI. Could NRCS employees come and help USFS/DOI employees on burns to get training experience. NRCS employees would not be pack tested, would be “observing” or “auditing” the fire, rather than being actual trainees. If NRCS employees want to get involved with real burn work, they would need to pass some sort of work capacity test. Possible that NRCS standard (“person must be physically fit for the job”) would suffice for the work capacity test.
7. BLM could develop an information bulletin that would let the field know that NRCS people want to get trained up.
 - a. **Action: Reggie Blackwell will put together a list of state-level contacts in NRCS so that training can be better organized. Will have something together for the group in the next few weeks.**

RX 510 Issues

1. FUWT provides oversight to the RX 510 training course. Very infrequent check-ins with Tim, but we have never directed them to do something, just advised them.
2. Two issues: The chair of the steering committee, Jay Perkins, is leaving in January and they need a suggestion/designation from the group. They don't have a suggestion, and nobody from the steering committee has the time to undertake the chairmanship. Second issue is that the FUWT liaison was Dick Bahr, but now they need a new one.
 - a. **Decision: Mary Taber is the new FUWT-RX510 liaison.**
3. FUWT is not obligated to give them a new chair, but because we oversee the group, they would like some direction on who to look at outside of the steering committee.
4. The steering committee doesn't rotate the chairmanship, and there is no Vice-Chair.
5. Jay Perkins needs to put together a recruitment paper showing the time commitment, the duties, and the minimum requirements for the position, which FUWT can use to shop around for recruits. FUWT preference is that the outgoing chair should recruit his successor, but this paper will work if that isn't possible.
6. Look to NAFRI. As NAFRI absorbs FUTA and PFTC, it is possible that they have a full time RxB1 on staff that could take over the Chair.
7. RX510 reviewed the requirement that the Chair be an RxB1, and decided that it was important for the class, even though it eliminates a number of people from qualifying to be the chair.
 - a. **Action: Kim will check on how the DOI liaisons at PFTC (Mark Ruggiero, Jim Durrwachter) work, and see if that would be compatible with RX510 chairmanship.**
 - b. **Action: Mary Taber will make sure that Jay Perkins will put together a recruitment paper.**

Complexity Analysis Issues

1. NPS just started using complexity analysis this year, started getting comments from the field. FUWT should take a look at how we inform the field on using the rating guide properly.
2. Problems: hard to score complexity (two people on the same unit come up with different complexity scores). Actually have more liability coverage when complexity scores are looser rather than tighter.
3. BLM requires a risk assessment for anything that they do on fire, to replace the JHA—Dave thinks that it is equivalent to the complexity analysis (it may have used the complexity analysis as a template).
4. Complexity analysis is supposed to help move people away from local knowledge.
5. Complexity analysis is taught at RX341 alpha course, and the comments coming back indicate that it is helping people to understand how to use it.
 - a. **Action: Dave Mueller will send FUWT the information from RX341 unit four instructors in the hope that it will clear up some of the issues people are having. Revisit at FUWT conference call.**
6. FUWT needs to be careful that any revisions don't further muddle things for the field. It might be smarter to put together a briefing paper to clarify some issues—at next conference call FUWT can define a task group to put that together after we see the Unit 4 Instructor's Guide.
7. NPS prefers the stuff in the WFU risk analysis to the Rx guide complexity analysis. Zimm-o-gram (??) which determine both risk and complexity. People have already changed the WFU analysis to work with the Rx fire analysis.
 - a. **Action: Dan will route the WFU-Rx risk analysis out to FUWT.**
 - b.

1630 Location and Details of Next Meeting/Round Robin

1. Need to meet with FENWT. Possible places to go: Anchorage, Tucson. Tucson location is probably too small for both FUWT and FENWT together. 1st week of June is proposed meeting date, though we would probably move the meeting earlier to accommodate June heat in Tucson, and to accommodate BIA conflicts. Looking earlier, possibly some time in May?
2. Alaska looks like a better situation than Tucson.
 - a. **Action: Dan will check on possibility of Denali availability for summer meeting.**
3. Conference call in the beginning of February. Add to conference call agenda: adopting interagency administrator Rx fire planning and implementation, Go-No Go checklist.