



# Minnesota Incident Command System 2016 Annual Report







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## **2016 MNICS Board of Directors**

William Carlson, Facility Manager, Voyageurs National Park

Connie Cummins, Forest Supervisor, Superior National Forest

Joseph Kelly, HSEM 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



# From the Chair

## MNICS TASK FORCE CHAIR

"Our interagency partnerships remained solid during a year of significant change. A wave of new leadership at the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center is bringing fresh ideas and an approach to efficiency. We will harness this organizational change and continue the mission of MNICS mission:

*To coordinate, educate and implement the Incident Command System to support fire and all risk incidents in Minnesota and nationwide.*

Thanks for your partnership and hard work this year."

**Greg Peterson**



# Task Force

**KURT FOGELBERG**  
**NPS**



"Having been with MNICS for a while, and seeing the change in our leadership, we have an opportunity to take this momentum and accomplish new goals in 2017."

**ROY HOLMES**  
**HSEM**



"MNICS partnerships form a bridge in all-hazard emergency response in Minnesota. An example is how we worked together during the summer storms. The SEOC, HSEM and MNICS are forging a path to help counties and emergency managers during these types of incidents."

**SETH GRIMM - FWS**



"Our agency values the MNICS partnership. Sharing resources, information and helping to shape fire policy and procedures in Minnesota is a rewarding experience through my participation on the MNICS Task Force."

**CHASE MARSHALL**  
**USFS**



"It is a vital experience to join the MNICS Task Force and work with knowledgeable fire personnel on interagency initiatives. I look forward to the decisions, projects, procedures and deliverables from the Task Force in 2017."

**RON STOFFEL- DNR**



"Fire suppression in Minnesota depends on the strength and cooperation of our interagency partners and teams. Whether it's a nuisance fire or a large incident, MNICS is a valuable resource both locally and nationally."



# MIFC Dispatch

2016 brought an early and busy spring fire season to Minnesota. Each MNICS Type-2 incident management team (IMT) mobilized to incidents along with a few Type 3 teams. In July, MNICS agencies assisted in recovery efforts after a series of large storms caused damage in the northern half of Minnesota. After the Wildfire Academy in June, the first of 10 MNICS Type-2 initial attack (IA) crews were mobilized. While noticeably slower than last year, work continued to mobilize engines, aircraft modules, crews and single resources throughout the summer, into fall and winter. MIFC also dispatched resources to support the Aug. 27 Beartown firefighters incident. 2016 incidents include:

Lyons and Lake Hattie Fires (MNDNR), Type-2 IMT Team A, Aultman

Skibo Fire (USFS), Type-2 IMT Team B, Peterson

Foss Lake Fire (USFS), Type-2 IMT Team C, Pisarek

Hut Two (MNDNR), Type-3, Lynch

Taylor Road (MNDNR), Type-3, Metro Team, Esbensen

2016 Wildfire Academy, Type-2 IMT Team A, Aultman

July 5 Blowdown (MNDNR), Type-3, Aultman

July 21 Blowdown (MNDNR), Type-3, Pisarek

MI-MIA Assist (BIA), Type-3, Bennett

## In-state mobilizations

Approximately 472 resources plus 14 Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) crews were mobilized to 115 incidents across Minnesota in 2016. Out-of-state resources supported both prescribed and wildfire incidents totaling 1,751 including Type-2, Type 2-IA and Type-1 crews.

## Out-state mobilizations

(Jan-Nov 2016 ROSS data)

Out-state mobilizations began in mid-February with resources sent to Florida and Missouri. During 2016 we supported national fire suppression efforts, the majority of which was spent at national planning level 2 and 3. Minnesota resources went to 27 different states including 10 Type 2-IA crews to Arizona, South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Michigan, and Washington. Many resources went on multiple assignments.

Days at Planning Levels (June-Sept)	1	2	3	4	5
	6	74	28	14	0

Personnel Numbers	DNR	USFS	FWS	BIA	NPS	Total
Crews	62	66	28	33	11	200
Rigs for crews	20	19	6	6	3	54
Engines	0	64	23	56	0	143
Aviation	32	29	0	5	1	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>683</b>

Thanks to Devery Sorensen for spearheading ROSS cleanup and to John O'Brien for contracts and billing assistance.

## November dispatch update

(Nov 1-29, 2016 ROSS data)

The southeastern U.S. had a significant increase in fire activity this fall. Minnesota mobilized resources to Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. We thank everyone working through the holidays.

DNR	USFS	FWS	BIA/Tribal	NPS	Total
68	57	4	22	2	153

## Thank you

MIFC Dispatch would like to thank all dispatchers helping us during the 2016 fire season. **Local:** Amanda Jones (DNR), Becky Robertshaw (USFS), Trudy Fagre (retired NPS), Bonnie Peterson (retired DNR), Kim Muirhead (FWS), Ashley Schiller (DNR), Joan Remus (DNR), Angela Mohar (DNR), Gerri Nelson (DNR), Mary Heise (DNR), Missy Gregerson (BIA), Kathy Hanson (DNR), Tom Fasteland (retired DNR), Terri Sternal (DNR) and Ginger Humphrey (DNR). **National:** Debbie Gardunio (CO-RMC), Linda Murray (CO-DRC), Bob Amidon (NH-NEC), Pearlie Green (TX-TIC), Gloria Holley (CO-MTC), Terri Oroz (NV-CNC), Amanda Curry (NV-EIC), Susan Ford (CO-PBC).

In June, D-310 Support Dispatcher training was held at the 2016 Wildfire Academy. In July, a D-110 Expanded Dispatch Recorder course was held at MIFC. Many thanks to all class instructors: Cec Huotari (retired FS), Jen Guith (USFS), Ronda Estey (retired BIA), Linda Bruss (DNR), Tom Staydohar (DNR), Mitch Bouchonville (USFS), Lonnie Lilly (DNR), Ryan Kingsley (USFS), Kim Muirhead (FWS), Devery Sorensen (DNR), Tom Viers (FS, EACC), Jen Parrish (FS, EACC), Joan Remus (DNR), Anna Hines (DNR), BJ Glesener (DNR) Ashley Schiller (DNR).

# Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

## FIRE

From fall 2015 to spring 2016 a total of 860 fires burned 9,300 Minnesota acres. The 2016 spring fire season began in early March as warm air surged north and temperatures climbed into the mid-60s. On March 8, the Twin Cities saw a record high of 70 degrees. Minnesota had 267 total fires in March burning 2,158 acres. This compares to 204 fires the year before for 1,781 acres burned. A majority of acres came from 15 fires during October 2015 and three separate weeks in March, April and May 2016. From April 9 to May 22, the National Weather Service issued a dozen [Red Flag Warnings](#). Late spring rainfall into early summer reduced seasonal drought. In FY-2016 there were 269 days of possible wildfire danger (at least one region at planning level 2 or higher). Of those, 188 were at Planning Level 2, a total of 46 were at Planning Level 3, another 26 days were at Planning Level 4 and nine days were at Planning Level 5. On 84 days at least one area was at Planning Level 3 while the rest of the state was at Planning Level 2.

## AVIATION

During the 2016 spring fire season, Minnesota wildfire aviation responded to nearly 200 fires. Four Fire Boss aircraft and two Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) were contracted for the season. MNICS partners at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) provided a Fire Boss and a SEAT in Bemidji. The U.S. Forest Service had two CL-415s and five large air tankers based in Bemidji, Brainerd and Ely. MNICS agencies provided 19 helicopters on standby. These aircraft were available to assist statewide fire departments, DNR Forestry Offices, MNICS and GLFFC partners. An air attack and air tanker was sent to Ontario to assist with wildfire suppression there. By early fall, Minnesota aircraft and crews had traveled to Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, Michigan, Oregon and Washington.



## WEATHER EVENTS

Wet weather and storms caused flooding and blowdown events in July and August. Single event rainfall exceeded 10-to-15 inches in some locations. Portions of the state had more than 110 percent normal precipitation and some areas showed 200 percent record-setting precipitation from April 1 to Sept. 6, 2016. Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan continue to perform Live Fuel Moisture measurements for a study out of Missoula, Montana.

## TRAINING

In February 2016, GLFFC sponsored a Sections Chief Academy in Duluth with 112 registrants for the weeklong course. The 2016 Wildfire Academy was held June 6-10 at Itasca Community College. During the past six years, Academy registrants have nearly doubled in size. A total of 841 students attended 34 courses taught by nearly 100 instructors.

This year MNICS Team-B, under the direction of Incident Commander Mike Aultman, helped manage the weeklong event providing an opportunity for numerous trainees to work on task books and obtain red card qualifications. Academy participants came from 10 fire departments and the National Park Service, National Weather Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, multiple tribal entities, state government, Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Camp Ripley. Overall, 39 fire-related courses were held in calendar year 2015 with 763 attendees. Courses ranged from basic wildfire suppression, to aviation courses and basic dispatch. A total of 1,058 state employees took work capacity tests (WCT) last year.



## RURAL FIRE DEPARTMENT

We help rural fire departments with cost-share grants, technical assistance, low-cost equipment and wildfire training. Through the Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP), Firefighters Property (FFP) and Department of Defense (FFP) programs, 42 vehicles were reissued to fire departments in 2016. Ladder trucks, fire engines, pick-up trucks, generators, water pumps, EMS supplies, long boards, tarps, cots and tool boxes are also re-purposed.

This year \$247,003 was awarded to 206 Minnesota departments plus \$80,000 in state dollars for \$327,003. In FY-2017, DNR Forestry will award \$343,500 in grants, of which 44 percent of applicants were approved with community populations under 10,000.

Steve Grove is managing the FEPP and FFP programs. His military and firefighting experience is an asset. He is located at the Willow River Wildfire Training Facility and works closely with Rodger Cahoon, our new mechanic who transferred from the DNR fleet program.

Shelly Serich administers the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) grant program, rural fire finance, MIFC budgets and MNICS assignment data. Our new staff members are proving to be invaluable to build on the success of their predecessors to maintain our customer-focused program.

## PREVENTION

This year GLFFC and MNDNR Fire Prevention program produced two radio ads that ran during Wildfire Prevention Week, April 17-23. The theme, *"Know Your Fire Weather,"* educated the public about weather conditions and fire behavior. Along with the ads, participating radio stations received a 10-question quiz. Listeners received a *"Kites Love Wind, So Do Fires"* kite for their quiz participation. The promotion sparked numerous radio interviews.

A Minnesota DNR Wildfire Prevention Week press release was issued on April 18 generating media coverage from WCCO TV, WDIO TV, Mille Lacs Messenger, Duluth News Tribune, Kanabec County Times, Lakeland TV and the Grand Rapids Herald Review. Coffee sleeves with a *"Wake Up and Smell the Coffee ... Not the Smoke"* safety message were distributed to coffee shops in Duluth and Grand Rapids. Actual wildfire activity in Minnesota peaked that week, so prevention outreach was timely.

Statewide newspaper ads also ran that week to promote fire safety awareness. Lake associations and home/cabin owners attended creating 'defensible space' sessions and received lawn and leaf bags with safety messaging for their participation.

Also, prevention staff regularly participated in county fairs, local parades and festivals, and visited classrooms festivals to educate children. Smokey Bear appeared at these events to distribute promotional rulers, key chains, pins, pencils and Frisbees. Prevention staff also participated at the Minnesota State Fair DNR booth again this year.

*Contributors: Diane Nygaard, BJ Glesener, Linda Bruss, Todd Manley, Tim Oland, Linda Gormanson, Jeff Jackson, Christi Powers*



# Bureau of Indian Affairs

MNICS partnerships are the foundation for safe and effective wildland fire operations in Minnesota and throughout the U.S. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal Fire Programs are proud to provide interagency incident management assistance while also tending to the needs of the communities they serve. Changes in 2016 to the BIA Fire Program: Natasha Woodwick became the MIFC assistant coordinator in January and Cory Berg accepted the Fuels Specialist position in July.

Reservation	In-State	Out-of-State
Red Lake	0 individual	36 assignments in 4 states
White Earth	3 individuals	21 assignments in 4 states
Fond du Lac	1 individual	10 assignments in 3 states
Mille Lacs	0 individual	2 assignments in 2 states
Bois Forte	1 individual	0 assignments in 0 states
Grand Portage	6 individuals	8 assignments in 4 states
Leech Lake	17 individuals	15 assignments in 5 states
MN Agency-BJI	5 individuals	1 assignments in 1 state
1854 Treaty Auth.	0 individual	6 assignments in 5 states
<b>Total</b>	<b>33 individuals</b>	<b>99 out-state assignments</b>

Helicopter: Type III N144BH		Flight Time: 84 hours Flew 21 Red Lake fires	
T-818 SEAT	Gallons Fire Ice	Gallons Retardant	Flight Hours
10 DNR Fires	16,914	0	16.61
1 Red Lake Fire	750	0	.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,664</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17.41</b>
T-851 Fire Boss	Gallons Fire Ice	Gallons water/foam	Flight Hours
10 MNDNR fires	6,000	85,582	18.33
2 Red Lake fires	1,200	9,650	2.50
1 White Earth fire	600	10,450	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,400</b>	<b>114,682</b>	<b>22.63</b>

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



Reservation	Rx fires	Acres
Red Lake	5	43,086
White Earth	17	1,012
Fond du Lac	2	15
Mille Lacs	1	14
Bois Forte	1	40
Grand Portage	1	10
Leech Lake	2	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>44,229</b>

Reservation	Wildfires	Acres
Red Lake	417	1,080
White Earth	77	532
Fond du Lac	1	1
Mille Lacs	12	167
Bois Forte	2	1
Grand Portage	0	0
Leech Lake	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>1,781</b>

## Prescribed burns, wildfires and assignments

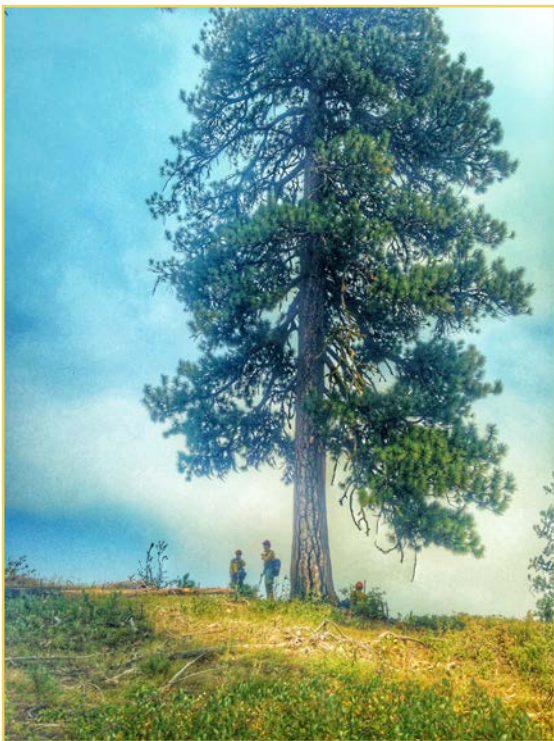
The 2016 fire season got off to a fast start in March and stayed active until the end of May. While fighting fires at home units, BIA and Tribal Fire Programs provided off-unit support on local and national incidents. This included fire support, severity, fire preposition, initial attack, prescribed burning, fire planning, investigation and prevention, dispatch support, aviation, MNICS IMT assignments and course instruction.

## Aviation

It was a busy time for aviation. There were two exclusive-use contract air tankers at the Bemidji tanker base, a Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) and a Fire Boss. These aircraft and a Red Lake helicopter were funded by the BIA national office. During summer fire season, the helicopter crew was dispatched to assist other BIA helicopter modules in the U.S. While on assignment crew members worked on their task books. Several were completed including one helicopter manager and three helicopter crew positions.



# National Park Service



## AGENCY REVIEW

The 2016 fire season was uneventful with four fires at Voyageurs for minimal acres. Prescribed burns were conducted at Saint Croix, Apostle Islands and Pipestone. We continue to support MIFC Dispatch by providing crew members, overhead, firefighters and vehicles. A total of 10 Voyageurs firefighters were assigned to MNICS Type 2-IA crews this season. Law enforcement went on security assignments and National Park resources were assigned to fires throughout the U.S. Mike Ward, former superintendent at Voyageurs and representative on the MNICS Board of Directors, accepted the superintendent's position at Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis Missouri.

# Fish & Wildlife Service

It was another challenging year for the Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) with shrinking budgets and less staff. Field stations still had a productive season even with a wet spring. Districts conducted 147 prescribed burns for 26,016 acres burned. Wildfires (14) and acres burned (933) were about half compared to 2015. The Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) began South Spur fuels reduction this year completing 500 acres of the 1200-acre project.

## Personnel changes

Eric Nelson left Agassiz NWR for a prescribed fire technician position at Great Dismal Swamp NWR, Virginia

Dan Angelo left Morris Wetland Management District (WMD) for MNDNR

Jared Culbertson is now the prescribed fire specialist for Litchfield WMD

David Blatz is now a career seasonal firefighter for Litchfield WMD

Kim Muirhead transferred to the new Zone budget analyst position

Jacob Ossowski is now a career seasonal firefighter for Fergus Falls WMD

Kris Larson left Litchfield and is now the Sherburne NWR fire management officer

Many positions remain vacant

## Training and mobilizations

FWS coordinated the 2016 Wildfire Academy S-234 (S-219) class and helped with S-231, S-290, S330 and L-280 and S-130/190. A FWS-hosted S-290 class will be held in December at Sherburne NWR. A total of 92 FWS personnel were assigned to operations, plans, finance, logistics and command positions in 10 states. This included CRWB, ENGB, ICT-2 and STOP trainee assignments. They also filled multiple spots on 2016 MNICS IMT fires including Lyons, Lake Hattie, Skibo and Foss Lake. The Minnesota Zone supported out-state prescribed fire operations with 16 people going to Oklahoma, Florida and South Carolina. Also, it was the third year FWS staff assisted with prescribed fire operations on U.S. Air Force bases in Florida and South Carolina.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (as of Oct. 2, 2016)				
Station	Wildfires	WF Acres	RX Burns	RX Acres
Agassiz NWR	0	0	8	3,337
Big Stone NWR	1	146	7	3,120
Crane Meadows NWR	1	33.2	3	593
Detroit Lakes WMD	4	616	13	2,613
Fergus Falls WMD	3	83	21	3,376
Glacial Ridge NWR	2	2	2	626
Hamden Slough NWR	1	9	1	1
Litchfield WMD	1	43	11	1,351
Minnesota Valley NWR	1	1	7	660
Morris WMD	0	0	26	4,168
Rice Lake NWR	0	0	0	0
Rydell NWR	0	0	0	0
Sherburne NWR	0	0	11	3,406
Tamarac NWR	0	0	3	360
Windom WMD	0	0	34	2,405
Winona District	0	0	0	0
<b>Zone totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>933.2</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>26,016</b>





# Homeland Security & Emergency Management



This year, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DPS-HSEM) recognized the importance of partnerships and education. We continue to foster relationships among city, county and state emergency service agencies and with volunteer groups. Training has become indispensable as we work to hone emergency response skills for when the going gets tough.

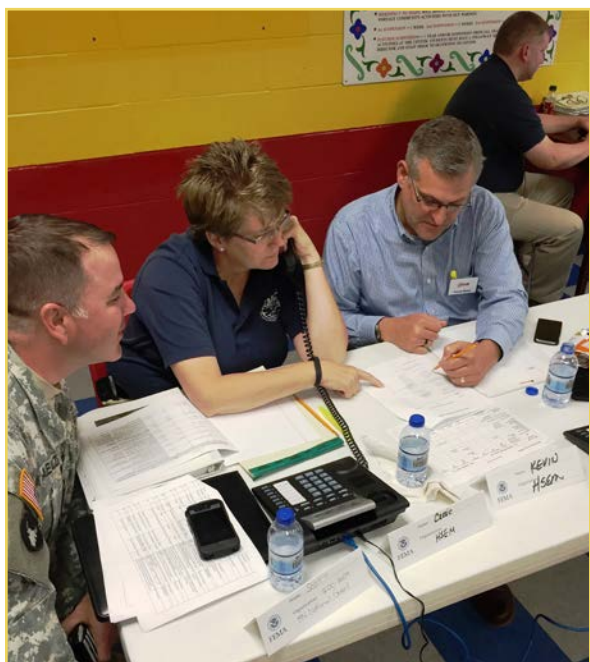


## Severe weather

In floods, tornadoes or wind damage in Minnesota, HSEM responded to waves of severe weather emergencies. Ongoing recovery efforts underscore the importance of our partnership with Minnesota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. While city, county and township officials assessed public property damage, volunteer organizations helped citizens to clean up and get back on their feet. FEMA awarded a \$1-million grant to Hubbard County Emergency Management to build safe rooms at Camp Wilderness Boy Scout Camp. Those safe rooms will shelter and provide peace of mind for those affected by severe weather.

## Outreach, awareness, training, education

For two years HSEM has offered Oil and Hazardous Substance Transportation Awareness Training to prepare emergency personnel to respond to oil train or hazardous material derailment. Milestones include a full-scale oil train derailment exercise in Stevens County with more than 400 personnel participating in June. In January, Martin County was first to test the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) during a winter storm. Law enforcement sent a citizen warning message advising against travel. Response was very favorable and helped keep Martin County citizens safe. In 2016, the DPS *Mic'd Up* video series focused on the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) showing behind-the-scene emergency operations, so lawmakers and the public understand our mission and the need for a new facility. To view the video check out the DPS YouTube page.



# U.S. Forest Service



The Chippewa (CPF) National Forest's fire season began March 21 with a total of 45 fires for 102 acres burned. The largest was a 40-acre grass and timber fire on the Blackduck Ranger District. The Superior (SUP) National Forest's fire season began on May 1 with a total of 19 fires for 1,914 acres burned. The largest was the 973-acre grass and timber Skibo Fire on the Laurentian Ranger District. Both CPF and SUP helped with regional and national prescribed burning and wildfire suppression. Our Type -3 helicopter, Type 2-IA crews, engines and overhead resources remained busy for the duration of the fire season.

## Prescribed fire

CPF had a challenging prescribed fire program in 2016 completing 14 prescribed burns for approximately 4,000 acres. The Superior completed 77 prescribed fires for 1,600 acres. Pile burns continued into the fall and winter. We thank our MNICS partners for their invaluable assistance and cooperation!

## Aviation

Both SUP and CPF National Forests had active aviation this year. USFS flew a total of 235 flight hours between all contracted or agency-owned aircraft that includes 43 hours of helicopter, 62 hours of fixed wing and 112 detection hours. The Ely Air Attack Base opened and served its first of 11 aircraft on April 15, 2016. A total of 259 loads of retardant/water were distributed from this base.

Aircraft flight following: 128	Public assistance: 27 (mostly storm cleanup)
Law enforcement: 3	Resource orders: 113
Medical aid: 13 (Medivacs)	Search and rescues: 21
Miscellaneous: 43	Smoke checks: 27
Prescribed fires: 96	Wildland fires: 76 (includes state assist fires)

## WildCAD data (as of Nov. 1, 2016)

Approximately 555 incidents were generated in WildCAD. See the table above for specifics. For more information check [www.wildcad.net/?WildWeb=MN-SCNF](http://www.wildcad.net/?WildWeb=MN-SCNF).

## Off-unit support

As of mid-October, there were 258 out-state assignments. Many of those mobilized had multiple assignments and were reassigned from preposition orders to new or ongoing national incidents. Approximately 44 administratively-determined (AD) time sheets and 27 travel vouchers were processed for training and incident assignments.





# Northeast Interagency Cache

## Cache

The Northeast Interagency Support Cache (NEK) processed and shipped 4,608 line items supplies that totaled over \$3.9 million. We processed 520 line items of returns for a total of \$1,149,183 and shipped \$355,191 worth of supplies to Caches in Idaho, California, New Mexico and Colorado. NEK also supports the national system by refurbishing pumps for Southern Area and Rocky Mountain Caches. The Cache supported six Type 2 incidents and three Type 3 incidents. Also, we outfitted ten Type 2-IA crews for out-state assignments and provided more than \$600,000 worth of supplies and equipment for two Wildfire Academies, four college training courses and numerous other training sessions. The Cache supplied nine contract helibases, three tanker bases and prepared equipment for state and federal prescribed burns. During the western fire season, NEK staff were on six fire assignments: assistant Cache manager, logistics section chief, base camp and equipment manager positions.



## Symbols

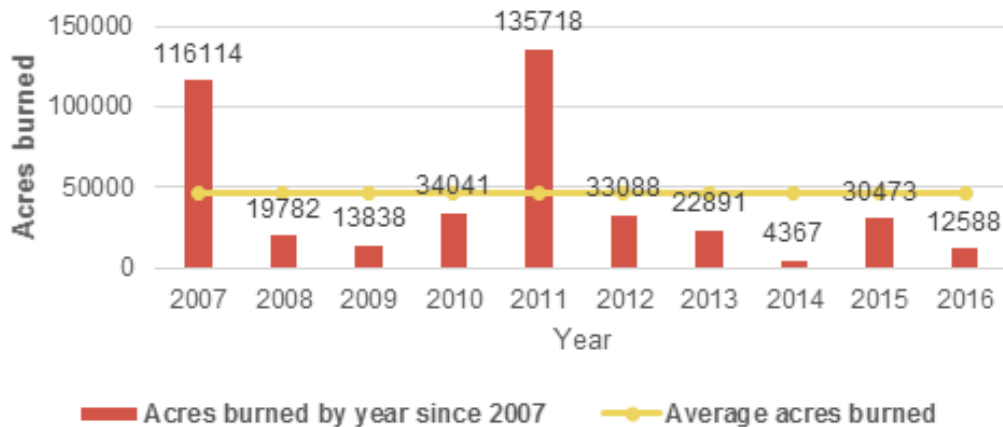
In 2016, the National Symbols Cache processed 3,027 orders for over \$1.1 million in sales. This was our highest sales total since 2005 and our second consecutive year topping \$1 million in sales. Currently 86 products are in stock. We hosted a product review meeting this year and several products have been discontinued and others added. New products will be offered in 2017. You can watch for them at [www.symbols.gov](http://www.symbols.gov).



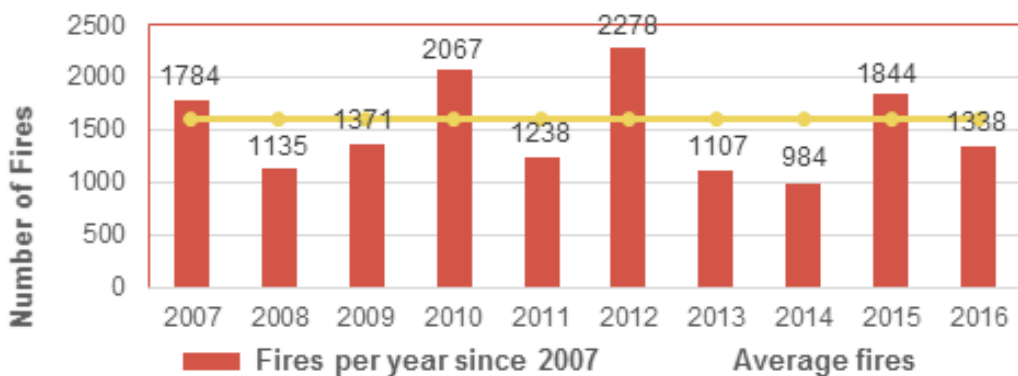
Best wishes to  
Jerry Larson, who  
retired June 6,  
2016.

# MIFC Intelligence Fire Data

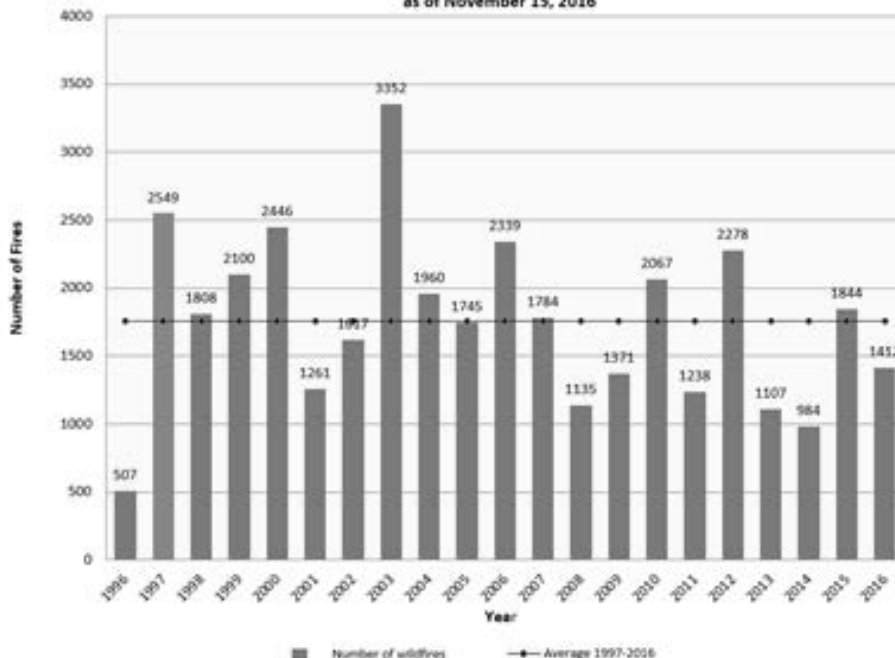
**MNICS Acres burned by Calendar Year  
2007 to Nov. 29, 2016**



**MNICS Wildfires by Calendar Year  
2007 to Nov. 29, 2016**



**MNICS Wildfires by Year since 1997  
as of November 15, 2016**



For calendar year 2016, January 1 through October 20, there were 267 days of possible wildfire danger. (i.e., at least one region at level 2 or higher). Of the possible wildfire days, 200 were at Planning Level 2, a total of 32 were at Planning Level 3, another 26 days were at Planning Level 4 and 9 days were at Planning Level 5. On 14 days, at least one area was at Planning Level 3 while the rest of the state was at Planning Level 2.

Contributors: BJ Glesener,  
Diane Nygaard



# In Memoriam



The wildland firefighting community mourned the loss of two Beartown firefighters involved in a fatal vehicle accident on Aug. 27 in Blaine, Minnesota. James Frederick "Jimmy" Shelfoe, Jr., 23, and Alan John "AJ" Swartz, 25, were traveling to the Box Canyon Fire in Utah with seven other Beartown firefighters when the accident occurred. On Aug. 30, Minnesota's Fire Service Foundation escorted a procession through Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan bringing the deceased back to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community in Baraga. Communities lined the streets for the procession and local fire departments contributed time, talent and resources to honor their firefighter brethren. Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder ordered U.S. and state flags to be lowered to half-staff on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 to honor Shelfoe, Jr. and Swartz.

According to FOX-UP TV-6 news, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community's Eagle Radio and the L'Anse and Baraga Fire Departments raised nearly \$10,000 in donations to aid the victims' families. The Wildland Firefighter Foundation also provided support and family assistance.



## Reflection

By Jeremy Bennett, IC , Aug 28-30, 2016

On the evening of August 27th I was contacted about the Beartown crew accident. As duty officer, I anticipated some involvement but initially was not sure of my role. In tragedy, we are never fully prepared to deal with life-changing events. What came out of this experience for me was a powerful lesson; one that has strengthened me as an individual, firefighter, father, husband and friend. I am grateful to everyone who took care of and honored the Beartown victims, A.J. Swartz and Jimmy Shelfoe, their families and loved ones.

Incident command attempts to bring order out of chaos, which is what we needed to do immediately after the accident. It became clear that our job was not to investigate, find fault or try to learn lessons about what happened. It was our duty to serve our fellow firefighters and the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community during this tragedy and to help provide a piece of healing for all involved.

To express all of the details and what I personally learned from this incident would take pages. Leading the Beartown incident team was an honor. It provided insight into my own grieving process, how I deal with stress, and realizing life's priorities. Many people involved deserve recognition and I am truly grateful to everyone.

A special thanks goes out to the Beartown Crew, their families, the Tribal Council and the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. I cannot imagine the loss and pain you experienced. Speaking for the team and support personnel, thank you for trusting and allowing us to help you during this incident. Providing care and support, and being able to bring Alan and James home in an honorable way was healing for us all. Know that even in this darkest time many good things have come as a result.

# Working Teams

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT TEAM

### Update SOG for Incident Information Management

In 2016, MNICS IMT lead PIOs initiated a comprehensive update of the MN Incident Organizer to include new tools and technologies and templates for daily updates and other templates to be used by all MNICS IMTs to support the Information function during an incident. A subgroup is bringing proposed changes to the full working group during the annual meeting to prepare a recommendation to the Task Force for implementation in 2017.

### Recruit, mentor, retain

The Information Working Group started the year with a two-day meeting in February open to all PIOs that included practice with new communication tools, information sharing from experienced PIOs, a panel of ICs, a panel of public affairs specialists, and an opportunity for attendees to visit with the MNICS training officer. A similar agenda is being planned for 2017. Bill Gabbert, editor for *Wildfire Today* and *Fire Aviation*, will present a webinar with tips about newsworthy coverage of wildfire suppression.

Through the season, members of the working group paired up with trainees to mentor and coach them through completion of task books. This included highlighting formal ICS classes as well as

on-the-job or detail opportunities. At least two PIO-2 trainees completed task books, two trainees completed PIO-F task books and several PIO-F trainees are near completion.

### Increase online engagement

A private Facebook page was set up early in 2016 to encourage informal communication within the Minnesota PIO community. The site has 24 active members. Also, the team is trying different recruitment approaches including contact with Lake Superior College and Itasca Community Colleges and increased social media outreach.

There was a significant increase in MNICS website, Twitter and Facebook postings from last year. Facebook went from 575 to 1.5K Likes (161%); Twitter followers increased from 407 to 669 (a 63% increase). As of Oct. 15, 2016 MNICS.org website stats are below:

Comparison	2015	2016
Total views	54,148	119,516
Visitors	15,801	39,958
Views per visit	343	299
Total posts	12	88

Contributors: Kris Reichenbach, Mark Erickson, Christi Powers

# Working Teams



## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TEAM

### Two teams make one

Incident Technology Support Specialists (ITSS) were mobilized to the Lyons, Hattie Lake, Skibo and Foss Lake wildfires. An ITSS also supported MNICS Team B at the 2016 Wildfire Academy. Numerous and brief mobilizations illuminated a need for ITSS and GISS to more closely align their work. In May, the two Working Teams began joint monthly meetings and activities. In August, the Task Force approved merging into a single team to be led jointly by an ITSS and a GISS member. That change takes place December 6, 2016.

### Hot topics

Hot IT topics on incidents last year were again hot topics for this year:

Expectations for fast (and immediate) internet on incidents continues to grow. The IT Working Team is pursuing an affordable wireless mesh solution.

Cloud-based incident management tools are maturing, though beyond the internet capacity of many incidents. Teams beta tested ArcGIS Online and Arc Collector (slated to become 2017 national standards for

GISS). E-iSuite cloud, though still too unreliable with slow internet for daily team work, is functioning well as the final repository for all incident databases.

Evolving digital security requirements (federal device security policies, agency data security, NAP accounts) introduced obstacles for multi-agency incident response. Minnesota has a presence on the national IT Working Team and actively researches and tests all changes.

More incident resources asking for mobile solutions. The IT Working Team works with MIFC to update laptop kits and has requested two iPad kits to add to existing equipment.

To recruit and retain new IT resources from MNICS agencies remains difficult. One-on-one invitations, educating supervisors and close mentoring remain the most effective tactics to grow ITSS.

*Contributor: Shelly Carroll*



# AVIATION OPERATIONS WORKING TEAM

## Program highlights

- ▶ MIFC aviation desk dispatched all MNICS aircraft receiving 351 requests for 137 fires
- ▶ During the busiest timeframe, 46 initial attack aircraft were dispatched
- ▶ Workspace was upgraded and extensive procedural changes were put into place

The MNICS/Great Lake Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) aviation meeting was held in Duluth. Partners shared asset availability and dispatch procedures. Vendors demonstrated fire suppressants and retardants. Air Tactical Group Supervisors (ATGS) and Air Attack Officer (ATO) workshops were held emphasizing iPad use to enhance standardization, improve operational safety and expand resource sharing. Assigned tasks are listed under the Members Section/Working Team portion of the MNICS website.

Aircraft in Minnesota: Contract and shared use			
MNDNR	USFS	BIA	DNR/BIA/USFS
8 exclusive use helicopters	A Type-1 helicopter	A Type-III helicopter	A Type-2 helicopter for initial attack
6 Type-3 CWN helicopters	A Type-3 helicopter	1 Fire Boss	<b>MN State Patrol</b> 1 Type-3 helicopter (infrared flight Hattie Lake Fire)
4 Fire Boss aircraft	5 Type-1 air tankers	1 SEAT	<b>MN Army National Guard</b> 4 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters
2 SEATs	2 CL-415's		<b>DNR Enforcement</b> A Type-3 helicopter (HLCO with MNARNG on Hut 2 Fire)
9 ATGS platforms	3 lead planes	<b>Detection aircraft</b> MN DNR: 15 light fixed-wing aircraft USFS: 3 Beaver & light fixed-wing detection flights	

## GLFFC tactical assists

- ▶ Under GLFFC agreements, two large air tankers, two lead planes and an aerial platform/air attack went to Kenora, Ontario. Also, efforts were coordinated between:
  - ▶ Ontario MNR, Dryden & Sault Ste. Marie
  - ▶ Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC), Winnipeg National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) in Boise, Idaho
  - ▶ Eastern Area Coordination Center (EACC) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
  - ▶ A Fire Boss/air attack platform to Michigan from Aug. 5 to 15, 2016
  - ▶ A USFS Type-3 helicopter to three BLM fires in Michigan including Poverty Island



Contributors: Rob Heavirland, Linda Bruss

*MIFC aviation desk had 357 aircraft requests on 137 fires*

- 149: helicopter
- 121: tankers
- 79: air attack

*MNICS aircraft logged 679 flight total flight hours from March 28 to May 23, 2016*

*Helicopter flight hours*

- DNR: 287 hours for 109 fires
- USFS: 43 hours for 6 fires
- BIA: 84 hours for 21 Red Lake fires

*Air attack*

- DNR: 187 hours for 63 fires
- USFS: 17.4 hours

*Missions took place March 12 to May 23*

## AVIATION STATS

## AVIATION OPERATIONS WORKING TEAM

### July 21 windstorm

The MIFC air desk coordinated search and rescue operations and assisted with aerial flight mapping to assess storm damage. Interagency aircraft included:

- ▶ A USFS Beaver
- ▶ A DNR Forestry air attack platform and Type-3 helicopter
- ▶ A DNR Enforcement fixed-wing plane (floats) and Type-3 helicopter
- ▶ Two MN State Patrol Type-3 helicopters (short haul/fixed wing)
- ▶ A Civil Air Patrol light fixed wing aircraft
- ▶ A Life Link helicopter
- ▶ A U.S. Border Patrol Type-3 helicopter

### Training and briefings

- ▶ Held an aviation workshop in February at Camp Ripley with participants from Wisconsin and Manitoba
- ▶ Coordinated an all-risk exercise at the 2016 Wildfire Academy with Life Link, State Patrol MART team, DNR Forestry and Enforcement aircraft and personnel
- ▶ Piloted a computer aided dispatch program (WildCAD) at MIFC aviation desk, Brainerd Tanker Base and Park Rapids IA office
- ▶ Created an “early callout” strategy for aerial fire suppression by ground teams Had training for DNR Enforcement, Minnesota National Guard and State Patrol
- ▶ Continued iPad technology program for ATGS, helicopter and aviation managers

### Assistance to Minnesota

- ▶ Twelve helitack from Oregon and Washington for spring fire season
- ▶ A ramp manager from Oregon and a SEAT manager from California
- ▶ Four air dispatchers and an out-state dispatch coordinator for IA and training
- ▶ One aviation coordinator to assist the aviation program (also ASGS on Type-2 fire)
- ▶ Three ATGS personnel for initial attack operations

### Out-State mobilization assistance

- ▶ Exclusive-use helicopter to western fires with four (8-person) modules (July-Sept.)
- ▶ 32 helitack resources; nine trainees received experien
- ▶ An exclusive-use Fire Boss to Idaho and Washington
- ▶ Mobilized 68 aviation personnel to 10 states on 57 incidents
- ▶ Exclusive-use USFS helicopter (6-8 person crew) to western fires for 60 days totaling 362.6 hours on contract

#### *Fixed wing tanker*

- DNR: 122 hours for 45 fires
- USFS: 62 hours for 7 fires
- BIA: 17 fires

#### *Missions took place March 12 to May 22*

#### *Kenora mission assistance, May 10*

- Fixed wing: 15.5 flight hours
- Air attack: 20 hours
- 11,859 gallons dropped

#### *Detection aircraft*

- DNR: 16 detection route for 1,400 hours
- USFS: 3 detection aircraft for 112.2 hours

#### *Fire suppressant & enhancers*

Worked with vendors on tactics for onboard aerial mixing systems for three Fire Boss aircraft

## AVIATION STATS



# Working Team

## PRESCRIBED FIRE/FUELS TEAM

The primary task in the spring for the Fuels Working Team is to coordinate interagency aerial ignition resources and to prioritize those burns needing aerial ignition. The Working Team created a prioritized list of prescribed burns needing aerial ignition resources. No conflicts were reported to the Working Team for needed aerial ignition resources.

### Smoke management plan

The Minnesota Smoke Management Plan (SMP) was updated, finalized and approved in March 2016. The Minnesota SMP is designed to mitigate the nuisance and public safety hazards posed by prescribed fire and managed wildfire activities in the state. The SMP outlines guidance and best practices to limit smoke intrusions into populated areas, prevent deterioration of air quality and National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) violations, and address visibility impacts in federal mandatory Class I areas. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued the final rule for “exceptional events.” The EPA relies heavily on ambient air quality data. However, the Clean Air Act also recognizes that it may not be appropriate to use monitoring data when influenced by an “exceptional event” such as a managed wildland fire or prescribed burn. The rule provides that all naturally ignited wildland fires are deemed “natural events” and that prescribed fires may be considered an “exceptional event” if they meet specific criteria; one being the use of a state-certified SMP for those fires. “Exceptional events” are unusual and typically caused by human activity. Minnesota Pollution Control issued 2014 and 2015 air quality reports. In both years there were days exceeding daily EPA air quality standards. However, those overages were not due to prescribed burning but because of smoke from Canadian wildfires.





# Working Team

## GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS SPECIALIST (GISS) TEAM

May 2016 was a busy month for MNICS-GISS with the Lyons, Hattie Lake, Skibo and Foss Lake fires. Lyons and Hattie Lake were handled under a single deployment with the team moving from Nimrod Ranger Station to the Hattie Lake Community Center. The Foss Lake Fire incident command post (ICP) was located at the U.S. Forest Service office in Ely, Minnesota. The Skibo Fire ICP was at the Hoyt Lakes Arena. During May 2016 fires, five GISS trainees gained experience toward task book completion. A MNICS team member deployed twice to western fires serving consecutively as GISS-T and GISS.

### **GISS training**

The GISS refresher was held on March 1, 2016 at MIFC. Members made new chair assignments, discussed standard operating guidelines and national technology trends.

### **Kit maintenance**

On July 18, a mid-summer Cache Kit Day at MIFC to refresh laptop and GIS kits, practice lessons learned on the spring incidents and discuss decommissioning of the "Map-mobile" was held at MIFC. Also, the GISS group met with the IT group to discuss plans to merge.



# Working Team

## TRAINING WORKING TEAM

### Section Chiefs Academy

The year began in preparation for the Feb. 1-5, 2016 Section Chiefs Academy in Duluth. Sponsored by the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC), about 125 people attended the weeklong course. Many of the 38 cadre instructors were from MNICS agencies.

### Wildfire Academy

The 2016 Wildland fire Academy, June 6 to 10, at Itasca Community College marked its 16th year. It was the second year for the Academy to be managed by a MNICS-IMT (under IC Mike Aultman). The team transformed Itasca Community College into an ICP with the same function and structure that students might encounter on a wildland fire assignment. The week featured 34 nationally-certified wildland fire courses for planning, operations, logistics, finance, dispatch and leadership. There was also an "Incident within an Incident Management" exercise simulating a search-and-rescue airlift. A total of 841 students registered this year with nearly 100 instructors making it the largest Academy offered to date. This compares to 733 registered in 2015 and 674 students in 2014. Academy attendance has nearly doubled since 2010 with 423 registrants back then.

A highlight included an evening meal and presentation by Dr. Charles Palmer on "Human Factors in Wildland Firefighting" and a classroom overview by wildland fire photographer Kari Greer. The Academy served as a training opportunity in itself for IMT-trainees and those working toward National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) certifications.

### Other training

This past calendar year MNICS offered 44 training courses to nearly 1,175 students. A leadership training initiative was launched in 2015 in partnership with the Minnesota Board of Firefighters, Training and Education (MBFTE). The goal was to bring wildland and structural firefighters together in a classroom before they meet on the fire line. Due to its popularity, "At the Point of Spear: Fire Service and Fireline Leadership" (L-380) was offered again in November 2016 at Camp Ripley.

*Contributor: Robert Lintelmann*

# Working Team



## ENFORCEMENT TEAM

### FI-210

The new version of FI-210 Wildfire Fire Origin and Cause Determination was released in Spring 2016 and several compact members are planning to offer this course soon (Ontario offered it in April 2016, Wisconsin held it in September, 2016 and Minnesota hosted a class in October 2016). Manitoba and Michigan plan to offer courses in the next couple of years. The new course has been very well received.

### FI-310

FI-310 Wildfire Investigation Case Management will be sponsored by GLFFC, hosted by Minnesota, and will be held in Duluth January 30 – February 3, 2017. Each compact member will be offered 5 seats in this course. FI-310 is an advanced fire investigation course and has only been offered in the Great Lakes once in the past.

### Collector application

Minnesota is developing a fire investigation app using Collector by ESRI which can be used on smart phones and tablets for mapping and documenting fire investigations.



*Contributor: Greg Vollhaber*



# 2016 Crew Mobilizations



Mobilization #1: 2016 R3 Regional Support, New Mexico, CRWB Nick Hasty (SUF)

Mobilization #2: Crow Peak, South Dakota, CRWB Mike Mackey (CPF)

Mobilization #3: Hayden Pass, Colorado, CRWB Adam Cook (CPF)

Mobilization #4: Hayden Pass, Colorado, CRWB Nick Abel (DNR)

Mobilization #5: Cliff Creek, Wyoming, CRWB Nick Hasty (SUF)

Mobilization #6: PSICC NF Fire Support 2016, Colorado, CRWB Ryan Halverson (CPF)

Mobilization #7: 2016 NR Fire Support prepo, Montana, CRWB Mike Lichter (DNR)

Mobilization #8: MI-HMF Forest Wide IA Res, Michigan, CRWB Adam Cook (CPF)

Mobilization #9: Copper King, Montana, CRWB Nick Hasty (SUF)

Mobilization #10: Deep North, Washington, CRWB Adam Cook (CPF)







## Photo credits

Phil Millette, Mark Erickson, Kari Greer, Jeromy Schmidt, Michael Schipper, Darrin Franco, Jon McDonald, Meghan Ring, Matt Goseyun, Matt Herberg, Paul Wannarka, Johnnie Hyde, Becca Manlove, Don Potter, Rebekah Luedtke, Christi Powers, Dillon Kreidermacher, Tim Oland, Adam Cook (and anyone we may have missed).



### Paul Lundgren, state fire section manager (DNR)

"I'm honored to serve in this position and look forward to working with agency partners and cooperators. I believe we can build on past progress and also look for ways to improve efficiency and enhance our capacity as national fire leaders. "



### Rebekah Luedtke, MIFC dispatch coordinator (DNR)

"Above all else, our purpose and responsibility is to support the firefighters on the ground, enabling them to carry out their duties in the safest and most efficient way possible. The decisions we make and the actions we chose at each level of the MNICS organization can significantly impact the success of our field personnel."

### Tasha Woodwick, asst. MIFC dispatch coordinator (BIA)

"Working in a true interagency setting is challenging, but making an effort to identify areas we can work together for the benefit of our fire resources is a goal for our Dispatch Center. The future holds additional challenges, but we want the best opportunities for our Minnesota resources. I am excited to be a part of the team making that happen."



### Darren Neuman, aviation supervisor (DNR)

"I'm excited to be working with a top-notch team in a program with both proven success. The Minnesota DNR wildfire aviation team looks forward to partnering with MNICS and GLFFC and aviation programs across the U.S. and Canada."

### Matt Woodwick, asst. aviation supervisor (DNR)

"We are bringing improvements to our air operations and aviation desk, which we will build on in 2017."



### Robert LaPlant, fire management officer (USFS)

"I am very happy to be back with USFS and look forward to maintaining strong working relationships with interagency partners and learning about northern Minnesota."