



Wildland Fire Leadership Council Meeting Notes

September 7 - 8, 2016
Boise, Idaho

Meeting Intent

View and understand on the ground success supporting Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) priorities and the goals of the cohesive strategy. Discuss leaders' intent and build strategic opportunities to further on the ground success. Further the four WFLC national priorities and give strategic direction to the National Strategic Committee (NSC), Regional Strategy Committees, agency, and organizational leadership grounded in the concepts of the Cohesive Strategy (CS) and wildland fire management nationally.

Action Items and Next Steps

See next steps for each agenda topic.

Attendees

(Phone Participants on September 8 only)

Council Members or Alternatives: Robert Bonnie (USDA), Kris Sarri (DOI), George Geissler (NGA), Mike Black (BIA), Rick Obernesser (NPS), Sue Phillips (USGS), Steve Ellis (BLM), Jeff Rupert (USFWS), Eric Litzenberg (IAFC), Dan Shoun (NACo), Vernon Stearns (ITC), Tom Tidwell (USFS), Janice Schneider (DOI), Mike Zupko (Executive Manager)

Partners: Tom Shultz, Beverly Scott, Jim Redinger, Meg Gilley, Ann Walker, Phil Rigdon,

Shoshone-Paiute Tribes Members: Chairman Lindsey Manning, Cristi Walker, Renee Thomas, Rebecca Hoover, Marlyne Jim, James Gibson, K.W. Pete, Ted Howard, Buster Gibson, Virginia Jones, Zane Jones, Angle Sassari

Support Staff: Bryan Rice, Harry Humbert, Shawna Legarza, Dan Olsen, Kelsey Delaney, Caitlyn Pollihan, Paul Orbuch, Bill Kaage, Lauren Bogard, Aaron Baldwin, Sue Stewart, Gary Wood, Katie Lighthall, Larry Mastic, Tim Murphy, Susan Filkins, Kristine Lee, Howard Hedrick, Jim Lyons, Craig Foss, Jim Fox*, Karin Rogers*, Danny Lee*, Pete Lahm*, Paul Steblein*

National Strategic Committee: Pete Anderson, Rich Cowger, Joe Stutler, Jim Erikson

* Telephone participants

** Additional participants and support staff on the September 7 field tour only are not listed.

September 7th 0800-0530



Field Tour around Mountain Home, Idaho Great Basin Sage-Grouse Habitat

The field tour highlighted the challenges and opportunities associated with the management of wildland fire and landscapes in and around sage grouse and sagebrush habitat near Mountain Home, Idaho. This included range management and activities around the DOI Secretarial Order 3336 which establishes the necessity to protect, conserve and restore the health of the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem as a critical fire management priority. Many of the field tour stops called attention to the importance of collaboration and partnerships (state, federal, tribal, NGO) to get work done. Speakers stressed that no one entity or organization can do this alone and that partners need to work collectively to achieve success across priority landscapes. Stops included the BLM Seed Warehouse, Paradigm Fuels Project, Pony Fire Rehabilitation, Healthy Habitat, and Bennett Mountain.

September 8th 0800-0530

Meeting Summary

Robert Bonnie and Kris Sarri provided welcoming remarks to the WFLC and expressed their thanks for the previous day's field tour. Tim Murphy started with a brief summary of the field tour and re-emphasized the importance of collaboration to get work done. Chairman Lindsey Manning of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes introduced several members of the tribe that opened the meeting with song; a flag song, honor song, and a victory song. Robert Bonnie then turned the meeting over to Mike Zupko to review the agenda, meeting purpose and goals, and to complete introductions.

Resiliency on Tribal Lands

Objective: To explore and understand tribal issues important to both timber country as well as range country with relation to wildland fire management and restoration/resiliency on tribal landscapes.

Phil Rigdon and Chairman Lindsey Manning each presented on activities, successes, challenges, and barriers that ITC, the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes and other tribes are encountering today in regard to forestry and rangeland issues. Rigdon's presentation included a PowerPoint and Chairman Manning's presentation included a video.

Summary highlights from presentations:

- Rigdon expressed concerns about the loss of "working forests" and the reality that we cannot afford to wait to act; we need to understand risk and set priorities. Restoration is critical to forested landscapes.
- Rigdon reiterated to the WFLC and other members in the room that collaboration and communication are key and no one entity can succeed alone.
- Rigdon provided a brief summary of several of the central acts that govern management of tribal forests, background on the Indian Forest Management Assessment Teams (IFMAT) most recent report, and the ITCs "Wildfire on Indian Forests: A Trust Crisis".



- Several challenges expressed:
 - There is a pending forest health crisis due to chronic federal underfunding;
 - The shifting of wildfire resources away from tribal property prematurely; and
 - The seeming lack of commitment, at times, to tribal relations from other federal agencies.
- WFLC members agreed with the need for increased restoration prior to wildfires as well as post-wildfire rehabilitation. Further, WFLC members recognize and understood the challenges that ITC expressed.
- Chairman Manning took WFLC members back in time with an overview of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes history.
- The Chairman emphasized his support for federal land and multi-use practices.
- Chairman Manning's video detailed the BLM Idaho partnership with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to grow native plants in greenhouses managed by the tribes. Other activities undertaken in partnership with federal agencies include willow planting, traditional food restoration, and wildfire suppression activities.

Life First Engagements and Lessons Learned from the 2016 Fire Season

Objective: WFLC will hear about the Forest Service led engagement sessions to date, understand feedback and impact of the feedback, evaluate potential engagement points around CS response principles and discuss other life safety approaches by all WFLC members.

Shawna Legarza and Dan Olsen provided an update to the WFLC on the progress of the Forest Service's Life First Engagement efforts. The Forest Service hosted one-day dialogue sessions earlier this spring/summer and heard from over 6,000 individuals (from federal and state agencies, NGO's, etc.) about how to eliminate unnecessary exposure to firefighters. Following the dialogue sessions, surveys were distributed to attendees with the request for feedback - again about how to reduce unnecessary exposure. The Forest Service has synthesized the feedback and identified four general themes: (1) Communication; (2) Driving to the Fire; (3) Aircraft; and (4) Mop-up.

In response to this effort and feedback, the Forest Service has taken a modified approach to conducting wildland fire reviews by shifting the focus to "what can be learned" from the fire. This modification has translated into four steps or stages to the learning review that have some similarities as well as differences from the prior review process. Further, the agency is partnering with researchers, scientists, sociologists, etc. on review teams. The key takeaway is that the Forest Service is focusing on learning and steering the agency towards a learning organization.

Discussion:

- Risk is tough to measure but we can measure exposure.
- How do we proactively manage fire under the "right" conditions as opposed to being reactive later?



- There was collective agreement by the WFLC principals that this needs to be an interagency effort. Need to unify around a single vision and be seen as a team.
- It is critical to the success of managing or suppressing a fire that dialogue on possible options occurs between impacted/responsible parties before a fire starts.
- States operate under a different set of rules from the federal agencies and have an obligation to fight fire in certain ways. The one-day dialogue sessions have helped to begin this conversation between states and federal agencies with wildfire responsibilities.

Next Steps:

- The WFLC identified three actions going forward (these may occur between this meeting and the next or be added to the agenda for the next meeting):
 - The WFLC will work towards facilitating and continued discussion both collectively and individually among partners;
 - The WFLC will consider how to strengthen the learning opportunities presented during the meeting (e.g. Life First, NFFF/USFA/IAFC discussions); and
 - The WFLC will consider how to approach/engage elected officials prior to a fire. Is there a structure or a format that can be formally developed and shared?

NSC Strategic Alignment and Gap Identification

Reference: NSC Strategic Alignment Briefing Paper

Objective:

WFLC members will understand the work to date by the NSC around conducting a thorough review of cohesive strategy ideas and opportunities and discuss the next steps in analyzing the review. This will inform how the NSC can provide recommendations around progress, trends and gaps in addressing key issues as well as considering operational form and function to best collectively address WFLC strategic issues and needs.

Pete Anderson updated the WFLC on the activities and accomplishments of the NSC including a review of the CS documents (draft), a roadmap for the next WFLC (in progress), and supporting increased coordination between agencies on the ground. Several emerging issues that the NSC has identified include: (1) The need for a clear, consistent definition of what a managed fire is; (2) Clarifying when, where, how, etc. categorical exclusions can be utilized on the ground by practitioners; and (3) The importance/need for RFA grants. Anderson made the WFLC aware that seven of the thirteen NSC members have expiring terms at the conclusion of this calendar year.

Discussion:

- When considering a definition of a managed fire, it's important to consider a definition that is understood through the eyes of the public (and not just through the eyes of a practitioner).



- There continues to be inconsistent expectation and confusion within the NSC, its charter, operations, etc. Further, there has been some struggle related to consistent participation by members on the NSC.
- How does the WFLC foresee the NSC operating going forward – consider administrative support, strategic, etc.? Are there structural changes to consider making to the NSC?
- WFLC principals discussed where the NSC has been effective and where potentially to de-emphasize NSC actions/activities.
- The ultimate goal of the NSC is to support and increase implementation of the CS on the ground and assists WFLC in engaging at the strategic level.
- Several possible NSC roles/structures discussed:
 - The NSC is the expertise that can be pulled in as necessary on specific issues.
 - The NSC is the “middle man” and acts as the conduit for information flow between the WFLC and the Regional Strategy Committees.
 - Comprise the NSC with both practitioners and WFLC members.
 - Collect senior staff from agencies to work together.

Next Steps:

- Mike Zupko will work with the WFLC principals to identify members/staff to discuss the definition of a managed fire.
- Zupko will connect with the DOI to discuss RFA grants and a path forward.
- Prior to the next meeting, the NSC will review the operational structure of the WFLC, NSC, and RSCs to identify what works and what has not worked. The NSC will bring items and possible recommendations forward for the WFLC to consider/discuss.
- Prior to the next meeting, WFLC members will identify nominees for the vacancies on the NSC. WFLC members need to inform Mike of possible nominees so that he can begin outreach. Final decisions need to be made at the next meeting.
- Tasking to existing task groups:
 - Categorical Exclusions – Understanding the when/who/what and how better will be tasked to the existing Environmental Compliance task group.
 - Increasing the use of prescribed fire and managed fire is to be considered by the existing Smoke Management and Air Quality task group.

Priority Issue Activities and Input

Objective: WFLC members will receive an update on current activity for each of the priority issues, discuss steps forward, and consider opportunities to leverage the relationships and partnerships. Additionally, WFLC will set expectations for the NSC and the priority task groups for the next 4-6 months.



Large Landscape Collaboration & Environmental Compliance

Center of Excellence Portal Draft Structure

Jim Fox walked the WFLC through the draft structure of the Virtual Center of Excellence. Among other items, the online format will make available information regarding large landscape collaboratives and activities underway across the nation. It will include a number of case studies and a fillable form to encourage the collecting of additional information. Several questions that still exist: (1) is the workflow guide linear or iterative; (2) how do we ensure that we capture all the needed information; and (3) who will champion this from each region?

Next Steps:

- Mike Zupko and Pete Anderson will circle back with the priority task group and several additional WFLC members to work with Fox and his colleagues on the Virtual Center of Excellence, and provide responses to the outstanding questions.
- Zupko would like WFLC principals to consider and address (at a later date) how best to navigate within the appropriate agencies to obtain this information (moving data efficiently).
- As additional information is added to the system, a review of potential policy level needs will occur. This will allow the WFLC principals to evaluate areas of policy engagement.

Tracking Success and Impact

Reference: Tracking Success and Impact Briefing Paper

Danny Lee supplied an update to the WFLC on the progress of the project being undertaken by Forest Service scientists and partners. The goal of the project is to develop and deliver an objective, quantifiable, and rigorous means of defining and measuring landscape resiliency through time. No next steps at this time.

Large Landscape Assessment Project and Large Landscape Collaboration Workshop

Mike Zupko shared a short update on the group to assess landscape level collaboration and determine opportunities and needs going forward. BLM has been leading the effort and through an agreement with the UDALL Foundation. A workshop of assessment findings is being considered later in the year or early 2017. Zupko continues to engage on this effort and will share updates with the WFLC as appropriate. No next steps at this time.

Smoke Management and Air Quality

Research Gap Forum Findings and WFLC Input

Reference: Recommendations from the WFLC Tall Timbers Research Station Smoke Management and Air Quality Research Gap Forum Briefing Paper



Paul Steblein and Pete Lahm provided an overview of the Smoke Management & Air Quality Research Gap Forum hosted by Tall Timbers Research Station (TTRS) August 23-25 in Tallahassee, Florida. The WFLC TTRS Smoke Forum was centered on common management and regulatory needs for research and applications. A diversity of partners and interests - federal to private - identified current challenges, research and management needs and learned from one another's expert perspectives. Steblein and Lahm walked the WFLC through the five priorities identified via the forum: (1) Public Health, Behavior, and Communication; (2) Smoke Models; (3) Emissions Inventory; (4) Relative Impacts of Prescribed versus Wildfire; and (5) Smoke Management and Basic Smoke Management Practices.

Next Steps:

- The WFLC will continue to expand on the five priorities.
- The WFLC supports the continued communication and cooperation of the groups that came together at the forum.

National Prescribed Fire Alliance / Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils Partnership – moving the issue forward

Mike Zupko discussed the opportunity to create jointly a National Prescribed Fire Alliance (NRxFA) with the coalition. Two engagement points being considered under the Alliance include: (1) Consistent and synchronized messaging about prescribed fire; and (2) Outreach around proposed regulations – making stakeholders aware of the information that is available. No next steps at this time.

National Playbook, Including EPA Engagement

Mike Zupko relayed that an internal playbook is being utilized to assist in information distribution and analysis. He will use it with the WFLC member agencies and organizations as opportunities arise.

Recent Rules and Regulations – A Challenge to CS Implementation

Pete Lahm briefed the WFLC on a short list of recent rules and regulations that have the potential to influence the implementation of the CS. This includes:

- 2015 Ozone NAAQS
- Proposed Exceptional Events Rule NPRM
- EPA National Air Quality Standards
- Particulate Matter – Integrated Science Assessment in the review process
- Regional Haze

There is an opportunity to share awareness around these issues from WFLC members to external partners and ensure partners understand potential consequences to land and wildland fire



management. In closing, Lahm made the WFLC aware of the International Smoke Symposium 2 from November 14-19 in California. No next steps at this time.

Reducing Risk to Communities

Policy and Program Review

Reference: Reducing Wildfire Risk to Communities Briefing Paper

Katie Lighthall gave an update on the policy and program review that will lead to a nationwide communities-at-risk assistance guidebook. The review is in progress. Lighthall mentioned that there are many similarities across the federal agencies. The goal of the guidebook is to assist communities by supplying information on relevant programs. Zupko also mentioned this will allow for a review of inconsistencies or policy opportunities to better leverage programs across agencies and partners. No next steps at this time.

National Messaging

Mike Zupko gave a brief update on the national messaging efforts that NSC members Brenda O'Connor and Tom Olshanski are working on. They continue to look into key messages that are concise and resonate well with target audiences. Further, they are researching possible communications barriers and appropriate tools in order to better reach target audiences. No next steps at the time.

Catalog of Risk-Assessment Attributes

Mike Zupko provided a brief update on the plan to develop a framework or structure that catalogs an understanding of layers and methodologies from various risk mapping systems. The intent is to create a "shopping list" communities can learn from and choose to engage further when undertaking wildfire risk assessments. No next steps at this time.

Public Comment

- There was a question regarding the role and budget of the WFLC, and if the WFLC is a BLI within federal agencies budgets.
 - Answered no, it is not a BLI. A top priority of the WFLC is the successful implementation of the CS.

Administrative Items, Next Steps and Closing

MOU Status

The final draft is being circulated around the legal departments of the four departments that will sign the MOU (USDA, DOI, DHS and DoD). Mike Zupko reminded everyone that DoD has been added to the MOU to bring in the military operations perspective as well as the installations and environment perspective. The DoD has provided comments back that will be addressed. The intent is to have a final MOU by November.



Cohesive Strategy Science Workshop

Joe Stutler gave an update on the Cohesive Strategy Science Workshop being planning for next spring in Reno, Nevada. Planners want to create a “learning laboratory” for attendees that bring science to the center of the discussion. More details to come. No next steps at this time.

Next Meeting Date

Confirmed for November 30, 2016, Washington DC in the USDA Whitten Building.

Closing Comments

Robert Bonnie and Kris Sarri thanked everyone for a great meeting, discussion and field tour.

Executive Session

No decisions were made during the executive session.

Adjourned: 5:15 pm.