

Wildland Fire Leadership Council

Conference Call

May 11, 2020, 1600 - 1700 EDT

CALL SUMMARY

Council Members (Principals or alternates)

Scott Cameron (DOI-PMB), Jim Hubbard (USDA-NRE), Jim Cason (DOI), Vicki Christiansen (FS), Perry Pendley (BLM), Cynthia Martinez (FWS), David Vela (NPS), Leon Ben (BIA), Anne Kinsinger (USGS), Nicole Larossa (FEMA-USFA), Maureen Sullivan (DoD), Brett Lacey (NLC), Kevin Cann (NACo), Vern Stearns (ITC), Patrick Holmes (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: Provide status update on how each agency/organization is approaching the current fire year in light of COVID-19 along with brief updates from WFLC policy priorities.

Call Agenda (1 hour):

1. Welcome – Jim Hubbard opened the call and introduced Jim Cason (Associate Deputy Secretary – DOI) will be taking over as chair with Susan Comb’s recent retirement. Cason welcomed everyone and discussed his energy to keep current initiatives moving forward as he re-engages WFLC.
2. Roll call – Zupko conducted the roll-call for the principals for each organization represented.
3. 2020 Fire Year
 - Brief fire year outlook – Shawna Legarza (FS-FAM) and Jeff Rupert (DOI-OWF) gave a quick overview of the current fire season and near-term outlook including increased resources available for interagency response, such as aircraft, as well as the intent for more aggressive initial attack intending to keep fires smaller requiring less overall resources.
 - Round robin overview of agency and organizational strategic focus and preparation for fire year response (in light of COVID-19) – Each principal gave a brief update of how their agency or organization was approaching the fire year and western fire season focusing on necessary changes to approach due to COVID-19.
 - The following potential gaps or strategic engagement opportunities for WFLC were identified and rolled-up as common themes. Zupko, Legarza and Rupert will work with the co-chairs to determine if WFLC is the appropriate forum to engage on the issues, or if other existing coordination structures may be with emphasized leaders’ intent stemming from WFLC.
 1. Mobilization across state lines - travel bans and/or automatic incoming quarantines have been over exaggerated at times and continuously

changing. Understanding how each state is approaching is important as well as collectively keeping up with the changing state policies as it relates to both coming and going.

2. Testing and access to PPE – consistency in approach as well as utilizing local relationships to understand local public health policies and procedures
3. Good alignment up and down most of the wildland fire management system, but an opportunity to further enhance relationships at the local level to ensure locals are engaged early and often.
4. Communications opportunities to further message at a high level:
 1. The interagency nature of wildland fire response and the strong ties across the spectrum from federal to state to tribal and to local;
 2. The challenges with not having all management options on the table due to additional constraints COVID-19 considerations put on the system. How to help local managers (land and fire) understand operating in restricted space;
 3. Mitigation and public education must continue to occur and finding ways to integrate that type of work and outreach into daily outreach will be important to lessen the overall impact of the fire year.
5. Several resources available that were discussed on the call include:
 1. Fire Management Board website of COVID-19 related memos
<https://sites.google.com/a/firenet.gov/fmb/home/information/memorandums/fmb-memorandums-2020>
 2. NASF has been tracking the issues closely and created several supporting documents. Geissler can point to as appropriate.

Zupko gave a very brief update on each of the following WFLC policy priorities and pointed everyone to the **ATTACHMENT I**. (WFLC 01-10-20 Deliverables Document dated 05-08-20) for a more in-depth update of the policy priorities).

4. WFLC Cross-Boundary Initiative stemming from leaders' intent – Zupko briefly mentioned the leadership group is forming and will have a call in the upcoming week. They will be charged with the development of overarching criteria that can help agencies and organizations better understand considerations around landscape level selection of geographies for collaboration. Secondly, the group will be charged with development of an engagement strategy national and

regional organizations can utilize in the development of their staff and membership when broadening their role in linking with cross-boundary opportunities.

5. Smoke Management and Air Quality Policy Priority – Zupko briefly discussed the recent activity of the joint WFLC-EPA-CDC communications group that is building joint messages around air quality and prescribed fire. Additionally, he shared that DOI and USDA had agreed to fully fund the two proposed Health Impact Assessments by EPA and CDC that were first discussed during the January WFLC meeting and subsequently built out over the past several months. The EPA HIA has a 6-12-month timeframe while the CDC proposal is 18-24 months.
6. Prescribed Fire Data Standards – setting up WFLC for data and technology conversation – Zupko and Rupert discussed one of the biggest take-aways from the joint work around prescribed fire and smoke is the inconsistency in prescribed fire and related smoke data. They will continue to work with DOI-PPA to distill some of those challenges and plan to present back to WFLC some of the data standard needs around the issue as well as linking to a broader conversations the co-chairs have discussed around data standards, technology and AI issues that relate to and can help inform wildland fire management overall.
7. Closing remarks from Co-Chairs – Hubbard and Cason both offered brief closing remarks.
8. Next steps/follow up – Zupko mentioned he will continue to spearhead those issues contained in the deliverables document and will work closely with the co-chairs to determine timing of the next WFLC call.