



Minnesota Incident Command System 2017 Annual Report





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2017 MNICS Board of Directors

Bob DeGross, Superintendent, Voyageurs National Park

Connie Cummins, Forest Supervisor, Superior National Forest

Joe Neuberger, HSEM Ops Branch Director, Department of Public Safety

Russ Langford, Deputy Regional Fire Management Coordinator, USFWS

Darla Lenz, Forest Supervisor, Chippewa National Forest

Paul Lundgren, Fire Section Manager, Minnesota DNR

Tom Remus, Fire Management Officer, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Message from the Board

MNICS members,

In October, it was announced that the dispatch offices and personnel housed at MIFC were formally integrated. The desired outcome for the future of the MIFC dispatch center is to consolidate current independent functional nodes into one integrated, cohesive and fully functioning interagency center with centralized leadership. Most importantly, we believe our dispatch center should be focused on the safety of our firefighters and other employees on the ground.

So, why is this being done?

There are many reasons why MNICS partners are implementing this change right now. As budgets shrink, retirements increase and staff numbers decline, we must rely on each other, now more than ever, to get more and more work done. There are opportunities to increase efficiencies, reduce redundancies and provide better quality service and support for all our agencies. However, the biggest reason is for safety of MNICS field personnel.

What does it mean to you?

The integrated dispatch, and its personnel, will equally and fairly serve and support all MNICS agencies to best of their ability. No matter your agency, you deserve and can expect the highest quality service possible from any of our dispatch personnel.

What you can expect going forward?

Several other recommendations are under consideration and will be worked on throughout the winter by the MNICS Board of Directors (BOD), MNICS Task Force and dispatch center personnel. There will be requests for input and opportunities to engage in the conversation. The dispatch center will host an open forum over the winter to provide an opportunity to engage dispatch in person and discuss your needs. There will also be physical changes to the layout of the MIFC dispatch center.

The BOD recognizes that dispatch center employees have been working very hard and cooperating in many different ways. We understand that changes will require shifts in how you have traditionally accomplished work. We will look for feedback on our action plan to best understand how to accomplish our goals together.

While continuing to honor the past and where we come from, we are looking to the future and how to make us better. We ask for your patience and understanding as this process develops and changes occur.

"Our mission is your safety"

MNICS Board of Directors
Rebekah Luedtke, Center Manager



Message

from the
Chair

The MNICS organization has seen significant change in 2017. Several in-services and meetings were held throughout the year to identify needed dispatch changes at the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center (MIFC). The MNICS Board of Directors has delegated authority to centralize coordination of dispatch functions including initial attack, air desk, logistics and expanded dispatch.

Along with these internal shifts, we have integrated with the Eastern Area Incident Management Team in a national weekly rotation to provide better coverage not only to MNICS partners but also to the Eastern Area Coordinating Center (EACC). While we saw relatively little fire activity in Minnesota, it was a busy western wildfire season. Among more than 1,000 mobilizations, 10 Type-2 initial attack crews went to western fires. We also sent two crews to Canada and provided personnel to hurricane relief efforts that are ongoing.

Organizational success is based on the strength of our interagency partnerships. Each MNICS agency contributes meaningfully in terms of time, talent and resources. More importantly, we have re-energized our safety mission to support wildland firefighters both in the air and on the ground.

Stay tuned for more changes in 2018. On behalf of the MNICS Task Force, I thank everyone for their dedication, cooperation, professionalism and participation this year.

Seth Grimm (FWS)
MNICS 2017 Task Force Chair

Minnesota had a relatively quiet fire weather season in 2017.

Six Red Flag Warnings were issued (April 16, May 5, Oct. 18, 19 and Nov. 28, 29) with any given county having no more than two warnings.

Winter 2016-17 was considered warm throughout most of the state with below average snowfall.

Several winter rains brought above average participation. Snow left the landscape in early March bringing the potential for an early start to spring fire season.

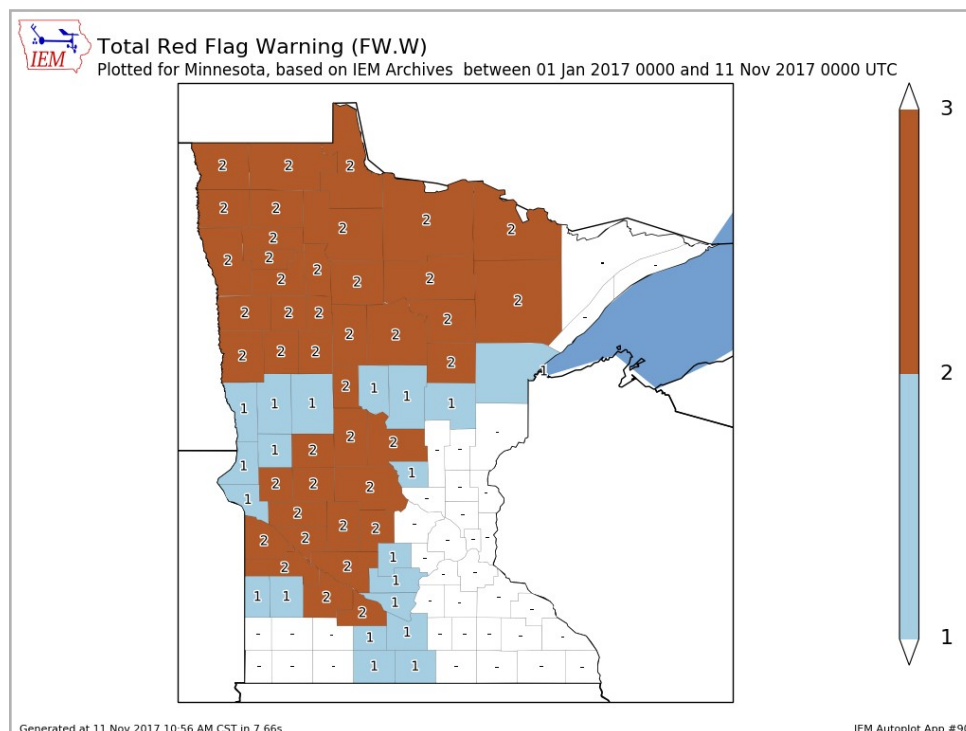
Plentiful spring and early summer rain kept fire weather concerns in check. However, northwestern Minnesota had sustained periods of moderate to severe drought.

Though September was warm and dry, there were no significant wind events to create fire weather days.

October began very wet and finished with snow and cold, quickly putting an end to fall wildfire season in Minnesota. However, the middle of October had a warm, windy and dry week that resulted in two Red Flag Warnings, as did November with late season Red Flag Warnings.



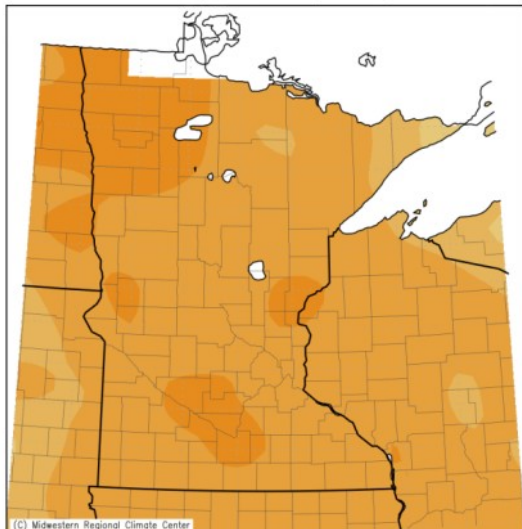
National Weather Service



Total number of Red Flag Warnings issued per county in 2017 (two additional Red Flag Warnings were issued on Nov. 28-29 that are not reflected on the map).

Contributor: Mike Griesinger, NWS-Chanhassen

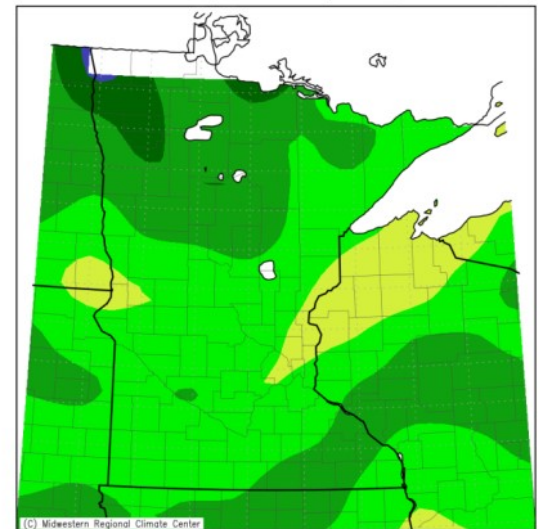
Average Temperature (°F): Departure from Mean
November 1, 2016 to April 30, 2017



(C) Midwestern Regional Climate Center
Mean period is 1981–2010.
Midwestern Regional Climate Center
cli-MATE: MRCC Application Tools Environment
Generated at: 11/12/2017 9:16:31 AM CST

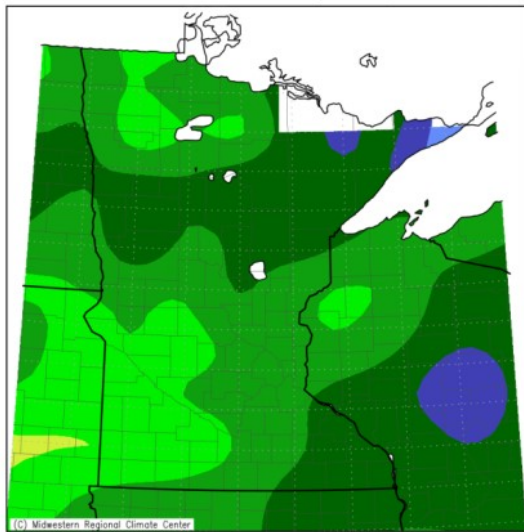


Accumulated Snowfall: Percent of Mean
November 1, 2016 to April 30, 2017



(C) Midwestern Regional Climate Center
Mean period is 1981–2010.
Midwestern Regional Climate Center
cli-MATE: MRCC Application Tools Environment
Generated at: 11/12/2017 9:13:57 AM CST

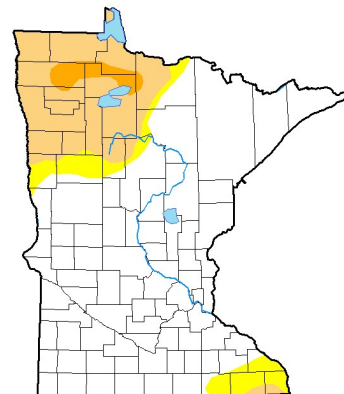
Accumulated Precipitation: Percent of Mean
November 1, 2016 to April 30, 2017



(C) Midwestern Regional Climate Center
Mean period is 1981–2010.
Midwestern Regional Climate Center
cli-MATE: MRCC Application Tools Environment
Generated at: 11/12/2017 9:14:46 AM CST

U.S. Drought Monitor Minnesota

September 12, 2017
(Released Thursday, Sep. 14, 2017)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	72.49	27.51	21.39	2.32	0.00	0.00
Last Week	75.28	24.72	16.97	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago	80.06	39.94	11.97	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:
 D0 Abnormally Dry
 D1 Moderate Drought
 D2 Severe Drought
 D3 Extreme Drought
 D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

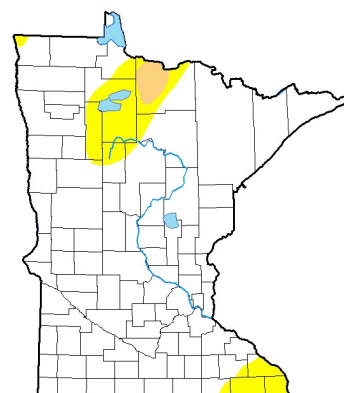
Author:
Richard Tinker
CPC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

U.S. Drought Monitor Minnesota

October 10, 2017
(Released Thursday, Oct. 12, 2017)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D1	D1-D2	D2-D3	D3-D4	D4
Current	88.89	11.01	1.37	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week	88.87	11.13	2.45	0.21	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago	77.40	22.60	6.41	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year	82.66	17.34	3.90	0.11	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:
 D0 Abnormally Dry
 D1 Moderate Drought
 D2 Severe Drought
 D3 Extreme Drought
 D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:
Anthony Artusa
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

A dry spring and summer in the northwest left moderate to severe drought into fall. A wet end to September, followed by a wet start in October quickly ate away at the northwestern Minnesota drought.



Dispatch

Minnesota 2017 spring fire season had light activity statewide. With reduced activity, work continued on mobilizing engines, aircraft modules, crews and single resources out of state during summer and fall.

In-state mobilizations

In early June, MNICS IMT A successfully coordinated the 2017 Wildfire Academy at Itasca Community College, Grand Rapids. Also in June, a mix of MNICS incident management team (IMT) members attended a Centers for Disease Control Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) training in Minneapolis.

This year approximately 550 resources were mobilized to 33 in-state incidents. A total of 275 out-of-state resources provided wildfire suppression and prescribed burning support, including a Type-2 IA Bay Mills crew and Type-1 Midewin and Idaho Panhandle crews.

In September, Minnesota DNR assisted in a search for a lost hunter in Pine County. The search took a few days but ended well when the hunter was found alive.

2017 out-of-state mobilizations (Jan. 1 to Oct. 25, 2017)

Out-of-state mobilizations began in late May with resources going to Wisconsin, Florida and Georgia. MNICS supported the national fire suppression effort with the majority of days at planning levels (PL) 4 and 5. Minnesota mobilized resources to 27 states, Canada and Puerto Rico. Ten Type-2 initial attack (IA) crews went to New Mexico, Montana and Utah. Minnesota DNR joined interstate crews that were mobilized to Manitoba and Ontario.

In mid-September, a rain and snow mix brought relief from a seemingly relentless fire season in the western U.S.

On Oct. 3, a drop to national planning level 2 was short lived when strong winds pushed deadly northern California wildfires into urban areas, killing 42 people and destroying 8,400 homes and buildings.

	1	2	3	4	5
Days at PL (June-Sept)	0	28	27	36	39

Personnel numbers	DNR	USFS	FWS	BIA/ Tribal	NPS	Total
Crews	63	63	27	27	14	194
Rigs in support of crew mobilizations	23	17	11	3	4	58
Engines	53	146	31	71	4	305
Aviation	23	32	0	4	0	59
Single resources	182	210	37	36	13	478
	344	468	106	141	35	1094

Oct. 1, 2016 – Sept. 30, 2017 ROSS Data



Unable to fill

With the overall increase in fire activity nationwide, MIFC dispatch also saw an increase in unfilled requests. For anyone who follows the unable to fill (UTF) lists on the national GACC web portal, it is a good indicator of positions in high demand.

MIFC UTF LIST Oct. 1, 2016 – Sept. 30, 2017			
AIR SUPPORT GROUP SUPERVISOR	3	HELICOPTER COORDINATOR	1
AIRCRAFT BASE RADIO OPERATOR	1	HELICOPTER COORDINATOR	1
AIRCRAFT DISPATCHER	4	HELICOPTER CREWMEMBER	10
AIRTANKER BASE MANAGER		HELICOPTER MANAGER, SINGLE RESOURCE	9
BASE CAMP MANAGER	1	Helicopter, Type-3 Standard	3
CREW BOSS	3	INCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS TECHNICIAN	1
DECK COORDINATOR	1	INITIAL ATTACK DISPATCHER	4
DIVISION/GROUP SUPERVISOR	4	MEDICAL UNIT LEADER	2
DOZER OPERATOR, INITIAL ATTACK	3	Module, Suppression	1
Dozer, Type-3	1	ORDERING MANAGER	2
Dozer, Type Any	1	PARAMEDIC, FIRELINE	2
ENGINE BOSS	4	Potable Water Truck, Type-3	1
Engine, Type-3	1	PREVENTION EDUCATION TEAM MEMBER	1
Engine, Type-3, 4, 5, or 6	1	PROCUREMENT UNIT LEADER	1
Engine, Type-6	4	RADIO OPERATOR	5
EQUIPMENT MANAGER	4	RECEIVING/DISTRIBUTION MANAGER	3
EQUIPMENT TIME RECORDER	1	SAFETY OFFICER, LINE	4
EXPANDED DISPATCH RECORDER	1	SAFETY OFFICER, TYPE-2	1
FACILITIES UNIT LEADER	1	SECURITY SPECIALIST, LEVEL 1	4
FIELD OBSERVER	4	SECURITY SPECIALIST, LEVEL 2	5
FINANCE/ADMIN. SECTION CHIEF, TYPE-2	1	SITUATION UNIT LEADER	2
FIRE FIGHTER TYPE-2	1	STAGING AREA MANAGER	1
FIREFIGHTER, TYPE-1	1	STATUS CHECK-IN RECORDER	4
FIXED WING PARKING TENDER	2	STRIKE TEAM LEADER, CREW	1
Fixed Wing, Air Tactical	12	SUPERVISORY DISPATCHER	1
Fixed Wing, Reconnaissance	1	SUPPLY UNIT LEADER	3
FOOD UNIT LEADER	1	SUPPORT DISPATCHER	3
GIS SPECIALIST	1	TASK FORCE LEADER	7
GROUND SUPPORT UNIT LEADER	1	TECHNICAL SPECIALIST	1
HEAVY EQUIPMENT BOSS, SINGLE RESOURCE	5	Tender, Water (Support) Type-2	1
HELIBASE MANAGER, 1 TO 5 HELICOPTERS	3	Tender, Water (Tactical) Type Any	1
Total	75	Total	86

Hurricane season

The U.S. saw a destructive hurricane season in 2017. On Aug. 25, Hurricane Harvey made landfall and brought record rainfall to Houston, dumping more than 50 inches. The Florida Keys and coastal cities of Florida experienced significant damage when Hurricane Irma made landfall on Sept. 11 after ripping through the U.S. Virgin Islands and devastating Puerto Rico. Less than two weeks later, Category 4 Hurricane Maria arrived ravaging the island.

These hurricanes came when the western U.S. was experiencing an extreme fire season with significant draw down of resources. Minnesota was able to send two personnel along with a Wisconsin team to Florida to aid in relief. We mobilized an EMT paramedic to Puerto Rico during its initial time of need, and two team EA-IMT members responded on Oct. 27, 2017.

Dispatch

Thank you

We thank all dispatchers for their assistance this season:

Ginger Humphrey, Gerri Nelson, Joan Remus, Ashley Schiller, Terri Sternal (DNR); Desiree Red Day (BIA), Becky Robertshaw (USFS)

Welcome

Logistics dispatcher Anna Hines was hired in June filling a position vacated by Ken Guith.

2017 MNICS Type-2 IA Crew Mobilizations



Mobilization 1: 2017 R3 Regional Support, New Mexico, CRWB Ryan Halvorson (USFS)

Mobilization 2: 2017 R3 Regional Support, New Mexico, CRWB Casey Goldsmith (USFS)

Mobilization 3: NRC Fire Support, Montana, CRWB Bill Alleman (NPS)

Mobilization 4: 2017 NR Fire Support, Montana, CRWB Ryan Miller (USFS)

Mobilization 5: Lodgepole Complex, Montana, CRWB Ryan Halvorson (USFS)

Mobilization 6: 2017 NR Fire Support, Montana, CRWB Bill Alleman (NPS)

Mobilization 7: 2017 NR Fire Support, Montana, CRWB Jason Bland (DNR)

Mobilization 8: 2017 NR Fire Support, Montana, CRWB Ryan Halvorson (USFS)

Mobilization 9: 2017 NR Fire Support, Montana, CRWB Bill Alleman (NPS)

Mobilization 10: 2017 BDC GACC Support/Prepo, Utah, CRWB Ryan Miller (USFS)



Homeland Security & Emergency Management

Rail safety training

HSEM continues its commitment to railway safety and awareness training. Since 2014, more than 6,200 first responders from 210 departments learned about rail transport of oil and hazardous substances, and how best to protect the public from those hazards. In addition, 1,533 responders from 66 departments have completed next-level operations training.

In October, HSEM partnered with the state's 11 chemical assessment teams (CATs) and local responders to participate in a first-of-its-kind exercise. First responders worked with the railroads to identify safety threats on rail cars carrying hazardous materials, such as anhydrous ammonia and chlorine. Participants learned methods to contain leaks or spills while protecting public safety.

Public outreach

At the State Fair in 2017, we engaged visitors in a "Gone in 60 Seconds" preparedness game. In a pre-packaged bag, patrons were challenged to find needed items (bottled water, first aid kits, flashlight) in less than a minute. The game simulates finding emergency items in a hurry.

Ready or not ... Training for Minnesota's next emergency

This year's catastrophic hurricanes and devastating wildfires around the nation remind us of the important work we do to prepare for emergencies. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DPS-HSEM) division continues to build partnerships to ensure effective emergency response.

Integrated Emergency Management Course

In 2017, Dakota and Washington counties participated in our Integrated Emergency Management Course (IEMC). Modeled after a national program at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute, the IEMC brings together multidisciplinary teams of elected officials, administrators, department heads and first responders to focus on:

- Senior officials' roles and responsibilities during emergencies.
- Emergency operations center (EOC) procedures and reports.
- Incident action planning.
- Public information, warnings and social media use in an emergency.
- Tabletop exercise.

Simulations were tailored to build needed skills for emergency response policy, plans and procedures.

State disasters

Severe weather in Minnesota may mean an average of 10 state disaster declarations after severe thunderstorms, heavy rains, high winds and tornadoes. Every year, HSEM staff work with townships, cities and counties to reimburse recovery and cleanup costs following severe weather.

Coming in 2018

The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) is replacing its incident management software to:

- Track multiple and concurrent incidents.
- Manage tasks, track resources and provide a common operating picture to its users.
- Provide the ability to share, request and submit information between stakeholders.
- Integrate GIS-based mapping capability.
- Provide data-sharing with other WebEOC federal, state and local systems.

WebEOC will be piloted at Super Bowl '18 with more components added by July.

MNICS partnerships are the foundation that allows for safe and effective wildland fire operations in Minnesota and throughout the United States .The Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal Fire Programs are proud to assist with interagency incidents while also tending to the needs of the communities they serve.

Suppression and prescribed fire data

The 2017 fire season was not as active as last year. However, Minnesota Agency Reservations and Red Lake Reservation conducted prescribed burning throughout 2017 (see wildfire and Rx charts below from October).

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Reservation	Fires	Acres
Red Lake	310	955
White Earth	54	234.5
Fond du Lac	4	1.5
Mille Lacs	11	11
Bois Forte	1	1
Grand Portage	1	0
Leech Lake	0	0
Total	380	1203

Reservation	Fires	Acres
Red Lake	310	955
White Earth	54	234.5
Fond du Lac	4	1.5
Mille Lacs	11	11
Bois Forte	1	1
Grand Portage	1	0
Leech Lake	0	0
Total	380	1203

2017 assignments

In addition to fighting wildfires on home units, BIA and each Tribal Fire Program provided off-unit support on incidents both in and out of state. Assignments include support in areas of fire, fire severity, fire preposition, and initial attack, prescribed burning, fire planning, fire investigation, fire prevention, dispatch support, aviation and teaching fire or National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) courses (see chart below).

*"Coming together,
sharing together,
working together and
succeeding together."*



BIA continued two exclusive use air tanker contracts at the Bemidji Interagency Tanker base, a single engine air tanker (SEAT) and a Fire Boss (a SEAT with floats).

In its third year of national funding, Red Lake's helicopter crew was dispatched during the summer wildfire season to assist other modules around the country.

While on assignment, several crew members completed their task books. (See chart below for flight time by agency).

Tribal agency	Resources	Mobilization	States
Red Lake	23	43	10
Mille Lacs	3	4	2
Boise Forte	1	1	1
Fond du Lac	7	11	4
Grand Portage	4	5	3
White Earth	17	42	8
1854 Treaty	3	6	2
MN Agency	3	6	6
Leech Lake	11	27	6
Total	72	145	17
Type-6 engines			
Red Lake	1	4	3
Fond du Lac	1	2	2
White Earth	3	4	1
Leech Lake	2	4	3
Total	7	14	5

Type-3 helicopter N144BH = 66.5 flight hours on 12 Red Lake wildfires			
T-811 SEAT	Gallons Fire Ice	Gallons retardant	Flight hours
5 MN DNR fires	4,441	0	4.71
0 Red Lake fires	0	0	0
Total	4,441	0	4.71
T-205 Fireboss	Fire Ice gallons	Water/foam gallons	Flight hours
1 DNR Fire	550	0	.32
4 Red Lake Fires	9,500	1,200	3.23
Total	10,050	1,200	3.55

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Around the state

This year's activities were fast paced and productive. Despite shrinking budgets, fewer staff and a wet spring, FWS stations conducted 159 prescribed (Rx) burns for a total of 21,904 acres. There were also 21 wildfires for 933 acres.

The Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District (WMD) completed two joint Rx burns with Burnham Creek Impoundment at Glacial Ridge for a total of 1,520 acres, and Downing/Waubun Waterfowl Protection Areas (WPA) for a total of 930 acres. Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) completed a priority tree removal and pile burning project at Gislason Lake.

In conjunction with Ridgewater Community College, Morris WMD provided training to Ortonville and Odessa volunteer fire departments.

A new remote automatic weather station (RAWS) was installed at Glacial Ridge NWR in Polk County to provide FWS and its partners additional Rx and wildfire decision support. Sherburne NWR acquired a new Type-4 engine.

Training and mobilizations

FWS assisted with the 2017 Wildfire Academy by coordinating S-219 (Firing Operations) and assisting MNICS partners with S-339 (Division Group Supervisor), S-231 (Engine Boss), L-280 (Followership to Leadership) and S-130/S-190 (Basic Wildland Firefighting) courses.

The western summer fire season proved to be very busy this year with 106 personnel being dispatched in operations, logistics, finance, plans and command positions in 12 states.

There were 17 positions including DIVS, TFLD, FACL, BUYL, SCKN, RCDM, ICT2, SEC1 and HEQB. For the fourth year, the FWS also supported the U.S. Air Force with prescribed burning in Florida and South Carolina.

Minnesota FWS (as of Oct. 6, 2017)

Station	Wildfires	WF Acres	Rx Burns	Rx Acres
Agassiz NWR	0	0	5	752.0
Big Stone NWR	0	0	8	1,665
Crane Meadows NWR	1	.1	6	261.0
Detroit Lakes WMD	2	53.0	9	1,392.0
Fergus Falls WMD	2	13.0	20	3,465.0
Glacial Ridge NWR	0	0	7	4,097.0
Hamden Slough NWR	0	0	1	190.0
Litchfield WMD	3	55.0	19	1,827.0
MN Valley NWR	2	1.5	12	1,998.0
Morris WMD	4	1.5	25	3,206.8
Rice Lake NWR	1	2.0	0	0
Sherburne NWR	3	4.3	6	265.0
Tamarac NWR	2	17.2	2	646.0
Winona District	0	0	2	49.0
Windom WMD	1	2.0	37	2,091.0
Zone Totals	21	149.5	159	21,904.8



National Park Service



The Border Waters Park Group consists of seven National Park Service units in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan:

- Voyageurs National Park
- Grand Portage National Monument
- Pipestone National Monument
- Apostle Islands National Lakeshore
- Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway
- Isle Royale National Park
- Keeweenaw National Monument

It was a wet year in 2017 with minimal wildfire activity. However, prescribed fires were conducted at Saint Croix, Apostle Islands, and Pipestone, with assistance from the United States Fish & Wildlife Service. Mechanical treatments also continued at Saint Croix.

Voyageurs National Park (VNP) continues to support the MNICS Type-2 initial attack program providing overhead, firefighters and vehicles. Fourteen individuals from VNP, Isle Royale and St. Croix were among the 10 MNICS crews on western assignments this summer.

Of the 31 individual mobilizations, 14 folks were assigned to crews, four on a Type-6 engine. A total of 13 single resources were assigned to incidents including ongoing hurricane support.

New developments

Patrick Pearson is the new Regional Fire Management Officer for the National Park Service (NPS) Midwest region replacing Jim McMahon. Based out of the Omaha, Nebraska office, Pearson was previously with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Region 4. We look forward to working with him.





MIFC Intelligence

Compared to the nation, Minnesota's 2017 wildfire season was very quiet.

As of Nov. 27, 2017 Minnesota Incident Command System (MNICS) agencies reported 1,009 wildfires totaling 5,329 acres burned in the state.

This compares to 1,428 MNICS agency wildfires for 12,267 acres burned the previous year and 1,845 wildfires for 30,475 acres burned in 2015.

In northwestern Minnesota, there was a short burst of wildfire activity in mid-May. Conditions there remained very dry into mid-October.

Fire conditions

Last year ended fairly wet. It was windy and warm in March 2017 but rain in April continued throughout the summer for the southern two-thirds of the state.

Southern Minnesota saw a late season snowfall and ample rain; as much as two-to-four inches in one event in the southwest in mid-May.

However, there were drought conditions in the northwest setting new Canadian indices records. Drought codes exceeded 700 for several weeks. Despite the drought, surprisingly few wildfires occurred in northwestern Minnesota this fall. Spring 2017 began dry but timely rains reduced fire danger in the Arrowhead.

A wet trend continued into June and seasonal precipitation totals from April to September ranked above the historic median in northeastern and parts of central and southern Minnesota.

Minnesota wildfires

As of Nov. 27, 2017 MNICS agencies report 1,009 wildfires totaling 5,329 acres; of those:

- DNR = 548 fires/2,268 acres
- FWS = 5 fires/6 acres
- USFS = 52 fires/5 acres
- BIA = 333 fires/578 acres

Prescribed burning

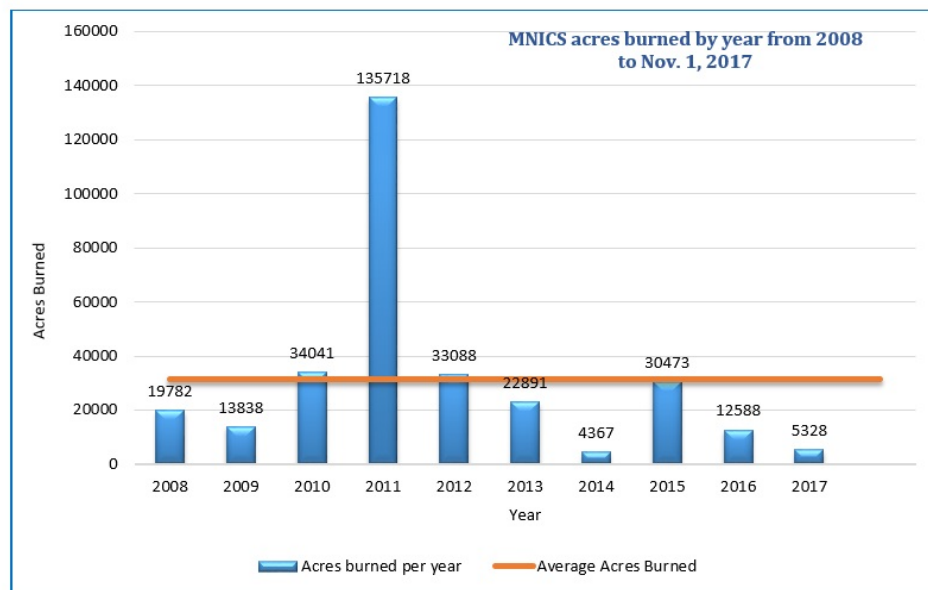
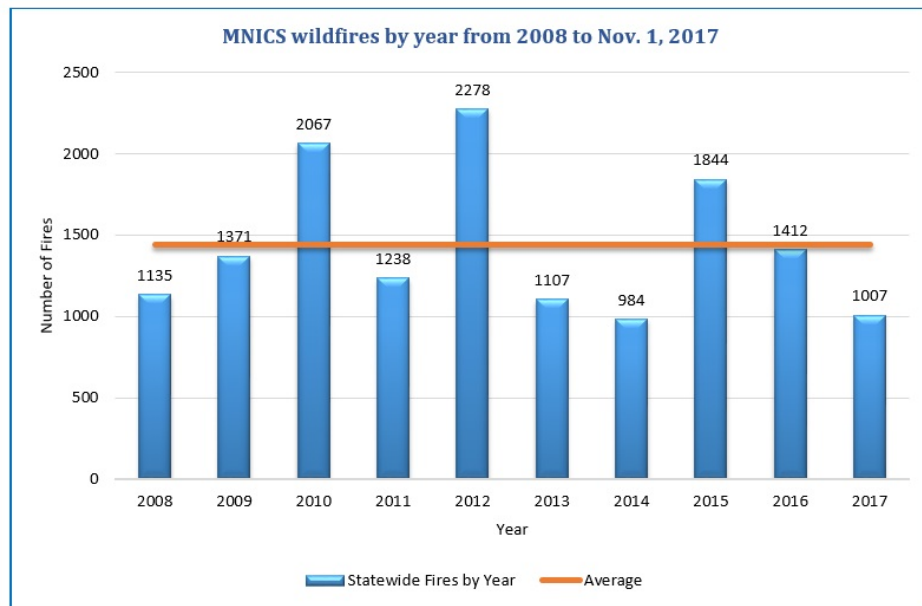
This year, MNICS agencies planned a total of 992 burns for 109,492 planned acres. As of Nov. 27, 2017, a total of 577 burns were reported for 101,738* acres.

- DNR = 344 burns/ 30,507 acres
- FWS = 91 burns /21,983 acres
- USFS = 97 burns/4,337 acres
- BIA = 43 burns/43,705 acres
- NPS = 2 burns/440 acres

* Military Affairs burned a total of 12,091 prescribed fire acres*

MNICS Wildfires and Prescribed Burns

MIFC Intelligence





U.S. Forest Service

Superior NF completed approximately 850 acres with 62 prescribed fires. The program continues into fall and winter with pile burns (*as of Nov.1, 2017).

Aviation

Among all three area Beaver aircraft, USFS flew approximately 350 flight hours for detection, animal surveys, forest health surveys, search and rescue operations and other missions. We also had approximately 135 flight hours by cooperator and contract aircraft for forest use. The Type-3 helicopter program flew approximately 236 hours across the nation this year with the help of over 55 overhead detailers.

SUF orders	CPF orders
Aircraft = 22	Aircraft = 4
Crews = 44	Crews = 22
Equipment = 121	Equipment = 38
Overhead = 161	Overhead = 39
Total = 348	Total = 103

Off unit support

To date, there have been 451 out-of-state assignments. Many USFS resources had multiple assignments and were reassigned from preposition orders to new or ongoing national incidents. Thanks to Debbie Hahn for her assistance to process some 83 administratively-determined (AD) timesheets and 76 travel vouchers for training and incident assignments.

Law enforcement: 4	Resource orders: 141
Medical aid: 11 (Medivacs)	Smoke checks: 43
Search and rescue: 15	Wildland fires: 60 (includes state assist fires)
Aircraft FF: 155	Prescribed fires: 117
Public assistance: 7	Miscellaneous: 37
As of Oct. 29, a total of 593 incidents are listed in WildCAD. Learn more: www.wildcad.net/?WildWeb=MN-SCNF	

Thank you

We thank all dispatchers for their assistance this season:

Jennifer Taylor, Nez-Pierce NF

Ana Campbell, Coconino NF

Jerry Garrett,
Wallowa-Whitman NF

John Anderson, Washington

Leith McAuley-
Okanogan-Wenatchee NF

Ryan Gaines, BLM Nevada

Brett Smith, Freemont-Winema

Amanda Jones, Superior NF

Ashley May-Klick, Superior NF

Nancy Borman, Superior NF

Becky Robertshaw, Superior NF

Joyce Barrott- Superior NF

Debbie Hahn, Superior NF

Jen Guith, Chippewa NF

Julie Palkki, Chippewa NF

Wildfires

Wildfire season on the Chippewa National Forest (NF) fire began March 27 with a season total of 36 fires for 43 acres. The largest fire was 20 acres in grass and timber on the Deer River Ranger District.

Wildfire season on the Superior NF began April 8 with a season total of 16 fires for 3 acres; the largest being 0.25 acres.

Both the Chippewa NF and Superior NF provided resources to help partners with prescribed burns and wildland fires. We actively supported regional and national efforts with overhead resources, Type-2 initial attack crews, engines and a Type-3 helicopter.

Prescribed Fire

Chippewa NF had an active prescribed fire program completing 14 prescribed burns for approximately 3200 acres*.

Congratulations to Robert LaPlant on his new appointment to Dakota Prairie Grasslands FMO



L-R: Andrew Johnson, Mimi Barzen, Smokey Bear and Forrest Boe, DNR Division of Forestry director

DNR PROGRAMS

Prevention

In July, DNR prevention staff and interagency partners presented a well-attended *Living with Fire* workshop in Ely, Minnesota.

Topics included fire ecology, living in a fire environment, fuels reduction and an afternoon of field tours. Dovetail Partners, Inc., a video production crew, filmed the event and two videos are being produced for future workshops and homeowner presentations.

Also in 2017, DNR prevention staff attended an informative Youth Fire Starters presentation with sobering statistics on juvenile arson intervention techniques.

Each third week in April the state observes Wildfire Prevention Week. This year the GLFFC Prevention Committee produced radio and print ads with a fire weather theme to bring precipitation and dry weather into the fire triangle.

“I’m a match and I love fire” ads ran on radio stations and in newspapers, mainly in the forested part of the state. We distributed rain gauges and cell phone dry bags at events to continue the fire weather theme.

Itasca County received two \$500 national Firewise grants to conduct prevention activities in northeastern Minnesota and to host an open house at the Deer River Fire Department on Saturday, May 6. Regional prevention experts were on hand to help with family-friendly activities.

Annually, DNR prevention partners volunteer at the Minnesota State Fair, also known as the “Great Minnesota Get-Together,” with attendance growing each year. The State Fair DNR building draws many patrons particularly on the first Friday of the 12-day event dedicated as Governor’s Fire Prevention Day.

This year, 114,292 people visited the fair that day and DNR wildfire prevention partners answered questions and

directed patrons to Smokey Bear swag and fire prevention resources. Throughout this year, prevention specialists have been busy with:

- Grant funding to 61 communities.
- Issuing 693 Firewise landowner contracts.
- Attending 26 prevention meetings; with 32 combined presentations.
- Contacting 41 fire department (FD) districts.
- Training nearly 5,000 FD personnel.
- Completing one 500-level assessment.
- Initiating two Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP).



DNR PROGRAMS

Rural fire department assistance

The Minnesota DNR Rural Fire Program assists fire departments by providing low cost equipment, matching grants, technical assistance and wildland fire training.

A total of \$435,700 in matching grants was awarded for fiscal year 2018.

The Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program received 376 grant applications and 159 projects were funded by a multi-agency grant committee.

Grants provided radios and pagers, personal protective gear, water movement equipment and wildland firefighting safety items. The cost-share program is available to Minnesota fire departments or communities with populations under 10,000. Program objectives are to obtain equipment to assist communities with saving lives and protecting property primarily in rural areas.

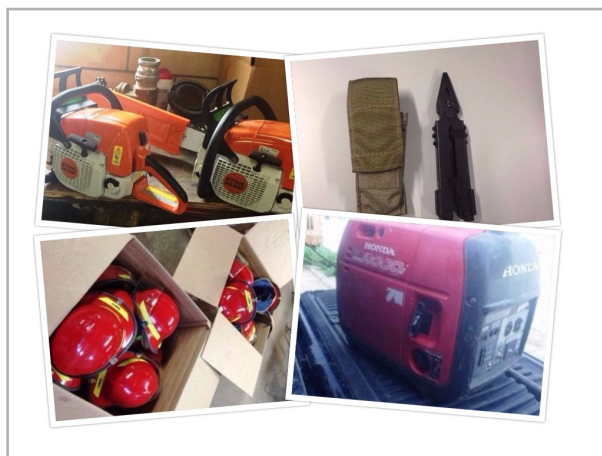
In 2017, the federal surplus property program exceeded all prior performance records. More than \$7.5 million in equipment and supplies were acquired and distributed to 600 Minnesota communities and four state agencies.

Highlighted items include ten freightliner truck chassis to be converted to water tenders, a heavy rescue unit, three fire engines, two water tenders and ten 60-KW generators.

A total of 22,000 pairs of safety glasses and more than 6,000 Gerber multi-tools were distributed to fire departments and other emergency response organizations.

The DNR Rural Fire Program is also working with Minnesota fire departments to develop best practices to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. For more equipment and grant information, visit the DNR website.

Minnesota DNR



Minnesota

DNR



DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

DNR PROGRAMS

Training

The 2017 Wildfire and Incident Management Academy was held June 5-9, 2017 at Itasca Community College, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

A total of 31 separate classes were held totaling 13,447 classroom hours (number of students X duration of course hours). Registrants totaled 793 with over 550 individual students constituting 76 percent of possible Academy capacity (actual number of students/potential students 793/1046).

Participants were from Minnesota and other states:

Florida, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina and Wisconsin. There were 77 MNICS agency instructors plus several from Advanced Minnesota and All Hazard Medical Solutions.

During the week, 21 trainees filled incident management team (IMT) positions. Sections include: Plans (6), Logistics (6), Operations (1), Air Operations (3), Finance (2), Liaison (1), Public Information (1) and Safety (1). Of the 44 IMT positions, six assisted as classroom instructors and four IMT members took courses; another four IMT members served as in-class subject matter experts.

Leadership courses

MNICS began partnering with the Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training Education (MBFTE) in 2016 to provide leadership training to both structural and wildland firefighters. With skilled facilitators from Mission Centered Solutions, participants learn principles and techniques to lead in high-risk, rapidly changing environments. In 2017, MBFTE's advisory committee awarded its second \$165,000 grant to MNICS for leadership courses to be offered into 2019.

Message from Troy Boschee, 2017 Training Working Team chair

"Looking back"

Over this past year, the MNICS training working team (TWT) developed a stronger sense of the hard work involved in fire training.

Many MNICS members contribute significant time and effort for a successful fire training year.

As of Nov. 1, 2017, more than 100 classes were offered to MNICS member agencies and Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) affiliates.

Offerings ranged from basic firefighting to advanced leadership. Growing each year, the 17th annual Wildfire Academy brought a diverse group of participants from six states and a mix of interagency instructors who build their subject matter expertise by teaching others.





Air Operations Working Team (AOWT) MIFC Aviation Desk

Annual aviation meeting

The annual MNICS/Great Lake Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) aviation meeting was held in Duluth in March. Each partner shared their asset availability and dispatch procedures.

An Air Tactical Group Supervisors and Air Attack Officers workshop was conducted with emphasis on iPad use to enhance standardization, improve operational safety and expand resource sharing.

The AOWT developed and assigned a list of tasks and action items, which can be viewed on the MNICS website under Working Teams (Air Operations) tab in the "For Members" section.

GLFFC coordinated actions

Ontario requested the DNR Quest Kodiak for initial attack from Aug. 13-20, 2017.

In May, the DNR contract helicopter assisted Wisconsin with the Adams Fire.

In March, an aviation mishap simulation took place with staff from the DNR, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, USFS and BIA.



GLFFC exchanges

WISCONSIN sent a single engine air tanker manager to the annual DNR aviation workshop.

MINNESOTA sent:

- Three Air Attack trainees to Ontario air attack officer training.
- Two Helibase Managers to Ontario air operations/branch director training.
- A Fire Boss for participation in an *Effectiveness Study of Fire Suppressants* in Ontario.

MANITOBA sent:

- Three Air Attack officers to DNR aviation workshop.
- Two Air Attack officers to assist with Minnesota fire suppression.

Training and briefings

-The 2017 Aviation Workshop was held in February at Camp Ripley with participants from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Manitoba.

-Implemented Computer Aided Dispatch (WildCAD) at MIFC aviation desk and five tanker bases to improve situational awareness and communications.

-Developed an early call-out strategy for aerial fire suppression resources by ground teams.

-Conducted classroom and flight training for DNR Enforcement, Minnesota Army National Guard and State Patrol personnel.

Aviation Report

-Continued iPad technology for the Air Tactical Group Supervisors, Helicopter and Aviation Managers.

Assistance to Minnesota

-Three single engine air tanker managers from Colorado assisted Minnesota tanker bases.

-Two Air Base Radio Operators from Washington and Wisconsin to assist Minnesota tanker bases.

-Three aircraft dispatchers from Arizona and Nebraska assisted the MIFC aviation desk.

Out-state assistance provided

-Assisted on western wildfires from June 29 to Aug. 14, 2017 with a Minnesota exclusive use helicopter and three 7-person modules.

-Nine trainees gained experience.

-Assisted North Dakota from July 11 to Aug. 3, 2017 with a Minnesota call-when-needed (CWN) helicopter and two modules.

-Mobilized Minnesota exclusive use Fire Boss to Idaho and Montana.

-Mobilized 72 aviation personnel to 10 states on 58 incidents.

MNICS aviation data (Jan. 1 to Oct. 23, 2017)

Aviation dispatches

MIFC aviation desk received 131 aircraft requests on 68 fires with 365 total flight hours as follows:

- Helicopter = 66 hours
- Air attack = 20 hours
- Tankers = 43 hours

Helicopters

- First flight on March 19 and last was on Nov. 27, 2017.
- Total DNR flight hours = 112 responding to 65 fires and 14 flight hours for prescribed burns.

Air attack

- First flight on March 19 and last was on Oct. 20, 2017.
- Total DNR flight hours = 129 responding to 20 fires.

Fixed wing tanker

- First flight on March 19 and last was on Oct. 20, 2017.
- Total DNR flight hours = 44 responding to 20 fires.
- Total BIA flight hours = 24 responding to 11 fires.

Detection Aircraft

- Total DNR detection hours = 1,400 on 16 routes.
- Total USFS detection hours = 151 on 3 detection aircraft.
- Flight following for conservation officers and FWS = 214 flights.

Aviation Report



MNICS Aircraft Contracted, Utilized and Shared in Minnesota	
Minnesota DNR	USFS
8 Exclusive Use Helicopters	1 Exclusive Use Helicopter
2 CWN Helicopter (1 Type-2, 1 Type-3)	1 Type-3 CWN Helicopter
4 Exclusive Use Fire Boss	1 CL-415
2 Exclusive Use SEATs	BIA
1 CO DPS SEAT	1 Type-3 Helicopter
2 DNR Platforms	1 Fire Boss
1 Exclusive Use Platform	1 SEAT
1 CWN Platform	USFS/DNR
	1 Type-3 Helicopter for initial attack
Detection Aircraft	
DNR: 16 detection light fixed-wing aircraft were flight followed by DNR area offices	USFS: 2 detection flights for Beavers and light fixed-wing aircraft

Northeast Interagency Cache

Northeast Interagency Support Cache

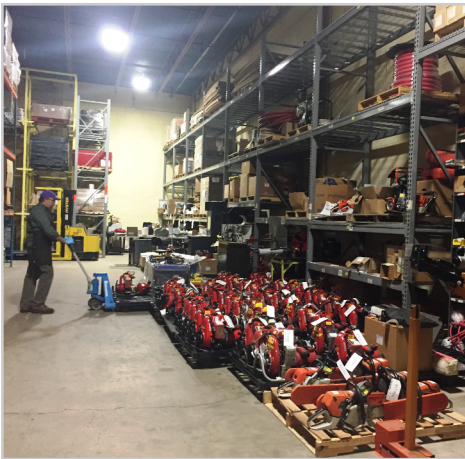
The Northeast Interagency Support Cache (NEK) processed and shipped 4,130 line items of supplies that totaled over \$2.1 million. We processed 423 line items of returns for a total of \$647,755.

NEK supported the National Cache System by shipping over \$2 million worth of supplies to Caches in several states; including Idaho, Montana, Oregon, California, and Colorado. NEK also supports the National System by refurbishing pumps for the Southern Area and Rocky Mountain Caches. Every high pressure pump within the national system was ordered this past year.

We also outfitted ten Type -2 IA crews for out-of-state assignments and two crews for Canadian assignments.

The Cache provided supplies and equipment of over \$600,000 for two Wildfire Academies, two college training courses, and numerous other training sessions. We provided supplies to nine contract helibases, three tanker bases and for State and Forest Service prescribed burns.

NEK staff supported the western fire season by assisting in the following positions: Cache Manager, Assistant Cache Manager, Logistics Section Chief, Base Camp Manager, Cache Supply Technician, Expanded Dispatch Support Dispatcher, Ordering Manager trainee and Technical Specialist. Cache personnel completed a total of 16 fire assignments.



National Symbols Cache

The National Symbols Cache processed 3,362 orders for over \$1.1 million in sales in 2017. Sales were similar to those in 2016. This was our third year in a row topping \$1 million in sales.

We currently stock 76 products. New products this year included “I met Smokey today” stickers, Woodsy carpenter pencils, carpenter pencil sharpeners and pens. New products in 2018

include a Smokey keychain, crayons and pop-up Frisbees. Watch for these new products at www.symbols.gov.

Deb Bruyere, Symbols Assistant Cache Manager, detailed in the Washington Office National Symbols Program Manager position for 120 days.

Jen Guith detailed into the Symbols Cache Assistant Manager position at NEK for 120 days to cover.

*Becky Robertshaw,
United States Forest
Service Supply Technician
retired on Oct. 31, 2017,
We wish her the very best
in her retirement.*

Working Teams



LOGISTICS

MNICS IMT trailers

In 2017, seven of the eight IMT trailers were safety inspected by Figgins Truck & Trailer in Grand Rapids. The trailers were weighed to see if they are within the axle limitations and are loaded appropriately. Inspection included checking lights, brakes, suspension components, the main frame, hitch area, safety chains, and wheel bearings. If any of these areas were faulty, maintenance work was completed to make sure they were roadworthy before the start of the 2017 fire season.

The Task Force also approved the use of Figgins to get the trailers to any fire that has requested an MNICS Incident Management Team. Since there weren't any IMT orders the process was not tested in 2017.

Resource Response Guide

Work continued on developing a Resource Response Guide for Type 3 Incidents. The Task Force has directed the Logistics Working Team to come up with a template that could be used across the MNICS agencies. This template would

include a standard set of questions for each of the field offices to answer and in turn develop their Resource Response Guide.

These guides would include information about local fire departments, hotels, restaurants, lunch vendors, porta toilet vendors, mechanics, garbage disposal, tire shops, fuel vendors, rental facilities, ambulance services, medical facilities, etc.

Logistics recruitment

A topic that comes up every year is the recruitment and retention of new people to work in Logistics. The team continues to try and come up with ideas that will help with this huge problem. At the 2017 Fire Academy, both the Supply Unit Leader and Ground Support Unit Leader courses were cancelled due to a lack of participants. A significant amount of the current Logistics people are retired or nearing retirement and our numbers will continue to dwindle as these people opt to do less and less of this work. The team will continue to work on possible solutions to this issue.



Contributors: Brian Wise, Adam Fisher



Working Teams

PREVENTION

Fire Prevention Working Team (FPWT)

In January, FPWT members participated in the Wildfire on Ice event in Walker, Minnesota. For 2017, FPWT members decided that each agency would coordinate their own district, area or regional events.

Looking ahead, we will recruit more FPWT members and seek partnerships for future collaborations. Possibilities include:

- Smokey Bear Day at Itasca State Park.
- Governor's Fire Prevention Day at the Minnesota State Fair.
- An open house at Minnesota Interagency Fire Center

Contributor: Mike Beaulieu

DISPATCH

Dispatch Working Team

B is for BUILDING and BETTER.

It was a year of building for the dispatch working team. We began to build a better team, build a better dispatch center, and build a better system to serve wildfire personnel in the air and on the ground.

Earlier this year, we created the "Mobilization Issues & Commonly Asked Questions: FAQs for Single Resources" guide.

To be updated annually as questions or problems arise, this is a quick reference for single resources or folks who are new to

incident mobilization. The dispatch workshop refresher has been restructured and will be held every other year.

In 2018, there will be more in-depth refresher topics and breakout sessions for agency-specific issues. The workshop is also an opportunity to connect with other dispatchers, gather new updates and refresh your skills.

In 2017, Minnesota saw increased demand for our dispatchers nationwide. Out-of-state MNICS dispatch assignments include:

- 6 – ACDP, Aircraft Dispatchers (1 Trainee)
- 2 – EDRC, Expanded Dispatch Recorders
- 21 – EDSD, Support Dispatchers (6 Trainees)
- 1 – EDSP, Supervisory Dispatcher (Trainee)
- 1 – IADP, Initial Attack Dispatcher (Trainee)
- 2 – INTS, Intel Support Specialists (1 Trainee)

A huge thank you to our MNICS dispatchers for their support, expertise and willingness to train others. We look forward to the 2018 fire season and changes to our MIFC dispatch organization to support the ever-changing fire environment.



Contributor: Ryan Kingsley



Working Teams

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT WORKING TEAM

The Information Management Working Team (IMWT) worked on a variety of projects in 2017, spending much of their project time on updating MNICS documents.

Updates were completed on the Minnesota Fire Suppression Pocket Field Guide, the MNICS 2017 Mobilization Guide and in-briefing packets for out-of-state resources. The IMWT also put together common templates and guides for public information officers (PIO) to use on Minnesota incidents.

In January, IMWT also coordinated a PIO refresher workshop in Grand Rapids. Topics included updates from MIFC and MNICS IMT incident commanders, task book process review, social media training that included doing live updates with Facebook, and basic photography for PIOs.

We were fortunate to see an increase in the number of PIO-2s in 2017. Four trainees completed their PIO-2 task books early in the year. The addition of these four people, many with great experience, helped to increase the depth in number of PIOs available to fill lead roles on MNICS incident management teams.

While there was only one official

PIO assignment in Minnesota in 2017, MNICS PIOs had a busy year and gained valuable experience working out of state.

Six MNICS PIOs were responsible for 27 (mostly Type-1) assignments in 2017. They worked in Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Puerto Rico. They faced many challenges during their assignments that included a firefighter fatality, destroyed homes, and the largest fire in Montana since 1910. Two of the PIOs were on assignments that landed them in or near the path of totality during the August 21st solar eclipse.

While not a PIO assignment, there were lessons learned when a MNICS PIO was on an all-hazard assignment in Puerto Rico. He spent the first two weeks of October in Puerto Rico for Hurricane Maria support. As an Emergency Support Function 4 Leader trainee, he worked with FEMA and other IMTs responsible for firefighting, saw crews and logistics support. It was a challenging assignment with limited resources.

Working Teams



ITSS-GISS WORKING TEAM

Last December, the newly combined Incident Technology Support Specialist (ITSS) and Geographic Information Systems Specialist (GISS) Working Team met at the MNICS annual meeting to discuss hot topics, strategies and needs that include:

- A formal agreement between Minnesota IT (MNIT) and MNICS for incident support.
- Wireless mesh with the capability to blanket an ICP area for internet access.
- ArcGIS Online (AGOL) and Collector-ArcGIS training.
- A “common operating picture” for incident mapping and technology needs.
- Decommissioning the Map-Mobile trailer at MIFC.

At MIFC in March, the ITSS-GISS working team held its winter refresher to discuss implementation of goals and new procedures. In June 2017, a total of 16 GISS and Situation Unit Leaders (SITL) working team members learned core AGOL and Collector concepts for use on incidents.

During the 2017 western fire season, a dozen GISS/GSAN/ITSS/SITL positions were on assignments in six states.

Contributor: Tom McCann



Working Teams



COMMUNICATIONS WORKING TEAM

Due to a wet spring and summer in 2017, there were no wildfire incidents in Minnesota. As a result, communications trailers were not dispatched this year but radio requests were filled from our cache inventory as needed.

To better assist with air desk dispatch, three new repeaters are now operating in Wannaska, New York Mills and in Grand Marais. Working with Minnesota IT services (MNIT), all repeaters are now linked through the DNR local area network (LAN) system using voice over internet protocol (VoIP). Four MIFC aviation desk consoles are now tied into all repeaters and the base station through the LAN.

The AirNet transitioned to P-25 digital mode with analog still working as backup. All MIFC repeaters are set to mixed mode allowing for both analog and digital radio communications. Five tanker bases were upgraded with new IP-1616 consoles to access the MIFC base station and newly-installed repeaters. Now each tanker base can talk to any aircraft flying within the state air zone.

In September, the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) communications working group met in Winnipeg, Manitoba. GLFFC partners compared how systems function with each other. The black box device (ACU-M)

was set up and tested at the Lac du Bonnet site. This seamlessly tied our VHF radio into other systems including Ontario 46-48 megaHertz (MHz) low band radio, Manitoba's MTS 800-MHz analog (FleetNet) and Minnesota's 800-MHz conventional state system (8-Call90D).

The MIFC radio communications shop also worked on interoperability of GLFFC zone frequencies for incidents that may occur in Ontario, Manitoba, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The new GLFFC zone setup is designated to group 16 on D-model portable radios in Minnesota, and there are also other frequencies available as needed.

USFS' Kevin Throop and Dave Jalonon installed an interagency *Air Guard* and *Fly-to-Follow* base station at MIFC. This ties together the federal consoles and adds more interoperability in Ely and the Minnesota Arrowhead region. They are in the process of installing additional Airguard/FlightFollow bases at three other sites in the Superior National Forest (NF). Also, Kevin and Dave continue to work on Superior NF east/west zone radio channels.

Looking ahead to 2018, configurations will be needed to accommodate MIFC dispatch integration that will streamline logistics, expanded dispatch, air desk and initial attack functions.

Contributor: Pat Coughlin



Working Teams

PREScribed FIRE & FUELS WORKING TEAM

A primary Prescribed Fire & Fuels Working Team (PFFWT) task is to coordinate interagency aerial ignition resources and prioritize burns needing aerial ignition. Accomplished this spring, there were no conflicts for needed aerial ignition resources.

Summer meeting at Camp Ripley

This summer, PFFWT met at Camp Ripley to discuss issues related to the Smoke Management Plan (SMP) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emission standard changes. Continued due diligent reporting is needed to stay ahead of potential issues. In Minnesota in 2016, two events were reported but there was no prescribed fire activity in the vicinity on those days. The 2016 report will be available for approval at the 2017 annual meeting.

In addition to the SMP, the MNICS Task Force assigned development of an interagency Fire Danger Operating Plan (FDOP). Brief discussion at the summer meeting helped to identify eco-regions or 'fire danger rating areas' in Minnesota. Finally, PFFWT toured Camp Ripley downrange facilities and prescribed fire project areas to help understand the complexity of fire management work on base.

Fire Danger Operating Plan

As previously mentioned, a FDOP was drafted this year to guide local level application of decision support tools, such as the National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) and the Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System (CFFDRS). The FDOP is supplemental to the Fire Management Plan.

It will establish and document management of a fire weather station network and describe fire danger ratings for local level fire decision-making. Actual implementation of fire business thresholds will be described in future supplemental action plans.

The initial phase has been completed to define statewide Fire Danger Rating Areas (FDRA). This includes statewide geo-spatial analysis of fire danger elements including landform and topography; weather and climatology; and vegetation and fuels. Seven FDRAs were identified by aligning variable elements to administrative boundaries. Next steps are to evaluate fire danger issues and identify related indicators.

Contributor: BJ Glesener, Tim Notch



New Beginnings



BRIAN PISAREK

In September, Brian Pisarek accepted the Advanced Wildfire Training Specialist position co-located at MIFC and General Andrews Wildfire Training Center. Brian obtained his B.S. in Forestry from the University of Minnesota and joined the DNR in 1981. He is a MNICS Type-2 incident commander leading teams on all-hazard incidents throughout the U.S. For 25 years, Brian has been on the City of Aitkin Fire Department ;17 years as Chief.

Throughout his career, Brian has taught many courses in both wildfire and structural fire. He recently began teaching 500-level courses for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) and is a part of the National Complex Incident Management Course (CIMC) cadre.



AMANDA GRANING

This year, Amanda began as an independent fire weather meteorologist for the Minnesota DNR.

In this role, she teaches NWCG weather courses across the region, participates in fire weather coordination calls and prepares weather presentations and webinars.

Federally, Graning spent several weeks in Missoula, Montana at the Northern Rockies Coordination Center and in Portland, Oregon at the Northwest Coordination Center. In this capacity, she creates daily fire activity updates, briefs and fire potential forecasts for area command, IMTs and agency affiliates. Recently, she began volunteering as a local firefighter for the Hermantown Fire Department .

SHELLY CARROLL

A long term MNICS member, Shelly formed SC Recon Drone Intelligence in 2017. Its mission is to improve the management of resources and property through timely, tailored, affordable aerial intelligence. She now works with other drone operators from the Department of the Interior (DOI) and NWCG to advance Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) use and policy.

MNICS agencies are exploring drone capability for data capture and processing, mapping and analysis, prevention and analytics and emergency damage assessment. UAS modules are now available through the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS) for wildfire incidents.

For years, the military has used drones for reconnaissance and monitoring. Public agencies have begun to use drones for surveillance of property, vegetation, habitat, wildlife, waterways, facilities and infrastructure.

"Today's drones are rugged and multi-mission capable. Carbon fiber airframes and the ability to economically carry multiple payloads mitigate risk for flight crews," said Carroll. "They also offer important safety features for aircraft separation and tracking, including automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast or ADS-B."

Of Note



Exchanging old for new

DNR wildfire aviation acquires Quest Kodiak

Since the 1970s, aviation has played a prominent role in Minnesota wildfire suppression. Air operations allow fast response and can dramatically reduce the loss of life, property and resources. Minnesota Incident Command System (MNICS) agencies use helicopters and airplanes for detection, mapping, to locate fires, drop water or retardant, deliver firefighters and supplies, gather intelligence, perform medical evacuations and assist with arsonist apprehension.

Minnesota DNR Forestry aviation resources include single and twin-engine fixed wing aircraft. Early in 2017, the DNR acquired a 2015 Quest Kodiak, a 10-seat, single-engine turboprop utility initial attack aircraft. The Quest Kodiak aircraft is being added to the aviation fleets of many natural resource agencies across the country.

"We chose the Kodiak because of the performance reliability of a turbine engine," said Darren Neuman, DNR wildfire aviation supervisor. "We can switch from initial attack to hauling people and the visibility is excellent."

Neighbors helping neighbors

In August, pilot Bernie Bolster flew the Kodiak to support fire operations in Ontario. Minnesota is part of the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) along with Ontario, Manitoba, Michigan and Wisconsin. As of late November, Ontario reported 776 wildfires with 111,955 hectares burned. Bolster spent a week hauling cargo and people. On one flight, he transported five people from Thunder Bay to Pickle Lake and helped with ongoing evacuations in the region.

"I made quite a few trips," said Bolster, a pilot since 1965. "It was my first trip to Canada. On one day there were 52 new fires by noon. We flew sun up to sun down. The Kodiak performed well."

A beginning, an ending

With the purchase of the Kodiak, a Cessna 206 acquired through the Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP) was no longer needed in the DNR wildfire aviation fleet. Military and federal aircraft, supplies and equipment can be decommissioned to other states through FEPP.

The New Jersey Forest Fire Service (NJFFS) decided to recommission the 206 through FEPP. Pilots Wayne Mauro and John Winberg arrived at the Grand Rapids airport on a clear day in September. Accompanied by NJFFS chief mechanic, Sal Ciccio, they prepared for the trek back to the Garden State.

"We will use the aircraft for detection and shuttling supplies," said Mauro. "It will also serve an air attack function."

DNR's Darren Neuman, Luke Ettl and Jim Wetzel were there to see them off. Ettl, a DNR pilot, flew the Cessna during its 15 years of service. Before that, Wetzel spent more than 500 hours in the aircraft. He started as forestry technician and became a pilot in 1974.

"The Cessna was meant for fire. It would haul a good load," said Wetzel, standing by the wing. "It was 'ash and trash,' transporting people and supplies for fire incidents," said 78-year-old Wetzel. A fulltime DNR employee from 1957 to 1999, he was a smokechaser until 2012.

"It was a good, old airplane but if I had my choice, I liked flying the Beaver," said Wetzel, referring to the de Havilland float planes currently in use by the U.S. Forest Service at the Ely seaplane base, and formally used by DNR as another FEPP aircraft.

Just before take-off Wetzel spoke with the New Jersey pilots.

"You flew fire?" Mauro asked Wetzel. "Did you like to fly floats? I think you would need it up here," said Mauro, referring to the abundance of lakes and rivers in Minnesota.

Read more about Minnesota wildfire aviation at www.mnics.org.

MNICS Awards



LEGACY AWARD

Dan Dearborn
Jim Sanders
Gene Mannelin

RETIREMENT

Mike Aultman
Mimi Barzen
Brad Estey
Steve Schumacher

LEADERSHIP AWARD

Cassie Diver
Jean Goad

AWARD OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Mark Erickson



Photo credits

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