



# WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## **Wildland Fire Leadership Council Meeting**

**Day 1: December 18, 2023**

**Virtual 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm EDT**

### Attendees

#### Council Members or Alternates:

Joan Mooney, DOI

Meryl Harrell, USDA

Grant Beebe, BLM

Trina Locke, BIA

Cynthia Martinez, FWS

Chris Wilcox, NPS

David Applegate, USGS

Nicole LaRosa, USFA

Erik Svendsen, CDC

Erika Sasser, EPA

Matt Kingsley, NACo

Bill Tripp, ITC

Chief Rich Elliot, IAFC

George Geissler, NASF

Mayor Yemi Mobolade, NLC

David Lytle, USFS R&D

Jaelith Hall-Rivera, USFS

Ara Andrea, ID rep for WGA

Laura McCarthy, NM rep for NGA

Ron Tickle, DOD

Eric Letvin, FEMA

Mike Zupko, WLFC

Katie Lighthall, WFLC

RSC representatives, senior staff, discussion leads/presenters and other interested participants were also in attendance.

### Opening Remarks and Introductions

Co-Chair, Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, DOI

Co-Chair, Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary, USDA

Mike Zupko, Executive Director, WFLC

Welcomed everyone to the meeting. Stated they were excited to build on the progress from the October meeting and identifying tangible outcomes over the next year. Mayor Mobolade provided a brief introduction as this is his first meeting serving in the role representing NLC.

### Agenda Review and Administration

- WFLC Executive Director Mike Zupko reviewed the meeting agenda, intentions, and goals of day 1.
- The October 17-18, 2023, minutes from the meeting in Yosemite National Park were unanimously approved.



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### WFLC Priorities from October Meeting – Next Steps

#### Proactive Use of Fire

#### Cultural Burning: Bill Tripp lead **ATTACHMENT I**

- Discussed the planned panel for the spring WFLC meeting on Tribal sovereignty, Tribal application of fire, and other barriers Tribes face. Things are progressing in Northern CA, specifically with the USFS, but was able to get the language about creating enabling conditions for cultural burning into a NEPA with the intention that this will start the process to incorporate it more going forward. Also need to consider the capacity needs and implementation challenges.
  - Zupko: The panel would provide basics to make sure everyone has the same foundational knowledge, then get into more details on location-specific challenges (like Tripp speaking on behalf of CA)
  - Locke on behalf of the BIA discussed the opportunities to coordinate with Tripp and the ITC to identify potential panelists from across the nation.
  - Harrell: The point of the panel in the spring meeting is to spotlight the barriers and opportunities. Would like to have examples of vehicles that have worked to allow for cultural burning application, as well as a time when you expected to be able to put fire on the landscape, but there was a barrier that prevented the application. Would like a sharing of lessons learned to help inform the dialogue on how we can discuss what others are doing successfully.
  - Cody Desautel: What does liability look like? Without having some protections if the ignitions start from cultural sources, where would the liability lie? WFMMC discussed this but didn't have concrete answers. This conversation needs to come into the spring meeting.
- Questions and follow up:
  - Tripp would like to be the California representative on this continued effort.
    - **SUPPORTED BY WFLC**
  - Would like to have someone come in from the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network to facilitate the session in a future meeting.
    - **SUPPORTED BY WFLC**
  - Zupko: Follow up and will send some questions out before the March meeting to have members bring thoughts to the spring meeting.
  - Short-term: Tribal examples from across the country, send them to Tripp, Locke, and Zupko to coordinate for the spring meeting panel



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Scaling up size and pace – Enabling cross-boundary support for Rx fire including improved resource ordering: George Geissler lead [ATTACHMENT II](#)

- There are several barriers to increasing the pace and scale of prescribed burning, including:
  - Social acceptance, liability, lack of adequate capacity (including trained personnel and funding), there are also barriers between qualifications systems.
- If we are going to look forward solutions, WFLC is the best organization available to cross jurisdictional boundaries and levels of government.
- From October meeting: Wanted to develop a leader's intent related to resource utilization and addressing the barriers, George read the statement provided in the meeting invitation.
- Action Plan:
  - First quarter 2024:
    - Finalize draft leaders' intent with input from WFLC members and determine methods for sharing leaders' intent to each agency/organization then support each WFLC member for distribution through their organizations.
    - Create a workgroup to examine the current policies and systems related to interagency participation, not just fire training but also resource sharing and how we use our ordering systems, then articulate the barriers that exist. Then propose short- and long-term solutions to the barriers identified.
  - After the workgroup reviews the needs, they will present an evaluation and initial thoughts at the March meeting. The larger WFLC group would examine next steps in the March meeting.
- Harrell: There were WFMMC members that had thoughts on this that we will want to engage in the workgroup process.
- Leaders' intent:
  - **Decided to hold off on calling a vote** since the language is new for members to review and many in leadership capacities are on leave for the holidays. Will come back to the leader's intent in 2024.
  - If you have thoughts or suggestions on the leader's intent, please send them to Geissler and Zupko.

Better integration of public health with wildland fire: Erik Svendsen

- WFLC Spring Meeting is Confirmed: March 5-6, 2024 at the CDC in Decatur, GA



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- The CDC and EPA are organizing this meeting with Zupko and have expressed an interest in showing some of the work the Agencies and their partners can do in the public health and fire space.
- Planning to have hands on activities to make the meeting engaging. For example,
  - Colleagues from NIOSH will bring equipment they have to protect firefighters in the field;
  - EPA will bring equipment to show how exposure assessments are done;
  - Will have some local partners from public health come discuss relevant topics;
  - Will have a presentation from the University of Oregon;
  - Will give a tour of the emergency operations center at the CDC and the museum which is part of the Smithsonian network of museums;
  - Want to discuss the additional public health impacts beyond smoke to include access to safe drinking water; and
  - Will also weave in the health equity and environmental justice conversation to this meeting, will provide tools to empower people in these discussions.
- Mandi Cohen, CDC Commission is confirmed to be there for part of the WFLC meeting! The Atlanta Center Director will also be present. Hoping to have the director at NIOSH present.
- All participants will need extra time to get through the CDC secure facility.
- Will not have a room block, people will have to find hotels nearby the CDC's location.
- Additional logistics will be distributed as they are confirmed. Please inform both Zupko and Morris, Grace (CDC/NCEH/DEHSP) [ucu7@cdc.gov](mailto:ucu7@cdc.gov) if you are planning to participate.

### Smoke and public health messaging: Heidi Huber-Stearns ATTACHMENT III

- Interested in partnering on the smoke and public health messaging piece of WFLC's work.
- The University of Oregon's Smoke Center has three key areas of focus: Communities and household preparation, communicating public health smoke risks, planning and response for smoke events <https://resilient.uoregon.edu/wildfire-smoke-center>
- Focus of the work: Effective messaging techniques, who are the messengers, what tactics work, how to ensure access to messaging, not necessarily on the specific messaging, but how they're reaching people.
- Plan of work:
  - 1. Conduct a literature review and evidence synthesis
  - 2. Convene communications experts to refine recommendations



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- 3. Facilitate interagency collaboration on strategies and opportunities among WFLC members, partners, and other agency representatives to review findings and recommendations and use this information to springboard for identifying strategies and opportunities for clearer, more consistent provision of actionable information.
- A “WFLC Subgroup” will be formed which will consist of WFLC members who want to serve as an advisory board to this partnership with the University of Oregon.
  - Can help map out what communication is appropriate for different contexts.
  - Create some connective tissue between this and the Smoke MOU that was recently released, as well as the smoke tabletops that are occurring.
  - Link to the JFSP as they are working on a lot of research to operations, as well as the medical public health advisory team will bring some leverage and support to these efforts.

### Wrap Up:

Co-Chair, Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, DOI

Co-Chair, Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary, USDA

Mike Zupko, Executive Director, WFLC

Thanked members for attending day one of the December WFLC meeting. Reviewed the discussions from day one and the agenda for the next day. Adjourned the meeting until the next day.



# WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## **Wildland Fire Leadership Council Meeting**

**Day 2: December 19, 2023**

**Virtual 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm EDT**

### Attendees

#### Council Members or Alternates:

Joan Mooney, DOI

Meryl Harrell, USDA

Grant Beebe, BLM

Trina Locke, BIA

Cynthia Martinez, FWS

Chris Wilcox, NPS

David Applegate, USGS

Nicole LaRosa, USFA

Erik Svendsen, CDC

Erika Sasser, EPA

Matt Kingsley, NACo

Bill Tripp, ITC

Chief Rich Elliot, IAFC

George Geissler, NASF

Mayor Yemi Mobolade, NLC

David Lytle, USFS R&D

Jaelith Hall-Rivera, USFS

Laura McCarthy, NM rep for NGA

Ron Tickle, DOD

Eric Letvin, FEMA

Mike Zupko, WFLC

Katie Lighthall, WFLC

RSC representatives, senior staff, discussion leads/presenters and other interested participants were also in attendance.

### Opening Remarks and Introductions

Co-Chair, Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, DOI

Co-Chair, Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary, USDA

Mike Zupko, Executive Director, WFLC

Welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided a recap of the day one discussion. Leadership expressed excitement for the spring meeting and officially welcomed Trina Locke as Johnna Blackhair has returned to her role.

Ron Tickle, DOD provided a quick introduction, stating that he will be the WFLC principle in his new role and Anne Jewell will be on his staff.

### Agenda Review and Administration

WFLC Executive Director Mike Zupko reviewed the meeting agenda, intentions, and goals of day 2.



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### WFLC Priorities from October Meeting – Next Steps (cont.)

CS Education, Communications and Marketing: Mike Zupko and Katie Lighthall

- Zupko gave an overview and a timeline of education, marketing and communications products and process for utilization by WFLC members and the goal of tailoring the conversation for location-specific needs. **ATTACHMENT IV**
- Lighthall showed the Cohesive Strategy PowerPoint presentation to help educate people on the strategy and what changed with the addendum. **ATTACHMENT V**
- Lighthall then showed the talking points and FAQs documents – the idea is that you can customize the talking points based on your audience. **ATTACHMENT VI**
  - Please let WFLC know if you believe any talking points are missing that you would like for them to include going forward.
- Common terminology document. (no attachment)
  - Intent of October discussion was to not have WFLC replace the NWCG process on terminology, but instead to define how words are used within the Cohesive Strategy and would like to test it with this group. Lighthall and Zupko showed the structure and process we can use going forward within WFLC.
    - Harrell: Intent was not to redefine terminology, but to create some common understanding on how terminology is being used.
    - Zupko: For words or phrases with a NWCG definition, that is the definition, we just want to make sure everyone is using the terminology in the same way.
    - Joe Ten Eyck: Example of terminology that has an evolving definition – “Urban Fire Storm”, a fire spreading from wildlands into urban areas or a urban area fire spreading into the wildland.
    - Geissler: It is good to continuously ground NWCG definitions in the context of the Cohesive Strategy. This would provide clarity/reinforcement at national level. Recognizing not all words or phrases are defined by NWCG. Remember - leadership of the agencies that make up NWCG are WFLC members.
    - Next Steps: Refine process and intent. If you are interested in helping further define the scope of WFLC’s Cohesive Strategy terminology, please let Lighthall and Zupko know.
- Follow up for the CS education, communications and marketing engagement: Please provide Lighthall and Zupko feedback on any of the products and begin thinking about when you want us to work with you and your communications professionals to begin building a specific integration strategy for your agency/organization.





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### WLFC Topics for Continued Discussion from October Meeting

#### Science, Data and Technology – David Applegate lead **ATTACHMENT VII**

- The proposal is a refinement from the October meeting to put together a workshop in Spring/Summer timeframe to do some synthesis across reports and recommendations.
- There have been many reports and recommendations related to science, data, and technology, including the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, recommendations coming out of Joint Fire Science Program, the Science for Disaster Reduction Interagency Working Group, and the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology report.
- The key question: Can we bring together the agencies to get a focus on “what are the near-term opportunities that would benefit from focused coordination across the agencies to make the integration from research to operations?”
- Called a vote to allow for planning on a workshop to bring together the agencies, reports that have been completed, pre-work to synthesize where the recommendations are falling, with the goal of deciding where to focus attention. USGS and Forest Service are able to support this, want to gauge interest in a leadership opportunity (a detailee) to coordinate these efforts.
  - **DECISION: UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTED TO MOVE FORWARD**

#### Mitigating Post Fire Impacts – Eric Letvin lead **ATTACHMENT VIII**

- Asked for comments or feedback on the paper sent to members in advance to gauge interest in moving forward to implement on the ground activities, including pilot projects and research to improve community resilience post-fire to identify gaps and solutions to address the gaps.
- Preemptively wanted to address some concerns:
  - There are many recommendations in Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission report to address post-fire, WFLC isn't here to solve all the problems.
  - There is also a Post-Fire Interagency Working Group with a MOU pending to establish a post-fire management board to provide clarity and guidance on Federal agency post-fire work.
  - This proposal would support the board in the Interagency Working Group MOU – it would operationalize how the board would work with Tribes, locals, states, NGOs, etc.





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- Federal agencies must abide by FACA – there are exemptions for groups assembled to provide facts, information, or individual advice. The group would set up the white paper to fit into one of the exemptions of FACA.
- There were questions and discussion about the organizational structure, external support potential, where funding might come from and linkages to the IWG MOU.
- Letvin: Open to evolving this idea however necessary, asks members to redline the idea to continue to make progress in this space.
- **DECISION: CONTINUED DISCUSSION IS NEEDED.** There is a shared priority for better organization across post-fire space, want to reconnect in the future about this idea. It is currently tabled for greater discussion and clarity as MOU moves forward.
  - Harrell: Can provide an update on the MOU in January.
  - Zupko: **Will continue this conversation leading up to the March meeting** and more clearly to evolve the idea and see where WFLC would fit into this post-fire space.

### Updates on Additional Topics

#### All-lands Wildfire Resilience Workshop next steps: Mike Zupko, Katie Lighthall

- The target is to share a draft playbook with the broader forestry community in February or March 2024.
- The steering committee is currently looking to secure funding for a coordinator to do some of the writing and facilitating of the playbook – federal partners are exploring funding options.
- Harrell: We want to make sure we are connecting with organizations that have done complementary work (like the Fire Adapted Communities Network and the Fire Learning Network), also want to make sure we are aware of inclusiveness and ensuring that the people who should be at the table are invited to participate.
- Zupko: Will keep members updated and provide a draft of the playbook as we move forward.

#### Invasives + Fire **ATTACHMENT IX**

- Most recent discussion of the joint task team is around regional efforts and how they can help further align around specific habitats.

### Round Robin, Closeout and Next Steps

Joan Mooney and Meryl Harrell lead

- Spring and Fall meeting – timing and topics (March 5-6, CDC, Atlanta)



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- Zupko sent out the invitation to the March meeting today 12/19/23 to WFLC members and senior staff. It will be distributed to the broader partner group soon.
- The CDC has a coordinator helping them to organize this event, feel free to reach out to her with questions (information in the invitation email from Mike) **Morris, Grace (CDC/NCEH/DEHSP)** [ucu7@cdc.gov](mailto:ucu7@cdc.gov)
- Planning a meeting around June in D.C.
- Asks members to consider locations for fall if they're exploring Tribal issues and public health issues more this year
- Leader's Intent from Day 1: Thanks to those who have sent feedback on the leader's intent around resource ordering. In early January, look for an updated version of this.
- Provided a recap of the two-day meeting, the decisions made, and the conversations that will continue at the March meeting. Thanked everyone for their participation.