

Wildland Fire Leadership Council
Conference Call – VIA ZOOM
December 3, 2020. 1100 am – 100 pm EDT

CALL SUMMARY – via ZOOM

Council Members (Principals or alternates)

Jim Cason (DOI), Jim Hubbard (USDA-NRE), Vicki Christiansen (FS), Perry Pendley (BLM), Shaun Sanchez (FWS), Jennifer Flynn (NPS), Anne Kinsinger (USGS), Keith Bryant (FEMA-USFA), John Suthers (NLC), Kevin Cann and Matt Kingsley (NACo), Vern Stearns (ITC), Troy Timmons (Gov. Bullock-Western Governors), Laura McCarthy (Gov. Lujan-Grisham – NGA), George Geissler (NASF), Erik Litzenberg (IAFC) and Mike Zupko (WFLC Executive Director). RSC representatives, senior staff and other interested participants were also on the call.

Meeting Objective: The meeting was focused on allowing the WFLC principals or their designated alternates to understand the status of the EPA assessment and provide feedback. Brief updates from WFLC policy priorities and other issues were given.

Opening Remarks – Chair, Jim Cason, Associate Deputy Secretary, DOI and Co-Chair, Jim Hubbard, Under Secretary, USDA, both offered welcome remarks.

Roll Call of Principals/Alternates by organization – Mike Zupko, Executive Director, WFLC, conducted the roll-call for the principals for each organization represented.

Agenda Review and Call/Zoom process – Zupko briefly reviewed the agenda, the intent of the meeting to focus on the current status of the EPA assessment and gave a brief overview of how to use the Zoom technology to help in facilitation of presentations and discussions of the WFLC principals.

Approval of Past WFLC Meeting and Call Minutes and Notes – There was a motion, second and unanimous approval of the following WFLC minutes and notes from WFLC engagements over the past year:

WFLC Meeting January 9-10, 2020

WFLC Call March 12, 2020

WFLC Call May 11, 2020

WFLC Call/Zoom September 29, 2020

EPA Comparative Assessment of the Impacts of Controlled Versus Uncontrolled Fire (CAIF): A Case Study of the Western U.S

Objective: To understand the EPA Comparative Assessment Structure and Timeline

Outcomes: General understanding of the Comparative Assessment and opportunities for engagement going forward

- Leadership Opening Remarks - Cason, Hubbard, Austin, Cascio each gave opening remarks on the intent of the assessment and their perspective for use and coordination going forward.
- Overview - Jason Sacks, Wayne Cascio, EPA presented **ATTACHMENT I**, a ppt overview of the assessment design and interim findings.
- Questions and Answers Specific to Overview – Zupko and Sacks facilitated a conversation and questions from the WFLC principals.
- Final Leadership Remarks - Cason, Hubbard, Austin, Cascio each gave closing remarks, thanked the research team and those participating with the assessment and discussed next steps and an opportunity to engage WFLC in 2021 as the project is finalized. Zupko will stay in close contact with the research team to help connect on any key items as well as begin the conversation as to how the findings may be utilized by the joint comms team and other outlets.

2020 Fire Year

- Overview and Lessons Learned and Key Issues to Collectively Consider - Patty Grantham-FS and Jeff Rupert-DOI presented a brief overview of the 2020 fire year including key statistics as well as offered their observations on several of the key considerations for the collective WFLC partners to understand before the 2021 fire year. Zupko will continue to work with Grantham and Rupert to evaluate any issues or opportunities to collectively address at the WFLC level and work closely with the WFLC co-chairs as appropriate.

WFLC Policy Priorities Updates

- America Burning, WUI - Zupko and Jim Karels offered an update of the project and mentioned Karels was recently contracted by IAFC to produce the final report during 2021. Zupko and Karels will be working closely together to outreach to WFLC members and partners for the development of the report and Zupko, Litzenberg and others will be strategizing longer-term approaches to maximize impacts of the findings and recommendations.
- Joint Invasives and Fire Strategy - Zupko briefed the membership about the joint WFLC/National Invasives Species “opportunities document” that is going through a review of both WFLC and NISC senior staff advisors to help roll-up both a way in which the 30 identified opportunities may be addressed as well as an internal rollout strategy to both WFLC and NISC members. Zupko will work with his counterpart in NISC to coordinate the distribution and feedback mechanism for both organizations.
- Mitigating Post Fire Impacts – Zupko and Timmons discussed that the WFLC and WGA partnership continues to move forward the various components from the ongoing work. A priorities roadmap will help to identify and align key opportunities for state and local governments to gain a better handle on near-term opportunities, which a science and data team will be helping to link existing information to the prioritized list. Additionally, the navigator concept, where an individual(s) would serve local communities in a support function has also gained interested in several states this year and has been distributed where it could be embraced as a pilot. We are continuing to refine and distribute these opportunities through a wide network to gain additional feedback and understand each opportunity and will package as appropriate if funding is secured.

Misc. Items

- E.O. 13855 Wildfire Strategy Status - Rupert and Grantham gave a brief update first thanking WFLC members for their insights and feedback over the past couple months. DOI and FS have been incorporating the feedback as appropriate and will be finalizing the proposal over the upcoming weeks to have a final strategy by December 31. They can share through WFLC at that time.
- Trillion Trees Initiative - Cason and Hubbard discussed the unique opportunity through the strategy, which extends much further than the federal government. Multiple partners are coordinating around this and they both see it as a great opportunity to fund post fire needs with rehabilitation after a fire through tree planting as well as longer-term management necessary to keep forests healthy. There is an opportunity for corporate America to really embrace this and dedicated funds may be set up to help funds identified needs. They encouraged WFLC to track closely and engage as appropriate. Several WFLC members are already active in the conversation.
- Closeout - Hubbard and Cason both thanked the members for an active year across a host of joint issues. They additionally thanked the EPA for the relationship that has grown over the past year and the opportunity in the upcoming years with both EPA and CDC to expand the working relationship through the WFLC principals. As a final closeout, Cason passed the chair back to Hubbard and USDA for 2021 as the chair rotates annually between DOI and USDA. The call was then adjourned.