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## WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEETING

**May 9, 2019, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm**

**San Diego, CA**

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **ATTENDEES:**

**Council Members or alternates:** Susan Combs (DOI), Jim Hubbard (USDA), Vicki Christiansen (USFS), Louis Rowe (NPS), Erik Litzenberg (IAFC), Vern Stearns (ITC), Grant Beebe (BLM), Anne Kinsinger (USGS), Cynthia Martinez (FWS), Rick Patrick (FEMA/USFA), Jim Karels (NASF), Mike Zupko (Executive Director) Leon Ben (BIA), Troy Timmons (WGA), Kevin Cann (NACo), John Suthers (NLC).

**Guests, Partners and Support Staff:** Jaelith Hall-Rivera, George Geissler, Jeff Rupert, Bill Hannenberg, Jim Durglo, Chris Topik, Cecelia Clavet, Jonathan Shuffield, Ed Christopher, Beth Lund, Dan Dallas, Erin Horsbrogh, Tami Defries, Randy Moore, Paul Steblein, Brett Lacey, Chris French, Alan Ager, Katie Lighthall, Larry Mastic, Gary Wood, Greg Norton, Dave Celino, Colin Stowell, Bill Molumby, Dan Thomascheski, Shawn Stokes, Katy O'Hara, Allie Weill, Nancy Koerperich, Jian Yang, Ann Walker, Paul Orbuch, John Steffenson, Claren Nilsson, Juliette Hayes, Brian D'Agostino

**On Phone:** Sarah Ball, Mark Goeller

#### **MEETING SUMMARY:**

##### **Welcome, Opening Remarks, Admin and Agenda Review**

*Susan Combs (DOI), Jim Hubbard (USDA), Mike Zupko (WFLC)*

- Chief Stowell, City of San Diego, welcomed the group and gave an overview of their department and urban interface challenges. He focused on their resources, their partnerships and building a fire adapted community that can be an example for other cities across the country. San Diego introduced the “Ready, Set, Go” program into the country. They have an active fuels management program through a community network of homeowners and local organizations to identify priorities. Aerial firefighting capacity has increased across as well.
- Jim Hubbard – Reflected on the field tour and wants to focus at policy and strategy level.
- Susan Combs – Looking at our priorities and working closely with our comms teams to help broadcast those decisions and opportunities with a broader audience is important. Transparency and helping our people and the public understand the uniqueness of this body and how we can move the ball forward.
- *The minutes from the September 17, 2019, WFLC meeting were unanimously approved.*



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## Reflections from the Field Tour

### Objective:

- Open discussion of reflections from Wednesday's field trip.

### Major Points of Discussion:

- In California (and specifically San Diego), strong collaboration has developed out of necessity, and over a fairly short period of time, because of major events like the Cedar Fire. People learned to trust each other during an incident—they were forced into it.
- California can be an example of what you can accomplish in terms of collaboration—we just have to figure out what California and other successful places do, exactly. There's a sense of urgency in CA right now—we need to bring that elsewhere, get people to pay attention before there's another Paradise.
  - How do you effectively communicate with people who haven't had an incident yet, before it happens?
- We need coordination, collaboration, communication at all levels, like they do well in San Diego, but how do you export to all levels, and all parts of the country?
- Cooperation across the border fence and with US Border Patrol is critical.
- It's all about relationships, relationships, relationships—there needs to be an emphasis on working together, cooperation.
- Can we distill what minimum relationships are needed for success, or what relationships make CA a success and what the barriers are?
  - How do you transport this information? Can you use consultants, other tools?
- Even CalFire has gaps and challenges despite successes.
  - Relationship with Law Enforcement community.
  - Private landowner rights & private industry insurance.
- Fuels management is difficult, because it's a never-ending battle. Even where there's funding, there isn't necessarily capacity.
- Roads, infrastructure, and powerlines lead to fire starts, and understanding these are essential to dealing with fire.
- In some cases, we need to figure out how to let our partners work. We can use NEPA as a reason to do stuff, not to not do stuff.



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## Strategic Alignment Report Review

### Objective:

*To present opportunities identified in the Strategic Alignment Report of the Cohesive Strategy building upon previous work completed in rolling up opportunities and challenges identified across a diversity of partners.*

### Discussion:

Mike Zupko, Larry Mastic, Katie Lighthall and Gary Wood presented **ATTACHMENT 1**.

- Overarching:
  - *Underlying assumptions* – prioritization of investments, acceptance of short-term risk for long-term gain, greater collective investment.
  - CS goals and WFLC strategic priorities feed through these assumptions.
  - Recommendation to *re-charter (or develop a new) strategic committee* to serve as the implementation body for WFLC. Help push issues up to the WFLC body and help take implementation actions down from WFLC decisions.
  - Additional recommendation to *create a WFLC communications working group* to create national level and WFLC unified messaging and collect messaging across WFLC members to better coalesce the voice across the wildland fire management system.
- Landscape Resiliency:
  - *Continue to encourage authorities* like the Omnibus, Farm Bill, Healthy Forest Initiatives, EO/SO.
  - With all of the tools that have come out recently it has muddied the waters and there is an opportunity to *develop toolkits or resources* that look at all of the laws, policies, authorities and distill them down so as people move in and out of jobs we don't lose track of how and what we can use.
  - Look at the authorities, find the gaps and help *address those gaps* in future policy updates.
  - *Environment compliance process needs to be built into training tools* so land managers at the local level know how to use them.
  - *Enable more Rx fire*. The data supports doing this.
  - Continue to push the communication, reaching the people where they are at using whatever tools we have to get the message out there. E.g. Good Fire vs Bad Fire.
- Fire Adapted Communities:
  - What is at the root of the Cohesive Strategy? It's about the people and the relationships. How can we invest in this? What commitments do we need to make to help?
  - Is there a better definition than what we already have? The human element is at the root of FACs, and relationships. How do we make enabling conditions to foster relationships, and in turn, promote more acceptance of work on the land?
  - *Create a FAC working group under WFLC* for closer coordination of activities and increased leverage.
- Wildfire Response:



- We are seeing longer, hotter fires. It seems like long term fire managers are seeing new things every year. We need to find a better way to *bring together fire managers and land managers*. What are our options to increase our capabilities?
- Communications and collaboration: Multiple opportunities exist as spelled out in the attachment for *increasing communications and collaboration across WFLC members*.

#### Next steps:

- *Incorporate recommendations into discussion around WFLC policy priorities and evaluate as strategic engagement opportunities to move issues forward.*
- *Zupko will further discuss with the WFLC co-chairs any additional support structure to assist in WFLC implementation of policy priorities.*

### **Regional Strategy Committee Updates & Implementation Insight to Strategic Priorities**

#### Northeast Regional Strategy Committee:

Dave Celino, Chair, presented a ppt, **ATTACHMENT 2** and distributed **ATTACHMENT 3**.

Priorities for 2019 – Align with national goals and objectives. Working groups established:

- LANDFIRE Coordination Work Group
  - Trying to find a way to build a standardized CWPP
  - Regional risk assessment work
  - Recalibrating Fuel models in NE
- Prescribed Fire Coordination Work Group
  - Established and distributed a survey to help tell the story of Rx in the NE (5Ws, Air quality, Resources, etc.)
- Wildfire Risk Assessment
  - Being led by USFS R9
- Planning & Engaging with local Fire departments
  - Survey to identify awareness of local fire departments and identifying needs of these depts.

Website will be adding a Wildfire Preparedness Guide. A one stop shop for resources.

National Cohesive Strategy Workshop in Oct in Plymouth, Mass – call for presentations are due July 1<sup>st</sup>.



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### Southeast Regional Strategy Committee:

Gary Wood, Coordinator, distributed **ATTACHMENT 4.**

- Long term impact of Hurricane Michael
- A Veterans Crew was established in the SE that is working on fuels and fire projects
- 20 New Firewise communities across the region
- A Type 3 Team was established in the SE and now studying the feasibility of continuing to roster and staff an interagency team of this nature
- Adding the capacity to use UAS for Rx
- Increased work with FEMA and coordination that is trickling down to local levels, helping build the relationships at that level.

### Western Regional Strategy Committee:

Katie Lighthall, Coordinator, distributed **ATTACHMENT 5.**

- Facilitating “hard truth” conversations around the west. Encouraging folks to talk about the realities and the impacts of wildfire in communities. It’s ok be honest about the information and the opportunities to collaborate and work across boundaries. Focusing on shared values and risk, shared responsibilities – how can we get past differences and really move the needle in the context of CS?
- Being honest about the relationships and the missions (differences) between states, federal and tribal lands. Find the shared values and build off of those. Look for the successes and build off of them.
- Recently stood up 3 new working groups within the RSC to support regional priorities.
  - Wildfire Response Hard Truths
  - Post Fire Impacts
  - Prescribed Fire

## **Increasing the Use of Active Management & Reducing Risk to Communities**

### Objective:

1. *To collectively identify methods to increase the use of active management across all-lands with the intent of reducing hazards that contribute to the risk of catastrophic wildfire.*
2. *To collectively understand the “new norm” communities are facing with wildland fires.*

### Panelist Led Conversations:

1. *Define the challenges, gaps and opportunities associated with active management & reducing risk to communities*



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### ***Active Management Conversation***

- a. Federal Perspective (FS) – Randy Moore, RF-R5. Presented **ATTACHMENT 6** and distributed **ATTACHMENT 7**.
- b. State Perspective, including Paradise CA as a case study (CALFIRE) – Nancy Koerperich, Deputy Unit Chief
- c. Industry Perspective (Sierra Pacific Industries) – Dan Tomascheski presented **ATTACHMENT 8**.

### ***Reducing Risk to Communities Conversation***

- a. Forestry Association Perspective (CA Forestry) – Steve Brink, VP, presented **ATTACHMENT 9** and distributed **ATTACHMENT 10**.
  - b. Local Perspective (Rural County Reps of CA) – Greg Norton, President
  - c. USGS local engagement – Anne Kinsinger, Associate Director presented **ATTACHMENT 11** and distributed **ATTACHMENT 12**.
2. Incident Commanders’ needs in the urban interface – Beth Lund (FS), Dan Dallas (FS) **ATTACHMENT 13** and Rick Young (NPS)
  3. Understand tools that can inform outcome-based planning
    - a. Scenario planning (FS) – Alan Ager, Research Forester presented **ATTACHMENT 14**.
    - b. Local access to risk planning tools (Esri) – John Steffenson, Manager presented **ATTACHMENT 15**.
    - c. Gas and Electric Company engagement (SDG&E) – Brian D’Agostino, Director of Fire Science presented **ATTACHMENT 16**.

## **Developing Solutions and a Policy Agenda to Address Priorities – A Strategic Dialogue**

### **Objective:**

*To identify opportunities to increase active management and support communities in reducing their risk and exposure.* Jaelith Hall-Rivera (FS) and George Geissler (WA DNR) facilitated the afternoon dialogue.

### **The following recurring themes came out of the initial WFLC conversation after the morning presentations:**

- Increase joint prioritization across agencies and organizations – locally, statewide and regionally
- Increasing the use of prescribed fire and the balance between short-term risk for long-term gain (smoke, public health, liability)
- Integration of land management and fire management within and across agencies and partners (incl. water and air managers)





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- Better pre-fire/pre-season coordination at the local level
  - Local vs federal or state issues – better alignment of resource mobilization, coordination of existing programs, increased efficiencies in programmatic and compliance requirements
  - Workforce challenges
  - “America Burning, Wildland” as a call to action around reframing the WUI issue and better coordination of fire adapted communities’ activities. (E.g. The catalyst behind a revised or refreshed call to action that can be employed at a local level and across boundaries.)
  - Joint coordinated communication across the wildland fire management system, more consistent messaging and joint development of “toolboxes” to compile information and best practices across agencies and WFLC members.

## Round Robin

*Each member was asked to share up to three opportunities/policy items to work together through WFLC that they wanted to see come out of the day.*

### Major Themes:

- Workforce challenges:
  - There’s a huge need for forestry professionals and firefighters.
  - We need to identify what is driving workforce challenges—interest or budget?
  - How can we professionalize our workforce, and identify what young people want (e.g., providing health benefits)?
  - The workforce has been seasonal, but now there’s not really a fire season, leading to a mismatch. There is also plenty of work to protect communities when not responding to fire.
  - OPM has hours restrictions, doesn’t work for some of us now, we don’t have enough resources. We should re-engage OPM.
  - There’s a lot of turnover and a lot of information—we need to put all the information in one place and provide training for managers.
  - Can WFLC back up a wildland fire series (in workforce)?
- Better using the tools and authorities we already have:
  - Authorities like Good Neighbor:
  - Identifying gaps in authorities
  - BLM is only agency w/Good Neighbor Authority—opportunity to allow access for other DOI bureaus.
    - Firewise program—identify how that program gets through the door, tap into it. Don’t reinvent the wheel, see what programs are already successful and figure out how to export them.
    - Mandate each region to put on X number of X collaborative programs—eg, Good Neighbor Programs.
    - Improve efficiency in resource utilization.



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- Identify what is working in active management & what is not working.
  - We're still not as effective as we need to be with our safety policy on the front line—still seeing fatalities & risky decision making, we can't let up on messaging.
  - EPA/WFLC conversation remains critical for jointly communicating opportunity for managing smoke in the air.
  - Shared vision, joint prioritization/collaboration & communication:
    - We still lack a shared vision—ideally one that points to local communities and that is accessible and relevant.
    - We should lift engagement to activate collaboration & resource needs where they are not, put the tradeoffs on the table.
    - Showcase work across boundaries
  - America Burning, wildland - “A Call to Action” around reframing the wildland urban interface:
    - Build out from success of changing the fire service and building industry of America Burning in 1973 and revisited in 1987.
    - Can we make a 20 to 30-minute film, and put it in hands of every fire department, that can “go viral” and drive national discussion on a more infiltrative level?
    - Use of social media to tell the story
    - Enhance key components of the Cohesive Strategy around WUI
  - Increasing use of science, technology, data and new information:
    - Integration of science and technology into day-to-day work
    - When we talk about communications, the flow of information includes learning from one another about new findings/science/tools
    - Generally, more integration of science and technology.
    - Leveraging data to empower citizenry, eliminate risk.
    - Use the DOI website as a one stop shop for fire information, including science, technology, and stories.
  - General role of WFLC:
    - How do we best utilize the organization sitting around this table?
    - We have a responsibility to lead.
    - May not be this group's role to convince every community.
    - Our time has come—lots of horsepower here.
    - Joint communications and consistent messaging
    - Development of joint “toolboxes” to compile and share implementation efficiencies and best practices around alignment of authorities

### Policy Priority Recurring Themes (Zupko):

- Reframing WUI issues and how to better engage at local levels – “America Burning, Wildland”
- Workforce challenges – how we gather information, so the group is better informed, and approach the challenge in a more consistent manner





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- Active Management – tools and tech and authorities to drive efficiency, joint prioritization and collaboration across boundaries. (e.g. Examine technology that is ready for deployment, including drones for prescribed fire and better aligning authorities across agencies.)
  - Jointly target communities for investment that have local investment; active management needs; and coordinated response organizations. RSCs track for lessons learned.
  - Targeted investment in decision making tools, science, technology and processes
  - Pre-season/fire-year coordination across agencies and partners at the local level.

### **Follow Up Items from Previous Meetings**

- Mitigating Post Fire Impacts – Troy Timmons, WGA, discussed a joint initiative between WGA and WFLC to better align federal, state and local actions around mitigation of post fire impacts. The two organizations will be working closely together to develop a “roadmap” to help define policy gaps and opportunities, determine mechanisms to improve interaction, look for more efficient ways to share information and best practices, and identify solutions to expedite the ability of state and local governments to respond. WFLC will address this issue in-depth at the next meeting.
- NWCG feedback on NFFF Report and potential WFLC engagement – Mark Goeller discussed **ATTACHMENT 17**, the key engagement points for NWCG and WFLC in supporting the NFFF EGH Wildland initiative.
- FEMA Mitigation Opportunities –Juliette Hayes, regional mitigation lead, led a discussion around the Disaster Response Recovery Act from October 2018 and how wildland fire is a much more prominent in FEMA programs going forward. Zupko will continue to coordinate with FEMA leadership on engagement points and work to align programs between FEMA, USFA with land management agencies and response. Mapping and technology that can serve a greater role during wildland fire response is also being worked on with FS and DOI are connected and working closely to coordinate.

### **Public Comment**

- No public comment was made.

### **Next Steps and Closeout**

- Mike Zupko, Jim Hubbard, and Susan Combs shared their final thoughts.
- Zupko will compile the recurring policy priorities from the meeting and draft opportunities for WFLC engagement and consideration by the WFLC membership.
- Zupko will reach out to the membership about setting a date for the next quarterly meeting.