



## National Wildfire Coordinating Group

National Interagency Fire Center  
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### MEMORANDUM

Reference: NWCG#011-2012

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

From: NWCG Chair *Antonio Bidabun*

Date: August 9, 2012

Subject: Wildland Fire Institute (WFI) – Update

In July of 2009, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Executive Board accepted the recommendations to explore a corporate university concept and subsequently created the Wildland Fire Institute (WFI). The WFI is a paradigm shift from traditional training to an increased emphasis on learning, employee development, and workforce planning in national wildland fire. The WFI will unify existing training resources and collectively address gaps in learning and development associated with incident and non-incident related skills and leadership.

As stated in the [NWCG July 2010 Memorandum](#), the Wildland Fire Institute will not be a new training group, nor is it intended to physically centralize all training functions. The intent is for an integrated, collaborative network of training groups throughout the wildland fire and aviation community to provide training, education, succession planning, and talent management now and into the future.

Currently, training functions are performed by many individuals at the local, regional, and national levels. While there is some standardization and cooperation, for the most part, they work independently. Workforce development is done by pockets of individuals and units, but without common practices or an integrated approach. The effectiveness of NWCG training receives little evaluation to see how it meets the goals of the NWCG partner agencies. Forecasting the future skill needs has been left to individual agencies with varying success in developing career paths in fire management and leadership. The WFI will bring these efforts together for the benefit of the joint interagency community, and provide a common venue for evaluating the effectiveness of NWCG training.

In October 2011, the NWCG Executive Board chartered a Board of Directors (BoD) to provide oversight and leadership to the Wildland Fire Institute. Members of the BoD include:

Bill Waterbury (Chair), Forest Service

Dan Smith, National Association of State Foresters  
Lyle Carlile, Bureau of Indian Affairs (NWCG Executive Board representative)  
John Glenn, Bureau of Land Management  
Dr. Steven Villachica, Associate Professor of Instructional and Performance Technology,  
Boise State University.

Establishing the BoD was an important first step in the startup of the WFI and is critical to the efficient transition from the current wildland fire training model to wildland fire learning and career development.

The BoD has chartered the WFI Interagency Transition Team (ITT) to assist them with the transition from the current operating model to the new integrated workforce development model. An Implementation Action Plan is under development which will lay out major tasks and milestones for a successful transition. This will be coordinated and implemented with consideration for the budgetary outlook of the partner agencies. The ITT is also establishing roles and responsibilities for the WFI Deans, who will provide oversight of content areas (e.g., Fire Environment, Administration and Business Management, Incident Operations). The intent is for the Dean function to be a collateral duty, drawing from the pool of subject matter experts within the wildland fire community.

Periodic updates will be provided throughout the transition, and information is available on the NWCG website at [www.nwcg.gov](http://www.nwcg.gov). If you would like further information, please contact Deb Fleming, Chair of the Interagency Transition Team, at (208) 387-5745 or [dlfleming@blm.gov](mailto:dlfleming@blm.gov).

cc: NWCG Executive Board  
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WFI Board of Directors:  
Bill Waterbury, Chair  
Dan Smith  
Lyle Carlile  
John Glenn  
Dr. Steven Villachica