

National Wildfire Coordinating Group

NWCG 2011 Annual Report



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NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

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ABOUT NWCG

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) is a collaborative, cooperative group of partners with a shared vision and national responsibilities for wildland fire management. Each with individual missions, they focus on firefighter and public safety by improving coordination and integration through sharing talents, information, and resources.

The NWCG provides leadership to the wildland fire community regarding training, standards, equipment, firefighting qualifications, and other wildland fire functions. As a unifying force in United States wildland fire management, the NWCG ensures that member agency efforts are consistent and coordinated while working collaboratively toward common goals.

NWCG's work has brought standardization to wildland firefighting training, qualifications, and equipment. These actions allow individuals from local, state, and federal agencies to readily cooperate and assist others in wildland fire management activities.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) consists of the following agencies, all of whom have national responsibilities for wildland fire management:

- Department of the Interior Bureaus:
 - Bureau of Land Management (BLM),
 - National Park Service (NPS),
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA),
 - The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS),
- USDA Forest Service (FS),
- State forestry agencies through the National Association of State Foresters (NASF),
- The Intertribal Timber Council (ITC),
- The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA).

These entities share the common goal of effective and efficient wildland fire management. They recognize that each organization's mission can be better accomplished through cooperative efforts.

OUR MISSION

The NWCG was formed to provide national leadership; and establish, maintain, and communicate standards, guidelines, and qualifications for wildland fire program management and to support the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Its goal is to provide more effective execution of each agency's fire management program. The group provides standards for training, equipment, qualifications, and other operational functions.

NWCG also provides a forum for coordinating, discussing, and resolving issues involving standards and program implementation. NWCG initiates actions to improve coordination and integration of state, tribal, and federal wildland fire programs while recognizing individual agency missions.

OUR PARTNERS

The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho, is the host to the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC), and the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC). In addition, the five Federal agencies with land-based wildland fire responsibilities (the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service- all of the Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture) maintain national fire leadership and support organizations at NIFC. Other on-site partners include the National Association of State Foresters, the National Weather Service, the U.S. Fire Administration, and the Great Basin Interagency Cache and Training Center. The Department of Interior Aviation Management Directorate and Office of Wildland Fire Coordination maintain offices off-campus in Boise as well.

On the surface, it can appear that all these organizations perform the same mission. Important differences can be summarized as follows:

- The **National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)** develops interagency wildland fire standards and qualifications for its member agencies to approve and utilize. It drafts wildland fire guidance for voluntary implementation by the member agencies and other wildland fire organizations at their discretion.
- The **National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC)** sets priorities, allocates resources, and coordinates and resolves policy interpretation with Geographic Area MAC's during wildland fire operations. NMAC allocates and prioritizes personnel and equipment when several simultaneous national emergencies are straining the support system.
- The **National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC)**'s mission is to serve as a focal point for coordinating the national mobilization of resources for wildland fire and other incidents throughout the United States.
- The **individual agencies'** NIFC offices support their respective agency missions primarily through providing national guidance and direction for their agency in wildland fire management, fuels management and aviation leadership and coordination.

The original vision of the National Interagency Fire Center is still valid today: to work together to reduce the duplication of services, cut costs, and coordinate national fire planning and operations. Working together in the same facility has tangible benefits. Ease of collaboration, interagency information sharing, decision-making, issue resolution, and coordination can be achieved by simply walking down the hall or meeting together on site to discuss and quickly resolve emerging issues.

The **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** and NWCG maintain ongoing collaboration at several levels in our organizations. The Executive Board has an executive-to-executive relationship with the National Integration Center (NIC) to discuss emerging strategic issues of mutual interest to the two organizations. Through this collaboration we have enhanced each other's understanding of our respective goals. NWCG representatives serve on several FEMA – NIC support teams as wildland fire and ICS subject matter experts. Topics of mutual interest include but are not limited to:

- Incident Command System (ICS) training courses, qualification standards, and certification systems.
- Incident management and response standards, such as equipment, ordering procedures, support resources, and preparedness contracts.

The **National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)** is one of the leaders in establishing nationwide voluntary consensus standards for firefighting. The NWCG and NFPA collaboration has been effective in incorporating wildland fire issues and concerns into operations equipment standards. NWCG has outlined several strategic actions for the coming year to enhance collaboration with NFPA regarding wildland fire standards.

There are many additional partners involved in helping NWCG successfully meet its' vision and mission. Collaboration and communication are critical to the success of the NWCG.

BACKGROUND

NWCG Executive Board

NWCG is governed by the NWCG Executive Board. Executive Board membership is limited to one individual organization representative, with the exception of the Forest Service who is served by two representatives – Fire and Aviation Management and Fire Research.

The Executive Board leads the wildland fire program by establishing standards and developing guidance for interagency fire management. They set priorities, assign tasks, and approve all NWCG products based on the NWCG strategic vision.

Program Management Unit (PMU)

The Program Management Unit (PMU) provides the only full time staff for the NWCG. The PMU helps to streamline NWCG processes and to improve coordination, communication, and governance between NWCG subgroups and the Executive Board toward the goal of promoting a safe and productive wildland fire workforce. The staff group includes a Program Manager, three (3) Branch Coordinators, a Training Branch Manager with an interagency staff of 22 specialists, and three (3) Wildland Fire Architects. The PMU also has two part time positions, a Communications Specialist and a Web Manager.

Branch Coordinators support and are advocates for the committees in their branch by providing coordination between the Executive Board and committees toward the development and implementation of wildland fire standards and guidance. The Training Branch Manager leads the NWCG Training development staff.

The NWCG Training Branch's mission is to develop relevant National Wildfire Coordinating Group training in a cost-effective manner to meet the needs of the wildland fire community. The Branch provides training assistance to field offices, state and local agencies, universities, and foreign nations. The NWCG Training Branch is comprised of an interagency staff of 22 full-time specialists. The five areas within the Branch include: 1) Development Unit, 2) Evaluation Unit 3) Instructional Media Unit, 4) Distance Learning Unit, and 5) Refresher Program Unit. Visit the [NWCG Training and Qualifications](#) website for more information.

The architect group provides a long-term view of the full scope of wildland fire processes, systems, and technologies.

Subgroups

Committees, subcommittees, units, subunits, boards, or task teams are commonly referred to as subgroups. All play a vital role for NWCG. The NWCG subgroup members provide knowledgeable representation of NWCG business area expertise. These subgroups provide the wherewithal necessary to constantly monitor and improve the wildland fire program. The NWCG subgroups include representatives from different agencies and geographical areas. They draw upon the technical expertise of their members to address issues and concerns affecting the wildland fire community. Their participation is a collateral duty.

Subgroup members are subject matter experts in their particular field and serve as outstanding resources to deal with topics such as:

- Assuring compliance with laws,
- Assessing and ensuring safety,
- Monitoring and assessing program effectiveness,
- Discovering and eliminating wasteful or inefficient practices,
- Solving problems,
- Establishing and maintaining standards and guidelines,
- Providing business area expertise as requested, and
- Providing national products, publications, and services.

Branch	Committee
Equipment & Technology	Information Technology
	Equipment Technology
	Fire Environment
	National Interagency Aviation
Planning, Policy, & Management	Fire Policy
	Interagency Fire Planning
	Fuels Management
	WUI Mitigation
	Smoke
	Communication, Education, & Prevention
Preparedness	Risk Management
	Incident Business Mgmt.
	Operations & Workforce Development
	National Response Framework/ National Incident Management System

TABLE 1: NWCG COMMITTEES BY BRANCH

Each of the 14 NWCG committees falls under the scope of one of the three branches of the PMU: Policy, Planning, and Management; Equipment and Technology; or Preparedness.

- The Policy, Planning and Management Branch focuses on interagency fire planning and policy implementation, fuels and smoke management, mitigation, prevention, and education.
- The Equipment and Technology Branch focuses on aviation, firefighting equipment, information resource management, and predicting when and how fires will burn.
- The Preparedness Branch focuses on incident business practices, managing occupational risks to firefighters, operations, training, and all hazard response.

NWCG uses a “collateral-duty” model for staffing subgroups. Most subgroup members have dedicated full-time jobs with the various agencies in addition to their part-time work on an NWCG committee. Subgroup members may be located at NIFC or in various locations across the United States.

The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (LLC) is a cutting-edge knowledge resource center for the entire wildland fire community and is chartered by NWCG. The LLC is located at the National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute (NAFRI) in Tucson, Arizona. The LLC provides innovative strategies, processes, and tools to assist the entire wildland fire community in performing more safely and effectively—using both past and present lessons. Visit their [website](#) for more information on the LLC.

MAJOR INITIATIVES

There is an extensive list of initiatives underway within the NWCG and its’ subgroups. To highlight a few:

Evolving Incident Management

Recognizing that the current workforce management and succession planning for wildfire incident management is not sustainable, the NWCG Executive Board chartered the Incident Management Organization Succession Planning (IMOSP) interagency team in 2010 to recommend a new organizational model for incident management.

The final recommendation package from the IMOSP Team was presented to the Executive Board in September. The package included an analysis document which provides an in-depth summary of stakeholder feedback received during the stakeholder engagement, and the Team’s recommendation for incident management organizations for the future. The Executive Board briefed their respective agencies during the last two (2) months of 2011 prior to releasing their decision in January 2012. To view the final report, the Executive Board’s decisions, and upcoming actions, please visit the [NWCG Evolving Incident Management](#) webpage.

Wildland Fire Institute (WFI)

NWCG continued to make progress in meeting the intent of the Wildland Fire Institute’s mission of unify existing training and expand workforce development for incident and non-incident learning and development. The WFI Board of Directors is meeting monthly to continue development of the WFI Strategic Plan and Transition Plan.

The intent of the WFI is to integrate existing wildland fire training groups into a collaborative network throughout the wildland fire and aviation community for training development and implementation. The WFI is not a new training group and it is not intended to physically centralize all existing wildland fire training.

NWCG Web Portal

NWCG began transformation towards a new Web Portal in 2011. The Web Portal greatly improves how NWCG serves the interagency wildland fire community. This approach will allow interagency teams to interact with each other via the portal and to collaborate across agency and geographical boundaries. During 2011, business requirement use cases were developed by the NWCG stakeholders and the Web Portal contractor to identify how the new Portal will be implemented and used by the wildland fire community. Ongoing development and testing were conducted with the contractor, the PMU staff, and NWCG committees. The year ended with the web portal being in a 'soft launch' status as development and enhancements continue. Full implementation of the new Portal will occur during 2012.

Information & Technology

In 2011, the National Wildland Fire Enterprise Architecture (NWFEA) was updated. The NWFEA was chartered to coordinate wildland fire management enterprise architecture efforts of the participating agencies to provide a means for increasing efficiency and eliminating redundancy. A validation of the NWFEA Blueprint reviewed information technology investments for the wildland fire programs of BIA, BLM, FWS, NPS, and USFS and provided a baseline for future investment decisions. PMU staff and the NWCG Information Technology Committee (ITC) began working with Department of Interior (DOI) and Forest Service leadership to create a single wildland fire IT investment strategy – the Wildland Fire Information and Technology (I&T) Roadmap based in part upon the NWFEA Blueprint.

NWCG Legacy Groups Decommissioned

Throughout history, the NWCG and the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB), established teams, committees, and other organized groups to accomplish a wide variety of tasks. After the 2008 reorganization of NWCG during which NFAEB melded into NWCG, the NWCG Program Management Unit compiled a list of NWCG commissioned groups to verify their status. Over 100 were determined to be no longer active, to have completed their original charge, or became part of new groups. However, none of these inactive groups was "decommissioned." A memorandum signed by the Executive Board Chair on March 31, 2011, officially decommissioned a number of inactive groups. A list of decommissioned groups can be seen [here](#).

Strategic Plan Updates

During 2011, The NWCG Executive Board reviewed the NWCG strategic plan and verified that the current NWCG Strategic Plan goals are still viable. These goals are used by the Executive Board, PMU, and the Committees to identify and prioritize programs of work. Strategic tasks (aka tactical actions) are tiered to the goals and are updated throughout the year as needed. In addition to reviewing the NWCG Strategic Plan goals, other plan elements such as objectives, barriers, and critical success assumptions were reviewed to ensure they are in sync with the Strategic Plan goals and are still valid today and into the future.

With time and budget now in the forefront, it is even more important for NWCG to seek those opportunities where collaboration amongst partners will result in more efficient and economic results for all involved.

NWCG ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Throughout the year, subgroups and the PMU worked on multiple NWCG sponsored programs and projects. All projects and programs must meet NWCG goals in a cost-effective manner. Projects exist in a variety of stages, ranging from ongoing operations and maintenance activities to new projects. Some projects may take more than a single year to finish. The PMU, the Budget Advisory Unit, and the committees participate in annually prioritizing projects for funding; however, the Executive Board makes the final funding decisions.

The following is a list of some of the more noteworthy accomplishments:

Cooperation and Coordination

Committees work with others to achieve common goals and provide benefits across multiple areas of wildland fire management. The art of coordination can be complicated and challenging but ultimately rewarding. The following projects involving internal and external partners are examples of cooperative work performed by the committees.

Committee	Delivery
Community Education & Prevention Committee	Conducted a Needs Assessment for the April 2007 <i>Communicator's Guide for Wildland Fire Management</i> of personnel in federal agencies with responsibilities in wildland fire education, prevention, mitigation, and incident public information to determine the usability of the <i>Communicator's Guide for Wildland Fire Management</i> .
Community Education & Prevention Committee	The Wildland Fire Investigation Subcommittee completed FI-311 Wildland Fire Investigation: Civil Case Management and worked on revising FI-210 Wildland Fire Origin & Cause Determination .
Equipment & Technology Committee	Developed and published the Interagency Ground Ignition Guide to provide guidance on use of many ground-deployed firing devices.
Equipment & Technology Committee	Revised the Fire Equipment Storage and Refurbishing Standards to provide guidance on equipment storage and refurbishment.
Equipment & Technology Committee	Developed and published the Interagency Transportation Guide for Gasoline, Mixed Gas, Drip Torch Fuel, and Diesel to provide guidance on the transportation of liquid fuels used in fire operations.
Equipment & Technology Committee	Represented NWCG interests to National Fire Protection Association standards development efforts, including fire apparatus, wildland fire respirators, personal protective equipment, and fire chemicals.
Fire Policy Committee	Reviewed the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) "tip card" on <i>Wildland Urban Interface Key Messages</i> .
Fire Policy Committee	Assisted in terminology review of the <i>Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide</i> .
Fuels Management Committee	Conducted field reviews of the <i>Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide</i> .
Fuels Management Committee	Worked on revising the <i>Rx 410 Smoke Management Guide for Prescribed and Wildland Fire</i> .

Committee	Delivery
Incident Business Committee	Evaluated methods and released administrative guidance and standards for incidents within close physical proximity known as “ complexes, mergers, and splits. ” The goal is to provide a framework for managing incident data and monitoring expenditures. View the guidance here .
Incident Business Committee	Assumed oversight and maintenance of the Large Fire Cost Review Guide .
Incident Business Committee	Began developing standard operating procedures (SOP's) for Buying Team Support for non-suppression incidents.
Information Technology Committee	Renewed focus on developing standards and training for incident IT support .
Information Technology Committee	Established a Change Management Board to manage NWCG Unit Identifier approval process.
National Interagency Aviation Committee	Performed operational coordination including large airtanker strategy, national deployment of Canadian aircraft, aviation frequencies, and cooperater standards.
National Interagency Aviation Committee	Published revision to the Interagency Aerial Supervision Guide to provide guidance to the aerial supervisor position.
National Interagency Aviation Committee	Published revision to the Interagency Airtanker Base Operations Guide to provide guidance to airtanker base operations.
National Interagency Aviation Committee	Published revision to the Interagency Single Engine Airtanker Operations Guide to provide guidance to single engine airtanker operations.
Operations & Workforce Development Committee	Revised the Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide (PMS 310-1) . This edition includes significant changes. The most current version of the PMS 310-1 and the Errata Sheet Summary of Changes can be found here .
Wildland Urban Interface Mitigation Committee	Hosted -- Building a Fire Adapted Community Network: A Forum for Leaders in the Wildland Urban Interface in Reno Nevada March 28 and 29. About 35 - 40 people attended the meeting. Participants primarily represented west coast wildland urban interface (WUI) community and agencies. Discussions primarily focused on the challenges of working in the WUI. Considerable discussion about "Adapted Communities" and the need to coordinate and consolidate the multiple efforts across the landscape.
NWCG Training Branch	Fifteen NWCG courses were in various stages of revision working toward recertification and republishing. Five courses were certified in 2011. Many interagency subject matter experts provided input on these updates.
NWCG Training Branch	Collaborated with FEMA (as co-chair of the FEMA Core Competency Management Working Group) on the contract for a crosswalk of command and general staff and unit leader competencies , behaviors, and training courses.

Innovation

Innovation is the creation of better or more effective products, processes, services, technologies, or ideas. The dedication and expertise of NWCG committees makes innovation a reality.

Committee	Delivery
Equipment & Technology Committee	Reviewed on-going projects to improve fire equipment , such as fire shelters, handtools, sleeping bags, first aid kits, and many more.
Equipment & Technology Committee	Received and evaluated innovative proposals for firefighting from partners and the general public. Follow this link for more information.
Fire Environment Committee	Provided on-line tools to deliver Predictive Services products to national and geographic area fire managers.
Fire Environment Committee	Developed and delivered fire behavior prediction and fire danger rating related training.
Smoke Committee	Updated and revised Smokepedia ; a compendium of over 600 air quality and smoke related terms
Interagency Fire Planning Committee	Conducted two virtual field trips for Greater Sand Dunes Interagency Fire Management Planning and Grand Teton National Park/Bridger Teton National Forest Interagency Fire Planning. The goal of these “virtual field trips” has been to keep the NWCG Interagency Fire Planning Committee (IFPC) engaged in current field level conditions, innovations, and challenges in fire planning as they evolve, and to share lessons learned among the fire planning community.
Information Technology Committee	Developed on-line data standards and glossary approval process . Implementation is pending the new NWCG Web Portal launch.
National Response Framework/ National Incident Management System	Worked on developing an All-Hazards Intent Document to define NWCG’s role in the preparedness for, coordination of, and support to all-hazards incidents. The project involved close coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This document was finalized in early 2012 and can be found here .
Risk Management Committee	Worked on developing recommended smoke exposure baselines and mitigation measures involving extensive studies and consultation with smoke experts. Their guidance was published in 2012 and can be viewed here .
Risk Management Committee	Developed SAFENET field card for personnel who don’t have ready access to computers. This process augments but does not replace the existing SAFENET system. View the Field Card memo and the Field Card here .
Wildland Urban Interface Mitigation Committee	Developed a WUI “tip card” on Wildland Urban Interface Key Messages for use by Public Information Officers to be used as a tool for national messages on the What (what is WUI?); Why (why is it a problem?); and the How (how to mitigate consequences of wildland fires in the WUI?).

Committee	Delivery
NWCG Training Branch	Developed the annual Wildland Fire Refresher Video and launched the Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher – WFSTAR website . With the future production of 2-4 new modules throughout the year, the web site will allow for ‘no year’ refresher courses where the field has the ability to choose the appropriate modules for upcoming training from a host of options.
NWCG Training Branch	Worked closely with the National Fire Academy to host three new distance-learning courses within their Learning Management System. Interagency Incident Business Management (S-260) is a fully online course. Crew Boss (S-230) and Engine Boss (S-231) are available in blended formats – part online, part instructor led. More information is available at this link . The average annual savings to the field per year for online S-260 training versus the traditional classroom training is estimated to be over \$500,000.
NWCG Training Branch	Served as members on the Wildland Fire Institute Implementation Task Team .

Looking Towards the Future

Many of our projects look beyond the "now" and formulate strategies for future success. Several of our committees are constantly asking "what's next?" Here's an example of some of the projects:

Committee	Delivery
Fire Environment Committee	Delivered the Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) Network Analysis report and worked on companion information to facilitate application of results at the local unit level.
Fire Environment Committee	Supported the Cohesive Strategy Science Team by consulting on fire occurrence data.
Fuels Management Committee	Created a Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Task Team to develop interagency field level reporting system for documenting wildfire and fuels treatment interactions.
Incident Business Committee	Developed business procedures for off-site/remote Incident assignments. This guidance to employees and incident management personnel can be seen here .
Interagency Fire Planning Committee	Developed Learning Pathways for Wildland Fire Planning . The draft paper has been shared widely among regional and field planners, and other resource disciplines to present the concept developed so far, and get feedback as to whether the approach meets needs and expectations of field personnel. Participated in several meetings with NWCG Training Branch to ensure integration with Wildland Fire Institute.
Information Technology Committee	Following the Geospatial Strategic Framework of 2010, the ITC began development of the Enterprise Geospatial Database to provide a common source of shared data, geospatial services, and infrastructure. View the transition plan here .

Committee	Delivery
Information Technology Committee	Worked with Forest Service and DOI to develop the Wildland Fire I&T Roadmap .
NWCG Training Branch	Organized training content with the Learning Content Management System (LCMS). The LCMS allows for content to be output in multiple formats (online, classroom, job aids, etc.) and also allows for content reusability and consistent, timely content updates.

NWCG PRODUCTS SUMMARY

NWCG products include interagency operational guides, forms, training course materials, personnel and equipment standards, and other related publications and documents. Products are made available in a variety of formats depending on product content and intended use. Formats include books, PowerPoint presentations or similar slide shows, videos (DVD or other format), posters, flyers, pamphlets, workbooks, and Web pages. Some products are available in Spanish versions.

Most NWCG products, other than training course materials, are available electronically from the NWCG Web site. Printed products are distributed through the Great Basin Cache at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho. Information on ordering printed NWCG products from the cache can be found in the link to [NFES Catalog, Part 2: Publications](#).

During the 2011 calendar year, 478,051 printed copies of NWCG products were shipped from the Great Basin Cache. The five most popular printed products for 2011, based on number of distributed copies were:

- PMS 461 *Incident Response Pocket Guide*: 126,719
- PMS 410-1 *Fireline Handbook*: 37,404
- S-190 *Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior, Student Workbook*: 31,373
- S-130 *Firefighter Training, Student Workbook*: 28,936
- PMS 411 *The New Generation Fire Shelter*: 17,889

2011 NWCG EXECUTIVE BOARD

William (Bill) Kaage (Chair), National Park Service

Aitor Bidaburu (Vice-Chair), U.S. Fire Administration

Brian McManus (Jan. – May) and John Segar (June – Dec.), Fish and Wildlife Service

Dan Smith, National Association of State Foresters

Howard Hedrick, Bureau of Land Management

Jim Erickson, Intertribal Timber Council

Karyn Wood, USDA Forest Service

Lyle Carlile, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Tom Zimmerman, USDA Forest Service – Fire Systems Research