Notes

October 1, 2026, MNICS Task Force Meeting

Task Force: Cory Berg, Greg Carlson, William Glesener, Darrin Franco, Nick Petrack, Matt Snell, Jennifer Olson
Non-Task Force Attendees: RJ Johnson (MNCC), Leanne Langeberg (Notes), Ryan Kingsley, Kevin Carlisle, Shelly Greniger

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
MNICS Budget	- The Task Force reviewed the monthly budget expenses and uncommitted funds. - The installation of accessible doors at the MIFC facility and the installation of MNCC dispatch monitors are both complete. The final expenses are expected in October. - The funding for the MNICS financial operating plan upgrade will be re-allocated to other project line items on the spreadsheet. - Berg will send Greniger an updated summary explaining the decision to commit $40,000 of MNICS co-op funds to the 2027 wildfire academy.
MIFC Building	- Hopkins Electric will replace the exterior fire strobe light. - The MIFC facility accessible door project is now complete, including adjustments made to the upstairs door to allow for quicker opening. - The MNCC monitors were installed last week; awaiting the antenna for the smaller monitors. - The Paul Bunyan television system has been deactivated, and funds returned to the general co-op funds. - The intruder locks for the MIFC doors were purchased. - The MNICS website is transitioning to web developer Russell Herder Group. - The Voyageurs construction crew is unavailable in the near term to assist with the Intel office remodel project. Carlisle will work with the NEK cache to determine who locally can help complete the project. - The first two phases of the training room project are complete. The flooring upgrade and electrical install are in the final phase, and contract bids will go out soon.
U.S. Wildland Fire Service Updates	- Recent transition activity for Minnesota has been quiet. - A new unit boundary was approved and includes all of northern Minnesota. The new unit boundaries take effect January 1, and unit chiefs will be identified at that time. - The geographic area leadership plan to meet in Denver to discuss updates to the geographic area organizational chart; several positions remain unfilled. The Wildland Fire Service (WFS) partners anticipate significant changes to names and positions to follow. - Efforts continue to fill property facility roles and transition property management to WFS. - The workforce is moving toward a centralized hiring model similar to the U.S. Forest Service, as they view group hiring as effective. Job postings are active on USAJOBS, with the next hiring round opening in January and advertising in February. - No aviation positions have opened yet. - MNICS needs are being communicated to the WFS. John Teutrine plans to attend the October meeting and possibly the MNICS annual meeting to support the Geographic Area representation.

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Fire Center and Cache facility planning subcommittee	- MIFC has invested heavily in the fire center, and space constraints continue to grow. - Recently, some staff from MIFC toured the L&M facility along Highway 169. The facility, along with 30 acres, is currently available for sale. The NEK cache's current leased space is expiring soon, and the U.S. Forest Service is exploring options between purchasing and continuing to lease. - The preliminary purchase estimate for L&M is lower than the combined cost of expanding the Pump Shop and addressing radio shop needs. - The Task Force agrees more detailed work is needed to help determine square footage requirements and operational needs from Training, Dispatch, and the Cache. - The L&M facility appears move-in ready for the Cache, but additional infrastructure investments will be required. - The Forest Service's flexibility is uncertain due to current organizational limbo, and it is recognized that the L&M facility may or may not be the right fit. - Ryan recently met with National Cache and Leasing staff and learned agencies are still required to maintain net-zero space. A combined facility (including the research building) may need to be considered. Purchasing a building would be a 3–5-year process, but a lease-to-own option could be analyzed. - A meeting with Forest Service engineers is scheduled for more evaluation. - Petrack will schedule a meeting to bring key MIFC and MNCC players together as a subcommittee and begin gathering data, taking a deeper look at the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center (MIFC) space needs. Petrack, USFS Task Force representative, will lead the subcommittee. - The core subcommittee will include Petrack, Glesener, Johnson, Kingsley, Niesen, and Schenck, and will remain small (five core members), bringing in subject matter experts only as needed to maintain effectiveness. - The committee will analyze fire center needs, privacy requirements, and partner expectations. It will also consider whether the potential move is appropriate only for the Cache or for all MIFC components, and analyze whether the L&M facility's age, lifespan, and value meet the needs. - L&M facility was last remodeled in 2001–2003, is roughly 100,000 sq ft (double the current NEK Cache size), and includes 30 acres adjoining DNR property. It could support either a full MIFC move or only the Cache, with the existing MIFC becoming a training facility. - A more thorough review of the corporate office space (second floor open layout) is needed before any final decision can be made. Any consideration of pursuing the L&M facility may delay current major U.S. Forest Service projects, such as the pump shop and radio shop, both of which are projected to exceed $4 million each. - Funding constraints mean the U.S. Forest Service's current high-priority projects lack money; relocation funding may help. Having the building in Grand Rapids is advantageous. - The Task Force agrees MNICS needs to clearly identify needs before being swayed by the availability of the L&M facility.

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MNCC long term plans	- Long-term Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center planning discussions have been tentatively placed on hold as the Wildland Fire Service transition consumed most of the Task Force's capacity. Presently, the MNCC roles in expanding dispatch and other dispatch functional areas remain unclear. - No additional progress has been made on radio equipment installation at Voyageur's National Park, with confusion around communication protocols between CUVA, the park and MNCC requiring further discussion. - The Chequamegon-Nicollet National Forest's dispatch is expecting a retirement this year, and rather than replacing that position, their interest in joining MNCC is growing. The Forest Service has multiple meeting plans that will include discussions of concerns about MNCC's capacity to expand and to take on three incoming dispatcher positions. - The MN DNR Deer River area recently brought their dispatcher back to Deer River, leaving MNCC uncertain about that connection. MN DNR will reach out to the Area Supervisor to further discuss.
MNICS BOD and Task Force Meeting agenda	- The Task Force will plan to discuss the following with the Board of Directors: - How the Wildland Fire Service integration into MNICS may potentially impact representation on the BOD, Task Force, Working Teams, and incident management teams. - Propose Task Force representation to include two representatives per agency. - Discuss the potential for Land management representation on the MNICS Board of Directors. - Discuss whether interagency planning calls will provide only Wildland Fire Service updates or will include agency- and unit-based updates. - Discuss possible changes to MNICS working team representation. - Review financial plan needs. - Provide an update on facilities work and subcommittee findings, and a brief update on MNCC's short- and long-term planning status.
Agency Updates	- **BIA** – Working through the program of work budget planning and preparing for potential property transfers from the BIA legacy to the Wildland Fire Service. Also focused on getting the tribes as caught up as possible, with funds moving to the Wildland Fire Service. Recent rain has greatly minimized fire activity. BIA currently has one helitack crew out on assignment. - **DNR** – No new updates shared. - **FWS** – The agency is wrapping up year-end reporting. A couple of staff are out on assignments. The agency is looking to conduct some prep work this fall for spring prescribed fire projects. - **HSEM** – The MNICS logistics working team met and will be pulling a list of available assets. Olson will represent HSEM at the BOD and Task Force meeting on Monday. - **NPS** – Fire crew is working on chipping burn piles. The fire program is working on the year-end closeout and preparing project plans for next year. Seasonal hires will remain on through the next pay period.

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Agency Updates cont.	- **USFS** – The fire program is working through the July Lightning Fire incident workload, including many media requests and finance-focused tasks. Fire crews are preparing and distributing equipment to burn piles this fall. The forests have some staff supporting fire needs in Michigan and California. Conducted an after-action review (AAR) with St. Louis County and will develop a task list to be passed on to the MNICS operations working team. The Superior National Forest is planning a two-day AAR with the National Incident Management Organization team, specifically for the Forest U.S. Service. Fall fire hire is now in full swing. The agency is working on hiring a training specialist at the fire center. - **MNCC** – The center is almost fully staffed, though it's still waiting to fill the DNR aircraft dispatcher position.

Next MNICS Task Force Meeting is scheduled for November 5, 2026.