

2015 MNICS Annual Report



The Minnesota Incident Command System (MNICS) is a state and federal interagency partnership. MNICS agencies cooperate to manage wildfires and all-risk incidents while developing standard procedures, practices and providing information for the oversight and support of wildfire incidents and emergencies.

MNICS members include the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN-DNR), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), the Minnesota Department of Safety (DPS) and the Division of Homeland Security (HSEM).

Located in Grand Rapids, the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center (MIFC) serves as a mobilization hub and is also home to the Northeast Interagency Fire Cache. MIFC support services include:

- All Risk Emergency Management
- Dispatch Coordination
- Fire Behavior Support
- Fire Cache
- Radio Shop
- Rural Fire Department Support
- Symbols Program
- Training Program
- Wildfire Aviation Management
- Information Management
- Outreach and Communications

Forest dispatch update

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Wildland fires

The Chippewa National Forest fire season began on March 18, 2015. There were **60** fires that burned **264** total acres; the largest being an **86-acre** grass fire at the Deer River Ranger District.

The Superior National Forest fire season began on March 28, 2015. There were **28** fires that burned a total of **130** acres; the largest being an **85-acre** grass and timber fire at the Kawishiwi Ranger District.

Our unit supplied multiple Initial Attack (Type 2-IA) crews, and a Type 3 helicopter, engines and overhead resources to aid national and regional wildland fires.

Prescribed fires

The Chippewa National Forest (CPF) completed **12** prescribed burns for a total of **259** acres.

The Superior National Forest (SUF) completed **79** prescribed burns for a total of **2,910** acres. Pile burns will continue throughout the winter.

Prescribed fires conducted this year would not have been possible without the help of MNICS partners.

"We have a great crew that puts in a lot of hard work and dedication to complete the mission."

Tracy Fifarek
Forest Service Dispatch
Center Manager

Aviation

Aviation efforts were very active in both the Superior and Chippewa forests. For SUF, a total of **411.5** flight hours was recorded among all aircraft.

For CPF, state-owned helicopters and a DHC-2 Beaver plane collectively recorded **59.2** flight hours.

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WildCAD events (as of Nov. 15, 2015)

Law enforcement = 3

Medivacs = 9

Search/rescue = 11

Air flight following = 179

Public assistance = 5

Resource orders = 156

Smoke checks = 58

Wildland fires = 113

Prescribed fires = 62

Miscellaneous = 74

Air dispatch and operations

At a glance

Minnesota CL-215 program

After **14** years of service to MNICS, GLFCC and out-state partners, air tankers T-263 and T-266 were sold to a buyer in Alaska.

Aviation events and training

- Developed and trained for an “early call-out” strategy for aerial fire suppression resources by ground personnel.
- Continued iPad technology program for Air Tactical Group supervisors.
- Facilitated a Blaze-Tamer demonstration (an environmentally-friendly water enhancer to use as a potential alternative to foam). May be used as a possible in-flight injection system for Fire Boss aircraft.
- Developed customized briefings, and focused on helicopter use in remote fire camps, for use by hand-crews mobilized to Manitoba.
- Delivered classroom and flight training to Minnesota National Guard and State Patrol.
- Conducted MN-DNR tanker base training in June.
- At annual spring workshop, all aviation personnel received information and training on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). Information was presented by a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) representative.
- Developed education outreach handout for UAS and signage for the Minnesota State Fair. Educated the public on UAS and Fire Traffic Area operations.

Aviation accomplishments

MN-DNR provided one aerial platform, including an air tactical group supervisor (ATGS), for Manitoba fire suppression efforts in July.

MNICS mobilized four Ontario CL-415 and two Bird Dog aircrafts to Montana and Idaho.

Assisted the Minnesota Air National Guard to mobilize two U-H60 Blackhawks to aid Washington state fire suppression efforts.

Used out-state aviation resources in Minnesota: an **8**-helitack from Oregon, three SEAT managers and one air ops branch director.

Some **68** MN-DNR aviation personnel supported **9** states on **87** incidents for positions with helicopter, fixed wing and dispatch operations.

For **70** days, an ‘Exclusive Use’ MN-DNR helicopter was mobilized to Montana wildfires along with **26** helitack personnel and **11** trainees.

For more than **100** days, USFS mobilized a Type 3 ‘Exclusive Use’ helicopter to Regions 1, 4 and 5.

For more than **90** days, a MN-DNR ‘Exclusive Use’ Fire Boss was mobilized to the state of Washington for assistance with **53** fires.

For **23** days, MN-DNR provided an aerial platform to Idaho.

MIFC update

Fire behavior and intelligence

Busy fire season in 2015

Dry conditions prevailed

As of Nov. 24, 2015 MNICS agencies reported **1,844** fires burning a total of **30,473** acres. This compares to the 20-year MNICS average of **1,650** fires burning **49,505** acres.

It was a busy year for fires. From Jan. 1 to Nov. 24, 2015 there were **231** days of possible wildfire danger, with at least one region at Planning Level 2 or higher. Of the possible wildfire days, **174** were at Planning Level 2, a total of **36** were at Planning Level 3; and 11 were at Planning Level 4.

Winter precipitation was quite light and Minnesota started the spring with droughty conditions. Snow cover melted rapidly in non-forested parts of the state with snow lingering in the Arrowhead region.

Dry winter conditions carried into spring. Deep soil drying was evident with the start of the Palsburg fire in the Beltrami State Forest. Just off Thompson Road, south of Warroad and east of Upper Red Lake, the fire burned more than **4,500** acres of commercial timberland.

Drought conditions continued through the spring with timely rains starting at the end of May. Rain in June and July ended drought conditions by the first week in July. September and October returned to a dry pattern and some of the warmest temperatures on record, contributing to the ignition of peat on the Trail Complex on private lands north of Fosston, Minnesota. Droughty areas reappeared in west central Minnesota until significant rains occurred in mid-November.



Predicting fire behavior and monitoring fuels

Several of the **37** remote automated weather stations (RAWS) in Minnesota have been modified to the new tri-leg format. This allows for easier maintenance and location changes, if necessary. These stations collect, store and forward data to help monitor for fire danger.

(Continued on p. 16)

"Understanding fire behavior, fire weather and fire danger is key to effectively protecting life, property and resources. Predictive services and fire intelligence support the operational needs of MNICS agencies."

William J. "BJ" Glesener
Predictive Services Coordinator
MN Department of Natural Resources

Diane Nygaard
MIFC Intel Specialist

"Our cadre of instructors is recognized for their excellence in both firefighting and teaching. Academy students directly benefit from this knowledge and experience." - Todd Manley, MIFC Training Coordinator

Training

Wildfire academy sets record attendance

From June 1 to 5, 2015 more than **850** participants attended the 15th annual Minnesota Wildfire Academy at Itasca Community College (ICC), Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Hosted by MNICS, the weeklong training was jointly managed by Advanced Minnesota (a training cooperative comprised of five community colleges) and the Minnesota Incident Command System.

The academy offered **27** nationally certified courses related to wildland fire planning, operations, logistics, finance, dispatch and leadership. Participants came from **28** fire departments, several colleges, the National Park Service, National Weather Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, multiple tribal entities and municipalities. Students also hailed from Conservation Corps Minnesota, The Nature Conservancy, counties, colleges, and private contractor fire fighters. Attendees traveled from as far away as Ohio, North Carolina and Florida.

The academy presents opportunities for interaction among all specialties and skill levels. Rookies, seasoned professionals and nationally certified (or "red carded") participants mingled at meals and special activities during

the week. Students also learned about Minnesota Type 2 Incident Management through an interactive Incident Command Post (ICP) that was staged at ICC. The simulation followed an Incident Action Plan similar to real wildland fire assignments.

The Incident Management Team itself also trained on exercises. Those who took previous National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) courses, working toward national certifications, could participate as Team trainees. They gained real-world experience while also being mentored.

In calendar year 2015 the MNICS organization offered **44** fire related training courses to approximately **1,174** personnel. Course offerings included basic wildfire suppression, dispatch and leadership courses.

This year MNICS launched a leadership training initiative to partner with Minnesota Board of Firefighters, Training and Education (MBFTE). It brought new wildland and structural firefighter leaders together in a classroom prior to fire incidents in the field. In October, the first leadership course (L-380) was offered at Camp Ripley with **12** MNICS students and **12** participants from structural fire departments.

Check out our academy photos at <https://mnics.shutterfly.com/pictures>.

Contributor: Bob Lintelmann



Agency update



Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Partners in progress

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

MNICS partnerships are a foundation 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 provide resources to assist with interagency incidents while also serving community needs.

Personnel changes

In August, former MIFC assistant coordinator Ronda Estey accepted an education coordinator position for the Mahnommen K-12 school district. Tom Schackman, former BIA fuels specialist, retired in October. We wish them well in their new endeavors.

Fire suppression

The 2015 fire season was off to a fast start in March and stayed very active until the first part of May, continuing into August. By early November, there was little to no fire activity. Fire numbers for both Red Lake and Minnesota agency reservations are below:

Reservation	# Wildland Fires	# Acres
Red Lake	479	1,826
White Earth	75	225
Fond du Lac	4	37
Mille Lacs	13	16
Bois Forte	3	1
Grand Portage	1	0
Leech Lake	0	0
Totals	575 fires	2,105 acres

In addition to fighting fires in their home units around the state, our BIA and tribal crews provided support on national incidents. We helped with: fire suppression, fire severity, fire preposition, initial attack, prescribed burning, fire planning, wildfire use, fire investigation, fire prevention, dispatch support, aviation, MNICS Incident Management Team assignments and teaching fire or NWCG courses.

Assignments and equipment

In-state assignments included three engines. Out-state, a total of eight Type-6 engines were assigned. Tribal personnel assignments by position are detailed below.

Reservation	In-State	In-State (other)	Out-of-State
Red Lake	1 individual		34 assignments in 5 states
White Earth	2 individuals		14 assignments in 2 states
Fond du Lac	0 individuals		15 assignments in 4 states
Mille Lacs	0 individuals		2 assignments in 1 state
Bois Forte	1 individuals		2 assignments in 2 states
Grand Portage	5 individuals		10 assignments in 4 states
Leech Lake	6 individuals		24 assignments in 4 states
MN. Agency-BJI	4 individual		3 assignments in 2 states
Midwest Region	9 individuals		9 assignments in 9 states
1854 Treaty Authority	0 individuals		5 assignments in 5 state
Total	28 individuals		118

Aviation

Red Lake now has funding for a helicopter module that includes:

- Bruce Jourdain, Helicopter Crew Supervisor
- Mike Seki, Assistant Helicopter Crew Supervisor
- Dave Rosebear, Helicopter Squad Leader
- Darrel Crow, Helicopter Squad Leader
- Angelo Juarez and Lance Crow, Helicopter Crew Members

In 2015 the BIA helicopter N144BH (Type 3) flew **66.3** total hours on **46** wildfire incidents. Fuel and retardant estimates are below:

T-801	Gallons/ Fire Ice	Gallons/Retardant	Flight HRS
14 MN-DNR fires	15,570	4,489	18.87
5 Red Lake fires	4,460	0	3.52
TOTAL	20,030	4,489	22.39
T-851 Fireboss	Gallons/ Fire Ice	Gallons Water/Foam	Flight HRS
12 MN-DNR Fires	5,730	54,130	21.29
4 Red Lake Fires	1,250	12,370	5.22
TOTALS	6,980 Gallons	66,500 Gallons	26.51 hours

(BIA report continued on p.14)

MNICS dispatch recap*80 in-state incidents overall (ROSS, Nov. 25, 2015)*

Crews	CCM (DNR)	Fire Suppression	Type 2	Type 2I-A
Minnesota	45 crews	1 module	3 crews	5 crews

Overhead personnel mobilized in-state (includes crews, OH and engine personnel)	BIA	FWS	USFS	MN-DNR	NPS	Total
Minnesota	32	15	80	216	4	347
Personnel (out-state)						224
Total						571

A total of 61 trainees from all MNICS agencies received in-state trainee assignments

Trainee Assignments	BIA	FWS	USFS	MN-DNR	VOP	Total
	5	2	19	34	1	61

MNICS agencies had 81 trainees on 194 separate out-state assignments

BIA	FWS	USFS	MN-DNR	VOP	Total
7	7	44	23	0	81

Minnesota sent two crews to Alaska and seven crews to western states. MN-DNR sent one crew to Manitoba

Type 2I-A	BIA	FWS	USFS	MN-DNR	VOP	Total
Western crews (9)	33	14	63	57	13	180
Manitoba				29		209

Personnel mobilized out-state

BIA	FWS	USFS	MN-DNR	VOP	Total
133	57	311	337	8	846

Engines out-state

BIA	FWS	USFS	MN-DNR	VOP	Contract Viper R-9	Total
12	5	11	18	0	4	50

Out-state mobilizations*Near-record fires and acres burned in the west*

This was an extremely busy year for out-of-state mobilizations. The summer fire season began in late June with resources being sent to Alaska. As summer progressed, extremely dry conditions in the western states brought a near-record number of fires and acres burned. The national preparedness level was raised to 5 by early August and remained intact until September. Resources were in high demand and almost all were made available for requested assignments. Total resources sent out-state was a combined **846** assignments (crew, aviation, engine, overhead and personnel). Casual hires constituted a total of **192** of these resources.

The Duluth Mobilization Center was open twice in 2015; once for an SNS exercise.

On June 23, two Minnesota crews and one from Wisconsin boarded an NICC jet for Alaska and returned two weeks later.

Personnel changes in MIFC dispatch include:

Long-time dispatcher Trudy Fagre retired in early April. Ken Guith, USFS, assumed her position in August.

Former MIFC assistant coordinator Ronda Estey took a teaching position in the Mahanomen school district. Tasha Woodwick, USFS, will assume her position in January, 2016.

Agency update



In 2015, there were 27 wildfires for a total of 2,026 acres on FWS service lands. No long-term severity funding was requested for FWS lands during the 2015 fire season.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

A year of opportunity and change

2015 also brought challenges

As state conditions rapidly escalated to Planning Level 4 in the spring, prescribed burning was not feasible. In addition, workforce reorganization occurred in the FWS Midwestern Region. However, field stations were able to manage a dynamic fire season on FWS lands and also assist MNICS partners with other wildfire incidents. Even with a suppression-oriented fire season and a reduced workforce, field stations were able to conduct over **158** prescribed burns for **17,081** acres; about half of what was accomplished in 2014.

Changes in personnel

- Jason Riggins named Regional Fire Management Coordinator (RFMC) for R3, Midwestern Region.
 - Jamie Farmer named South Zone Fire Management Officer (FMO) for Iowa and Missouri.
 - Seth Grimm named West Zone FMO for Minnesota.
 - Thad Herzberger named East Zone FMO for Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.
 - Dan Laber named North Zone FMO for Wisconsin and Michigan.
 - Nate Perrine transferred from Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District (WMD) to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) as a new Prescribed Fire Specialist.
 - Blair Mace transferred from the Fergus Falls WMD into a Realty Specialist position at the Fergus Falls office.
 - Mark Fondriest left Detroit Lakes WMD for an Assistant Engine Captain position at the Huron-Manistee National Forest (NF).
 - Lindy McNeilus transferred from Detroit Lakes WMD to Kenai NWR as their Prevention Technician.
- (Many positions are still vacant but we are optimistic about filling more in 2016).

Training

The FWS coordinated an S-234 (S-219) class at the MNICS Academy and assisted with S-211, RX-301 and other courses. Interagency fire refreshers and other local courses were held at most FWS stations.

Mobilization

Over **96** FWS resources from Minnesota were dispatched to **9** different states this year. Personnel held positions in operations, aviation, plans, finance, dispatching, and command including many trainee assignments such as CRWB, DIVS, ENGB, HEQB, OSC2, and SITL.

US Fish & Wildlife Service Wildfires and Prescribed

Station	Wildfires	WF Acres	RX Burn
Agassiz NWR	1	888.0	9
Big Stone NWR	1	0.1	9
Crane Meadows NWR	-	-	1
Detroit Lakes WMD	5	486.0	11
Fergus Falls WMD	6	457.2	19
Glacial Ridge NWR	2	0.9	2
Hamden Slough NWR	-	-	-
Litchfield WMD	5	137.0	20
Minnesota Valley NWR	2	35.1	9
Morris WMD	1	0.5	34
Rice Lake NWR	-	-	1
Rydell NWR	-	-	-
Sherburne NWR	1	1.0	11
Tamarac NWR	-	-	-
Windom WMD	3	20.0	32
Winona District	-	-	-

Contributor: Russ Langford

GISS, Finance and Dispatch working teams

Teams train, set tasks, network

*Out in the field, in the office or at training,
working teams forge ahead.*

GISS

In April 2015, when the Palsburg fire ignited, the team successfully used Global Positioning System (GPS) tools to create geo-referenced Portable Document Format (PDF) maps. The maps contained bar matrix codes, also known as QR codes, which can be scanned with a smart phone. The code downloads a map onto the phone with a marked location of the user in relation to the incident taking place.

GISS training (continued p. 11)

On Feb. 18, 2015 the team logged on for a national GISS webinar sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) for a refresher course on fire incident mapping tools. Also, the team met in March at the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center (MIFC) in Grand Rapids to learn about new map plotting equipment. Members practiced loading maps and troubleshooting situations that could potentially arise during an incident.

Finance working team (FWT)

On April 27, 2015 e-ISuite was launched - the next generation of I-suite. MNICS FWT members, Kevin O'Brien and Randee Olson, led training sessions on the new software, which does not require multiple licenses and can be deployed to multiple work stations.

General benefits of this system are significant. It provides centralized data, has a complete incident life cycle from initial attack to close-out, plus automatically backs up and saves historical data for many years. Also, e-ISuite improves the electronic payment process.

Benefits of e-ISuite at remote locations:

- Admin rights are not needed
- Data from other sources can easily be retrieved (ROSS, ICBS, IQCS)

Benefits of e-ISuite at an agency:

- Wider range of capability
- Easily create and manage IAPs, costs, invoices for local resources

Finance working team (continued)

Finally, FWT member, John Kelly, prepared a one-page flyer for the MNICS IMT Incident Replacement Policy. For National Fire Equipment System items, NFES, the team will follow the process outlined in the NWCG-NFES Catalog.

Reminder: Submit replacement orders within 30 days of incident control date. IMTs cannot authorize random replacement of cache items. Non-cache items should be replaced by the home unit. A Property Loss and Damage Report or General Message substantiates the need for replacement. All non-NFES requests must be approved by the FSC or Incident Commander.

Dispatch working team (DWT) snapshot

Workshop held: Some **50** interagency dispatchers attended a refresher workshop at MIFC on March 18 from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. A seasonal weather outlook was presented, MIFC and MNICS updates were discussed and ordering procedures were reviewed.

Recruit trainees: A shortage of qualified dispatchers exists. The team will network with possible recruits and work with MIFC to update and generate a new dispatcher list.

Interact with Training Working Team: USFS Natasha Woodwick will serve as the contact for the Training Working Team, since she is also a member of it and was recently hired as the new MIFC assistant coordinator. Jeff Jackson, NE FireWise Specialist for MN-DNR, is a member of the Prevention Working Team (PWT) and will be a contact for DWT.

Training: As part of an ongoing training needs assessment process, the group agrees that a D-310 (Support Dispatcher) course needs to be offered and to follow the D-110 (Dispatch Recorder) course. In June 2015, some 16 attendees took D-110 as part of the Wildfire Academy being offered at Itasca Community College. Future plans include working with the MNICS-PWT to host a Wildland Fire Prevention Open House and host agency leaders so they can spend time in dispatch to and focus on the scope of these duties.

MNICS 2015

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*"MNICS and GLFFC
partnerships are vital. We
value each agency's
contribution to the success and
mobility of our ICS response
efforts."*

Ron Stoffel, MNICS chair

Minnesota DNR forestry update

Summary of 2015 fire season

The 2015 spring fire season began early due to sparse snow and warm winter temperatures. Little moisture with above average spring temperatures contributed to a very active fire season.

In Minnesota, there were **990** fires on DNR-protected lands, totaling more than **23,000** acres burned. MNICS agencies reported **1,844** fires for a total of **73,075** acres burned. The most significant was the Palsburg fire in April that consumed approximately **4,500** acres.

The western United States just experienced one of the most devastating fire seasons in recent memory. It began in late June when Alaska called for national assistance. Seasonal rains put an end to the Alaska fires in mid-July but soon after the western states began to burn. As of October, MNICS agencies had sent more than **780** resources, including nine **20**-person initial attack crews, **57** engine assignments and contract aircraft.

Aviation

Wildfire aviation resources played a large role in fire suppression throughout the spring wildfire season in Minnesota. Substantial changes took place in the MN-DNR wildfire aviation program two state-owned CL-215 water scooping air tankers were sold. They were replaced with four contracted Fire Boss aircraft and two Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs).

Also, the BIA provided a Fire Boss and a SEAT in Bemidji, Minnesota; while USFS provided a CL-415 in Grand Rapids, and large air tankers based in Bemidji, Brainerd and Ely. Together, MNICS agencies had a dozen helicopters on standby for the spring fire season. Aircraft responded to nearly **200** fires and also assisted local and rural fire departments.

Wildfire prevention

The Wildfire Prevention Program completed its final phase of a three-year wildfire ember campaign. Working with GLFFC member states and provinces, the campaign focused on lake-home and cabin owners. Several products were tailored to that audience, such as lawn and leaf bags that were distributed with safety messages.

Outreach also included presentations at annual meetings, participation in parades and fairs, banner displays and school appearances with Smokey Bear. Also, each year MN-DNR participates in Spring Fire Prevention Week and at the State Fair on Governor's Fire Prevention Day. The fire tower and fire prevention building draw approximately **20,000** fair patrons each year.

Statute changes

At the urging of the State Fire Marshal and state universities (MNSCU) the agency requested a statute change to regulate training burns conducted by fire departments to train staff. With the support of the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association, the changes were approved during the past legislative session. Check the Office of the Revisor of Statutes for specific language changes to § 88.17.3.A.

Burning permits

The online burning permit system is in place for most counties in forested regions of the state. This allows fire suppression managers to control daily burning. Also, dispatchers and fire managers can view an online map locating where burn permits have been activated. In 2014, over **42,000** paper and electronic open burning permits were activated **67,285** times.

Fire behavior and predictive services

Minnesota joined Wisconsin and Michigan in performing Live Fuel Moisture measurements for a study out of Missoula, Montana. Three sites were added to the study, Bemidji, Big Falls and Sandstone. The Bemidji site measures fuel moisture and fuel density, while the other two sites measure fuel moisture.

A proposed change to the **Red Flag Warning** system would be to add wind gusts to the criteria. Proposed criteria includes: "Sustained 20-foot winds at 20 mph or greater with frequent (3-hours or more) gusts of over 25 mph (in wooded areas) or more than 35 mph (in grasslands)."

Contributor: Ron Stoffel



In Memoriam Jean S. Bergerson

Jean was a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources employee for many years, retiring in 2013 as the MIFC public information officer. After a brief illness, she passed away on Sept. 19, 2015 at her home in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

She loved hunting, fishing, horses and dogs. Jean is remembered for her dedication to nature and wildland conservation.

An Oct. 17, 2015 memorial service was held for family and friends. An observance will also take place at the MNICS annual meeting, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2015 at the Duluth Holiday Inn & Suites.

Working team update

A total of 25 items posted on the MNICS Facebook page accrued more than 575 "Likes."

MNICS joined the "Twitter-sphere" last year. Some 25 tweets drew more than 407 followers in 2015.

Information management and GISS

Web and social media enhance visibility

Facebook and Twitter sites are up and running; website moved to state server.

In late November 2015, the Information Technology Working Team (ITWT) completed the migration of the MNICS.org website to a state server. The move will cost less per month to maintain and provides additional firewall security.

Pending Task Force approval, planning is underway to migrate the GLFFC.com website in 2016.

Social media

The Standard Operating Guide for the MNICS.org website was updated in 2015 to include oversight procedures for a Facebook account. The MNICS Website User Guide was updated to reflect this change and also edited for other content.

Web and social media accounts were most active during April when the Palsburg fire occurred as detailed below:

Month	Total visits to site by month	Maximum daily visits
April	28,029	934
May	6,731	217
June	4,191	~ 100
July	3,238	~ 100
August	3,366	~ 100
September	2,522	~ 100
October	1,821	~ 100

New recruits and more mentoring

Some 10 Public Information Officer (PIO) trainees are being mentored by MNICS-PIO group members. An S-203 class was attended by 14 new PIO recruits. This included eight members from USFS, four from MN-DNR, one each from BIA and Fond du Lac forestry. Most have started a task book and several have completed (or nearly finished) their trainee task books. During this year's busy western wildfire season, MNICS drew from its PIO pool to fill 13 requests at varying levels of qualifications and expertise.

Training and future plans

In February and March, Minnesota PIOs met or participated in online training and presentations particularly to go over the new functionality of the MNICS.org website and social media accounts.

Along these lines, our team will build social presence by adding Facebook friends or Twitter followers. Also, we will continue to recruit PIO trainees and encourage existing members to keep their qualifications up-to-date.

GISS adds quick response capability to maps (continued from p. 8)

QR codes make for easy user download.

Currently comprised of nine qualified members and nine trainees, the MNICS Geographic Information System (GIS) working team continues to develop standards, protocols, procedures, research and training for Geographic Information System Specialists (GISS) who work on incidents (continued on page 10).

Contributor: Kris Reichenbach



Homeland Security & Emergency Management

Providing disaster assistance

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Homeland Security and Emergency Management division (DPS-HSEM) provided aid for three state disasters in 2015. The state disaster contingency account enables counties to apply for funding when they do not meet federal disaster criteria or suffer severe damage outside of a federally-declared disaster.

In June, Martin County received HSEM assistance for damage from severe thunderstorms. In July, Cass, Crow Wing and Todd counties received assistance for damage from high wind and storms. In August, Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton approved a request from Pennington County for damage incurred from heavy storms.

Crossing borders

In September, more than 90 Minnesota and Canadian emergency management professionals took part in a first-ever Integrated Emergency Management course in Grand Portage, Minnesota. HSEM Director Joe Kelly joined Regional Program Coordinator Roy Holmes and others for a five-day session to better define a coordinated cross-border response. They worked alongside participants from five U.S. and Canadian jurisdictions. The FEMA course provided a realistic crisis situation within a structured learning environment to improve readiness and provide a networking opportunity.

Responding to oil transport delays

HSEM is focused on oil by rail transport and provides awareness training to fire departments and others impacted by the dramatic increase in oil-train transportation. In 2014, Gov. Mark Dayton signed Railroad and Pipeline Safety legislation, which authorized **135** oil awareness training sessions to **96** departments throughout the state. A total of **3,140** first responders, emergency management professionals and chemical assessment teams received advanced training specific to crude oil, and worked with school districts to develop emergency plans for buildings located near railroad tracks.

Partnering with the Minnesota National Guard

In times of disaster or crisis, Minnesotans depend on the National Guard and the HSEM works with the governor's office to activate guard troops when needed or requested by localities. In late August, HSEM participated in Vigilant Guard 2015, a rare training opportunity for federal, regional, local, civilian and military partners. HSEM activated the state operations center in St. Paul for a simulated disaster involving shale oil and severe weather in Duluth, Minnesota.

Help to manage emergencies

On Jan. 28-29, 2015 officials from Stevens County and HSEM conducted Minnesota's first-ever integrated emergency management course. Held at Camp Ripley, the two-day event brought participants together for a simulated hazardous materials rail car accident. Stevens County Emergency Management Director Dona Greiner and HSEM Integrated Emergency Management Course Coordinator Glenn Elvecrog planned and executed the course involving an on-scene Emergency Operations Center (EOC) command team and agency participants. Their task was to develop a situation report and incident action plan, determine EOC responsibilities, coordinate policy-decision groups and create public information messaging.

Preventing chemical disasters

It's important for elected officials, community leaders, first responders and emergency managers to know about hazardous and toxic chemicals that are stored in their area. Under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) our agency collects information from **6,290** facilities that store hazardous chemicals and **445** facilities that handle toxic chemicals. Data are compiled into the state's Toxic Release Inventory. Minnesota is first in the nation to report source reduction activities. State law requires chemical storage facilities to have a Pollution Prevention Plan and submit an annual Pollution Prevention Progress Report. These tools help facilities to identify and implement pollution prevention strategies.

Contributor: Roy Holmes

In-state resource assignments

Information (compiled from ROSS, Nov. 25, 2015)

This year we had an extremely busy fire season in Minnesota. The spring fire season began in mid-March and ended by mid-May. Fall fire season was short and lasted only about a month. Total number of fires for all agencies was **1,844** for **30,473** acres. Agencies also reported **677** prescribed burns completed for a total of **73,075** acres overall.

Wildfire acres by agency

Wildfires	BIA	FWS	USFS	MN-DNR	NPS	Total
Number	627	27	88	1,102	0	1,844
Total acres	2,150	2,026	395	25,902	0	30,473

Prescribed burns by agency

RX Burns	BIA	FWS	USFS	MN-DNR	NPS	Total
Number	25	167	97	387	1	677
Total acres	39,326	18,785	3,379	11, 525	60	73,075

In-state mobilization summary

MIFC dispatch and Superior dispatch mobilized approximately **571** resources to **969** different assignments across Minnesota. This includes crews, engine/ aviation personnel and individual overhead resources. Out-of-state resources totaled **224** people. This included one Type 2 and five Type 2I-A crews, engines and overhead positions.

Significant incidents include:

- Palsburg Fire, a Type 2 Incident (Brian Pisarek) with **102** personnel
- Silver Lake Fire, a Type 4 Incident with **17** personnel
- Chester Fire, a Type 3 incident that used **39** resources

SHOUT OUT

*MNICS agencies thank **Tom Fasteland**, MIFC coordinator, for nine years of dedication and service in the dispatch center. Also, appreciation goes to **Jean Goad**, MIFC-PIO who retired earlier in 2015 and hello to **Christi Powers**, the new MIFC-PIO as of October. Best wishes and good luck to all!*

At a glance

A first-ever Minnesota Wildfire Academy was run by a Type 2 Incident Management Team with **52** people participating. Jim Hinds was incident commander for the team. The academy provided an opportunity for **30** trainees to get experience on a Type 2 IMT.

Incident Management Team B (Greg Peterson) also did a Strategic National Stockpile exercise with the Minnesota Department of Health, along with the Center for Disease Control and the U.S. Marshals Office to set up a receiving and distribution site. Twenty five team members and trainees participated in the exercise.

MIFC Dispatch had **29** resources assist with dispatch operations in both the spring fire season and the summer mobilization of National Resources. Resources came from Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Kentucky and Montana.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) mobilized **37** resources from across the U.S. to assist with prescribed burning.



(continued from p. 5)

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Prevention activities

The BIA also engaged in statewide outreach and participated in diverse range of community events. Among those, we attended powwows, conducted school visits, participated in health fairs, helped host Smokey Bear Day at Itasca State Park and support in Wildfire on Ice, a fundraiser for the Wildland Firefighter Foundation.

Reservation	Unit Activities	Contacts Made	Off-Unit Activities	Contacts Made	Training	Highlights of Prevention and Outreach Efforts
Red Lake	31	1397	6	1250	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powwows Head Start school visits Minnesota State Fair participation Smokey Bear Day, Itasca State Park Wildfire on Ice FDL Resource Management event Provider in Action conference
White Earth	9	2500	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Head Start and early childhood program visits 3 visits to elementary schools 5 parades 3 off-unit special events 5 on-unit special events
Fond du Lac (FDL)	10	3000	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 Moons powwow FDL Ojibwe powwow and Resource Management meetings Spring powwow July 4th parade Provided content for an article in Fire Prevention News Health fair and elementary Forestry Field Day participation
Mille Lacs	No report	No report	No report	No report	No report	No report
Bois Forte	4	600	0	0	0	Community and fire prevention events
Grand Portage	8	355	12	144	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head Start and Sugarbush Elementary School Sugarbush Career Fair & Mentorship Program Head Start Fall Color Walk Burn Permit System presentations Head Start Fire Safety Day
Leech Lake	6	1000	8	500	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area school and Head Start events Local powwows Summer Fest Community parades and picnics Perch Jerk; Career Day; Earth Day; Take A Kid Fishing Day

MIFC update

Rural assistance, Cache and Symbols

Rural fire departments receive funds

Annual requests exceed available funding.

The Minnesota DNR assists rural fire departments by providing or administering cost-share grants, technical assistance, low-cost equipment and wildland fire training.

The Northeast Area Fire Cache supports Minnesota fire departments by selling fire equipment. In 2015, those sales totaled **\$64,371**.

In fiscal year 2015, MN-DNR Forestry acquired more than **\$2.4** million in federal property. Fire trucks, tenders, chassis, boat generators, water pumps, emergency medical services (EMS) supplies, long boards, tarps, cots, and tool boxes were bought.

The **Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)** grant program received **388** grant requests totaling more than **\$2.2** million. Since 2011, the VFA served **837** rural Minnesota communities.

Learn more at:

www.mndnr.gov/grants/ruralfire

Check our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/ruralfire

Contributor: Tim Oland

Cache is ship shape

The Northeast Interagency Support Cache (NEK) processed and shipped 4,471 line item supplies totaling more than \$2.2 million. We processed 498 returns equaling \$739,892.

Our team supports the national cache system. In 2015, we shipped more than \$1 million in supplies to Idaho, California, Colorado, Montana, Oregon and Washington. This year, the NEK supported the national cache system by providing refurbished pumps and supplies to nine contract helibases and three tanker bases.

Also, our team outfitted nine Type-2 IA crews for out-of-state assignments. In addition, resources were provided for four wildfire academies, four college training course and 17 other types of training sessions.

In all, Cache personnel were on detail for 16 fire assignments. For western area fires, we supported the following positions: Cache Manager (trainee), Cache Coordinator (trainee), Assistant Cache Manager, Aircraft Dispatcher, Cache Supply Clerk (trainee), Logistics Section Chief, Facilities Unit Leader and Supply Unit Leader.

Symbols sales soar

The National Symbols Cache processed 2,107 orders for over \$1 million in sales. This was the first time sales exceeded \$1 million in five years.

We currently stock 93 products with more added this year: A **Smokey in Space** bookmark (English-Spanish) and **Smokey Bear** poster.

Other new products include a **Woodsy Owl** climate change poster and sunglasses, as well as "Be Idle Free" keychains to remind drivers to turn off car engines when not in motion.

Contributor: Brian Wise

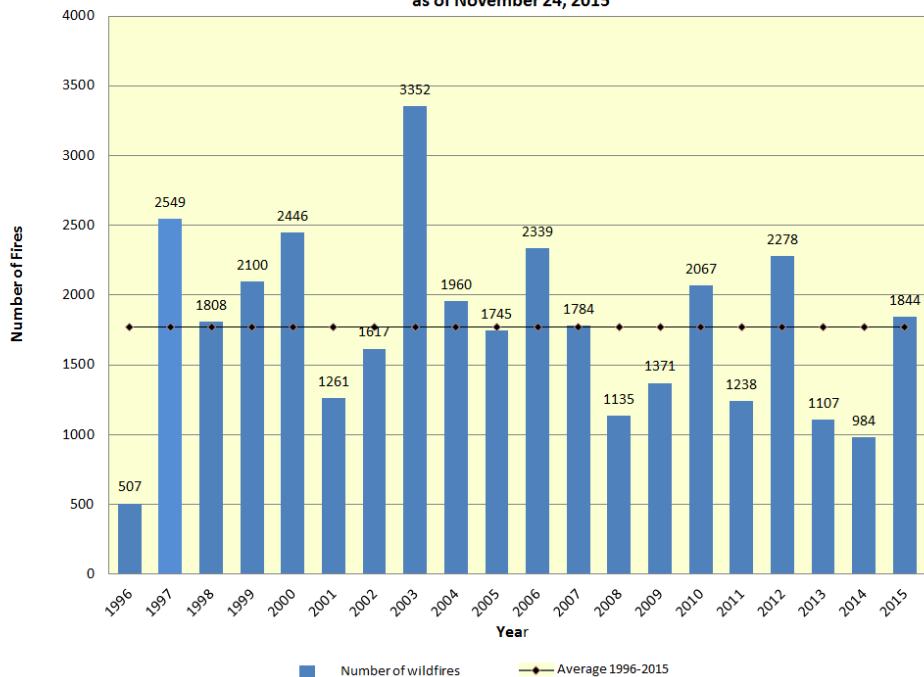
*So long to Cache staff members in 2015. In May, **Joe Radmanovich** took a position with St. Croix State Park and **Larry Hansen** retired in July.*

Many thanks for your contributions to the development and success of the Cache and Symbols programs.

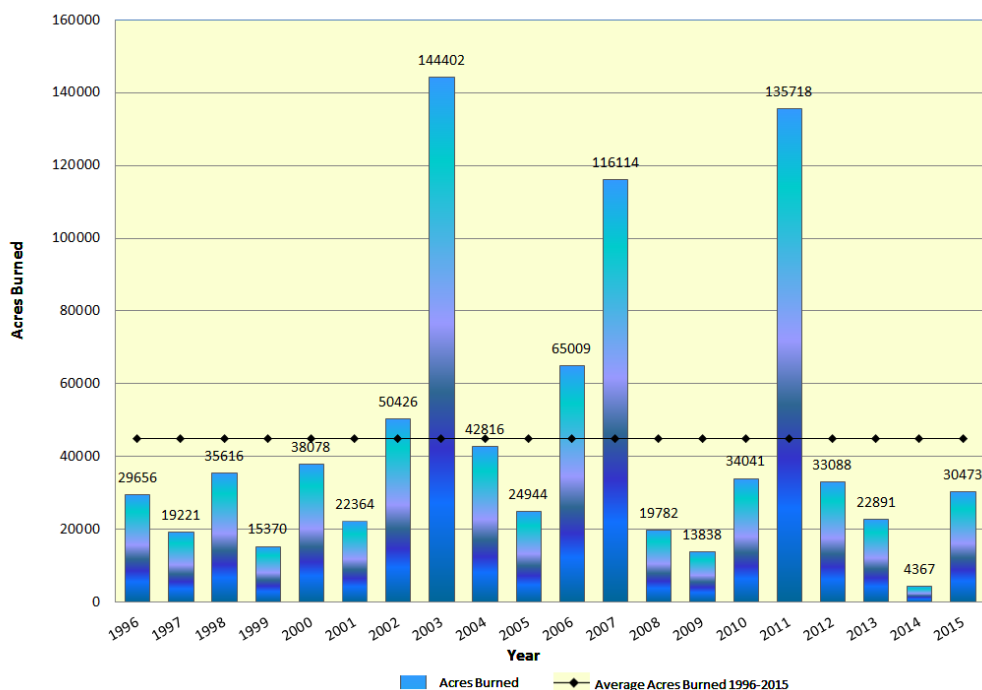
Through Nov. 15, 2015 MNICS agencies reported 1,844 fires for 30,473 acres. The 20-year MNICS agency average is 1,650 fires that burned 49,505 acres.

Fire behavior and intelligence

MNICS Wildfires by Year since 1996
as of November 24, 2015



MNICS Acres burned per year Since 1996
as of November 24, 2015



Preparedness

Level 1

Minimal fire activity; most geographic areas have low to moderate fire danger.

Level 2

Several geographic areas experience high to extreme fire danger. Wildland fire activity is on the increase. Large fires are occurring in one or more areas.

Level 3

Two or more geographic areas experience wildland fires or prescribed burns. Mobilization of additional resources needed; Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams are committed to two or more geographic areas.

Level 4

Three or more geographic areas experience events that require Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams.

Level 5

Full commitment of national resources is ongoing. Potential for emerging, significant wildland fires is high in multiple geographic areas and emergency measures are sustained to support incident operations.

Adapted from NIFC.gov

Working team update

Air operations working team (AOWT)

Teams meet in March

Participated in exercises and networked to share information.

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

The group participated in radio technology/communication exercises that included interoperability radio testing to a cross-band repeater and agency aircraft.

The workshop also offered Compact Air Tactical Group Supervisors and Air Attack Officers a chance to meet and improve operational safety and to discuss resource sharing.



Fire season recap

The aviation desk received **483** aircraft requests and aircraft were dispatched to **195** fires. The busiest day was May 2, 2015 when **50** aviation dispatches were ordered for **17** fires.

MN-DNR used eight 'Exclusive Use' contracts and 14 CWN contracts for helicopters. Also, the agency contracted four 'Exclusive Use' Fire Boss aircraft and two SEAT contracts using eight aerial platforms. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) provided a Fire Boss and SEAT. Along with 1 Exclusive Use helicopter to support firefighting and prescribed burning efforts.

To aid in the effort, air tankers were provided by the USFS, which included a CL-415, a C-130 and P2V aircraft along with lead planes and ASMs. Also, USFS contracted for a Type 3 helicopter. As an alternative to retardant, Fire-Ice was used extensively with SEATs and the Fire Boss.

Contributor: Linda Bruss



Forest dispatch update

Chippewa-Superior National Forest

(continued from p. 2)

Superior Forest resource orders

- Aircraft = 22
 - Crews = 37
 - Equipment = 47
 - Overhead = 132
- Total = 238 orders**

Chippewa Forest resource orders

- Aircraft = 5
 - Crews = 17
 - Equipment = 14
 - Overhead = 35
- Total = 71 orders**

Off unit support

There were **309** out-of-state assignments in 2015. Many of the USFS resources were mobilized for multiple assignments particularly out west.

Significant resources were mobilized for multiple assignments, particularly for incidents out west.

Approximately **230** timesheets and **97** vouchers were processed for out-of-state travel during the 2015 fire season.

Personnel

Two dispatch positions were hired this year. In April, we welcomed Elizabeth Schmidt, our 18/8 Initial Attack Dispatcher. In October, Ryan Kingsley joined us as Assistant Dispatch Center Manager. Welcome aboard!

Workers and volunteers

Many thanks to those who helped us this year!

Nancy Borman, Superior National Forest (SUF)
Jen Guith, Chippewa National Forest (CPF)
Debbie Hahn, SUF
Adam Hanson, SUF
Ryan Johnson, SUF
Ryan Kingsley, Mark Twain NF, MO
Mike Mackey, CPF
Ashley May-Klick, SUF
Kim Owczarzak, Huron Manistee NF, Michigan
Chris Owens, Daniel Boone NF, Kentucky
Julie Palkki, CPF
Becky Robertshaw, SUF
Jennie Rowland, BIA Boise Forte, Idaho
David Walks, BIA Rocky Mountain Regional Office, MT
Patty Williams, Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF, Idaho
Sandra Williams, NE Area State-Private Forestry, PA
Tasha Woodwick, CPF

Palsburg fire

On the afternoon of Wednesday, April 15, 2015 a fire broke out a few miles east of Hayes Lake State Park in northwestern Minnesota.

Winds of 30 to 40 mph quickly swept the fire into dense pine forests in Beltrami Island State Park near Warroad. On April 16, the 35-member MNICS Team C, led by Incident Commander Brian Pisarek, assumed oversight of the fire for four days until local units resumed management of the blaze on April 20, 2015.

The fire burned 4,550 acres primarily in pine forest on state land. Some scattered Red Lake Band of Chippewa tribal lands also burned.

Agencies that partnered to suppress the fire include: the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Roseau Fire Department, Warroad Fire Department, the Roseau Sheriff's office and Minnesota National Guard Hawk Helicopter crews.



*Several photos provided
by Tyler Fish*