



NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

National Interagency Fire Center
3833 S. Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

MEMORANDUM

Reference: NWCG#039-2010

To: NWCG Committee Chairs
Geographic Area Coordinating Group (GACG) Chairs
National IC/AC Council Chair

From: NWCG Chair *William Raage*

Date: August 18, 2010

Subject: Strategic Operational Planner (SOPL): Description and Use

The 2009 *Guidance for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* allowing agencies to manage wildfires concurrently for multiple objectives, made the term Wildland Fire Use (WFU) obsolete. As a result, WFU position designators and resource names are also being changed.

To reflect the wildland fire management terminology update, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) merged the Fire Use Manager positions, FUM1 and FUM2, into one position now called Strategic Operational Planner (SOPL). The transition has created some confusion about the use of this position and its future role in incident management. The SOPL position develops long-term risk assessments and management actions, which enables achievement of established objectives associated with the wildfire under a range of potential fire spread locations and fire behavior conditions. The skill set of a SOPL should be considered for any wildfire where it is expected that it will take more than three days to achieve the established objectives.

As a skill position in the Incident Command System, the SOPL provides information to fire managers that can be used to determine appropriate actions that will accomplish the desired objectives. The range of actions is developed from analyses of current and probable situations using the Wildfire Decision Support System (WFDSS), which decision makers will find useful to understand situational limits when making their decisions.

Incident Management Teams (IMT) and Agency Administrators have the discretion to determine on an incident-by-incident basis how the SOPL will most effectively fit into the incident organization and supervisory structure. For example, a SOPL may also be assigned to Decision

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Support Centers established to provide long-term assessments for multiple wildfires instead of being assigned to a single incident IMT. In situations where the skills are unavailable locally, a SOPL will be ordered and assigned to complex long-term fire incidents. In all cases, SOPLs work in close contact and in conjunction with Long Term Fire Behavior Analyst(s) (LTAN) and other specialists supporting long term fire behavior analyses.

The Transition Plan for the SOPL position can be found at <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/docs/sopl-transition-plan.pdf>. For additional information, please contact the following agency representatives from the NWCG Fire Use Subcommittee:

Kim Van Hemelryck (Chair)
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
kim_vanhemelryck@fws.gov
208-387-5957

Tim Sexton
U.S. Forest Service
timsexton@fs.fed.us
208-861-5043

Jim Hutton
National Park Service
jim_hutton@nps.gov
208-387-5226

Mary Taber
Bureau of Indian Affairs
mary.taber@bia.gov
208-387-5042

Todd Richardson
Bureau of Land Management
todd_richardson@blm.gov

For NASF, contact Kim Van Hemelryck

303-239-3879

cc: NWCG Executive Board
Kim Van Hemelryck
Jim Hutton
Todd Richardson
Tim Sexton
Mary Taber