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January 31, 2023, MNICS Task Force Meeting

Task Force: Greg Carlson, William Glesener, Tom Remus, Mike Hill, Jacob Beauregard, Ben Roy

Non-Task Force Attendees: Mike Mackey – MNCC, Ryan Kingsley – MNCC, Leanne Langeberg – Notes, Brian Wise, Kevin Carlisle

Guests: Jonathan Benson, Adam Fischer, Joe Weflen Logistics Working Team Representatives

DISCUSSION ITEM	NOTES
<p>Building and Budget Update</p>	<p>Building Update –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The installation of new software for the key card readers may require retrofitting the current card readers and computer hardware to meet the upgraded software system requirements and increase space to connect cameras. Joel Perrington and Kevin Carlisle are looking into the upgrades that may be required. - The MIFC Facility managers decided to seek three vendor quotes for the elevator repair. Two of the vendors that have completed site visits reported different issues, but both agree the core issue is related to elevator age and a bad motor. - The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has requested permission from the Forest Service to trap deer in the back yard at the MIFC facility as part of a chronic wasting disease study. The request has been presented to Tom Hall, Superior National Forest Supervisor, to determine if any special parameters must be followed including requirements for a liability release form. <p>Budget Update –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force reviewed the current budget and available coop funds. The additional elevator repair line-item on the spreadsheet is a known error and will be adjusted. The Task Force approved the special expense funds for the upcoming S-390 refreshments, but due to purchasing limitations they will no longer approve refreshments funds on future requests for standard courses. There will be exceptions for courses that are offered through contracts like L-380.
<p>MNICS Type 3 IMT Spring Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Working team proposed delaying the scheduled MNICS Type 3 IMT spring meeting until later in March or early April due to numerous training conflicts of primary team members serving as lead or cadre members. - Task Force decided to leave the current dates in place, and those instructing training sessions will prioritize their training events
<p>Radio and Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task Force discussed the ongoing radio communications challenge MNICS partners experience with dropped radio frequencies. In addition to the continuing radio concerns, transitions to the WildCAD-e system will likely result in more issues. - Task Force asked the MNCC Center Manager to document as many of the issues they encounter through the next fire season. - DNR is working toward upgrading their radio systems to all digital within the next five years and feels this will improve many concerns they are experiencing. - MNCC has submitted a ticket to improve the bandwidth to help address some of the network issues experienced with the Forest Service communications.



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Logistics Working Team proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jonathan Benson, Joe Weflen, Adam Fischer, and Kevin Carlisle met with the Task Force to discuss plans for recruitment events. - There is a well-known critical shortage in the logistics pool MNICS-wide. The Logistics Working Team is planning to host a couple of introductory workshops that will focus on logistics position shortfalls and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tasks required for each position. Extra emphasis will be placed on the positions that support the MNICS Type 3 Teams, like ground support, base camp manager, and ordering manager positions. - The workshops will likely be hosted online and recorded and posted for viewing later. Previous workshops drew a lot of interest, but few followed through on opening task books and earning qualifications. - Task Force supports the workshop initiative. They also recognize increasing interagency support is important, and the Department of Interior agencies will make a stronger effort to look at other program areas that could support MNICS Team logistics. - Logistics working team members also expressed concerns about needing more logistics support rostered as MNICS Teams on western mobility assignments. This topic will be discussed at length during the MNICS Type 3 IMT spring meeting. - Task Force recommended focusing on filling the rostered logistics team position and ordering what the team needs after in-briefing with the agency administrator.
Wildfire Academy Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MNICS Training Working Team met on January 27 to discuss the course offerings, academy brochure, and the inclusion of a special local government S-215 for structure protection and local fire department members. The additional S-215 will run from Thursday through Saturday. - The academy will be supported by a Type 3 incident management team (IMT) again this year. Mike Aultman has volunteered to be the incident commander of the IMT academy. The IMT will be offered as a course with pre-selected command and general (C&G) staff members that will serve as lead instructors and mentors. The intent will be to provide hands-on training leading to recertification or task book evaluation. The course will be free. As a result of a no-fee collection, the regular academy registration for the Itasca Community Education path is not an option, and students will need to sign up through the fire training calendar.
Radio and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task Force discussed the ongoing radio communications challenge MNICS partners experience with dropped radio frequencies. In addition to the continuing radio concerns, transitions to the WildCAD-e system will likely result in more issues. - Task Force asked the MNCC Center Manager to document as many of the issues they encounter through the next fire season. - DNR is working toward upgrading their radio systems to all digital within the next five years and feels this will improve many concerns they are experiencing. - MNCC has submitted a ticket to improve the bandwidth to help address some of the network issues experienced with the Forest Service communications.
Center Manager Delegation of Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task Force approved the Center Manager taking over the coordination of obtaining final signatures for the MNCC Center Manager Delegation of Authority annually.



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MNICS MOB Guide Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most of the 2023 MNICS Mobilization Guide (Mob Guide) edits have been returned and updated in the current draft. The Mob Guide is on track to be released at the beginning of March. - The changes submitted by the Task Force for Chapter 20 Cost Share Agreements have been made. However, the Task Force is still working through specific changes to ERAs and how DOI agencies operate cost-share agreements. - Changes are coming down from NICC regarding the VIPER contract process. Beginning this year, one coordination center will handle all of the EMS and ambulance resource contracts. HSEM will take the lead on forwarding the information to the local agency reps when available and will serve as a main point of contact for questions. - Mike Mackey asked the Task Force for guidance on how to incorporate recent changes that have been made to the MNICS Type 2 Initial Attack Crews (MNICS Type 2 IA Crews) standard operating guide (SOG) into Chapter 30 Crews of the Mob Guide. - The Mob Guide will reference the MNICS Type 2 IA Crews SOG and add a link in the Mob Guide.
MNICS Working Team Tasks Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mike Mackey has contacted and connected with most of the MNICS Working Team chairs about the transition of the MNCC coordinator position. - A final list of current working team chairs, task force reps, and the MNICS Meeting planning committee has been compiled. - The Task Force and Working Team chairs have been briefed on the FireNet accounts and where to locate current working team assignments.
Aircraft Dispatcher qualifications and the N9059 course requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Forest Service has relaxed some of its requirements for obtaining Aircraft Dispatcher qualifications. One of the options is to attend the 3-hour N9059 course. MNCC is working with Ashley Zupancich, who leads the course, and she will hold 12 seats for MNCC at the February 13 training session.
Chequamegon – Nicollet National Forest dispatch request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mike Mackey shared information about an email he was included in regarding changes to dispatching for the Chequamegon-Nicollet National Forest to make the Task Force and Board of Directors aware. Due to recent transitions in positions, the Chequamegon-Nicollet National Forest dispatch center is down a couple of dispatchers and unable to support their needs fully. They are looking to combine dispatching efforts with the State of Wisconsin coordination center and inquired about the possibility of temporary support from MNCC.
FireNet archives and physical files for Incident Management Team incidents in Minnesota.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Several boxes containing incident documents from incidents that required incident management team management in Minnesota and were stored at MNCC will be routed back to the appropriate agencies. - Task Force will have a short window to request access to the archived folders created in FireNet for incidents managed by Incident Management Teams in 2021. - FireNet was not intended to be a final archive for these records that will soon be permanently deleted. Task Force members were encouraged to work with the MNCC Center Manager to ensure they can gain access before the files are permanently removed from FireNet.



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WildCAD-e Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Eastern Area plans to deploy the WildCAD-e software in June. They will be one of the last coordination centers to transition, a deliberate decision to minimize impact during spring fire season. - MNCC is aware that issues may arise with Red Lake Agency now recognized as a Tier 4 coordination center as the EACC and MNCC transition. MNCC is aware of their may possible issues arise during the transitions at EACC and MNCC with Red Lake Agency now recognized as a Tier 4 coordination center.
MNICS Future Dispatching coordination project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During Mike Mackey’s time as the MNCC center manager, he was working to reengage the conversation on unifying dispatching service MNICS-wide and the infrastructure improvement needed to transition. - While there is no specific assignment prepared, Mike doesn’t want to see the project set aside with his transition to a new position, but he acknowledged that he would not be able to continue working on the project in his new role.
MNCC Team Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MNCC coordinator was granted permission and access to MNICS coop funds to pursue a team-building session for MNCC staff. Unfortunately, the team-building effort was placed on hold due to staff shortages. - The funding set aside for team-building will roll over for the next Center Manager. Mike will share the plans he started for the team-building event for the next MNCC manager.
Agency Updates	<p>DNR – The front desk representative will begin on February 15. The additional six candidates had great skill sets and will be encouraged to consider the DNR's smoke chaser opportunity. Interviews for the Northeast Region fire specialist have wrapped up. The supervisory training specialist position is in progress, and the interim plan is to proceed with a work-out-of-class detailer. Optimism is growing for bonding bill funding to move forward with improvements at the Hibbing and Brainerd tanker bases with the budget surplus</p> <p>FS – Hiring efforts continue to move forward, and the announcements for the Fire Management Officer and MNCC center manager have closed, with interview dates to be determined. There are currently 15 temporary- seasonal vacancies between the two national forests. There have been no new developments on Region 9's idea to develop a Type 3 incident management team and considerations for adopting the MNICS model. Many thanks to Mike Mackey for his service as the MNCC center manager over the past couple of years. Plans are underway for a send-off celebration. Ryan Kingsley has accepted and started a 120-day detail as the center manager</p> <p>NPS – Continue to work on seasonal hiring and see improvements compared to last year. The supervisory forestry technician (vice Fogelberg) has started in the position. The agency is working through the final stages of updating the fire management plans for Voyageurs and all parks in the zone. The region and technical committee will need to review all the updated burn plans before implementation. The fire program is waiting on the direction regarding the long-eared bat endangered species and its impacts on fire management. Cattail burns are planned for late March and early April.</p>



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Agency Updates cont.

FWS – Seth Grim has accepted a 60-day detail to the regional office in California, and Mike Hill is the acting West Zone Fire Management Officer. Seth's detail may extend as three additional vacancies will open soon. Ben Roy will mentor Caleb on the Operations Working Team Task Force Rep duties, and Mike Hill will assume the Task Force rep role for the Prescribed Fire and Fuels Working Team during Seth's detail assignment. Hiring challenges with seasonal hires is ongoing; however, four of the five career seasonal positions have been filled at the Litchfield, Fergus Falls, Morris, and Minnesota Valley locations. The Sherburn position will be readvertised. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been selected as the pilot agency for the InFORM fuels model. It will incorporate FWS into the InFORM program after they initially declined when the program was first released.

HSEM – The National Qualification Coordinator position was filled. The Operations Facility SEOC position advertisement has closed and will hopefully be filled by March. The WebEOC resource request board was updated and will provide a smoother flow for requests from local jurisdictions. HSEM is also developing a mutual aid request board that will allow local jurisdictions to add resources and rates directly to the board. The Special Event assessment rating is in phase two, incorporating a lot of data collected from survey 123 and ArcGIS. Tribes and counties can enter data at the state level as a basic risk assessment, and the information will feed into the federal data. Phase 2 is expected to be wrapped up by the end of March. The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) is on track to be constructed in Blaine, Minn., and a request for additional funds has been submitted to complete the project. Applications for the HSEM director position are being accepted through February 23. The Governor's Conference will be held on February 23 and 24, and Paul Lundgren will present on MNICS. Projects in progress include an EMAC Department of Health team, including a public information branch, that will focus on anthrax, working with the State Fire Marshall's Office on an all-hazard response team, updating the emergency response executive order and the Minnesota emergency operations plan that connects to MNICS. HSEM work on being more inclusive of MNICS team members in training scenarios involving all-hazard flood response teams.

MNCC – Mike Mackey thanked the Task Force for their mentorship, support, and encouragement during his center manager role. Mike reminded the Task Force to plan to temporarily move the MNCC if plans move forward with roof replacement during the fire season. During the Eastern Area Dispatch Workshop, the Michigan Interagency Coordination Center brought up the challenges with Isle Royal. If plans continue to involve MNCC in providing support, as happened last summer, then a standard support request form needs to be established between the MICC to the MNCC. Mike requested Jacob Beauregard help coordinate an onsite meeting with the State Duty Officer and acting MNCC Center Manager, Ryan Kingsley, in March, so they can talk about documents that were used in the past.

Next Task Force Meeting will be March 2, 2023, in-person at MIFC.