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February 13, 2024, MNICS Task Force Meeting

Task Force: Greg Carlson, BJ Glesener, Cory Berg, Darren Franco, Nick Petrack, Kara Behr

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

Guests - Caleb Schreiber, USDA Forest Service, Travis Verdegan, MNICS Predictive Services

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
Budget Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reviewed the monthly budget expenses. There were no significant expenses incurred over the past month.- The Task Force reviewed the pending projects and identified the following projects that have been completed – installation of the MIFC facility paging horns, the 2023 MNICS guest speaker fees, and generator voltage regulator repair.- MNCC requested the Task Force purchase 16 new office chairs to replace missing and broken chairs on the dispatch floor with MNICS coop funds. Kevin Carlisle, MIFC Logistics Coordinator, estimated \$15,000 would be needed to replace all 16 chairs based on the office supply vendor catalog he commonly uses. Ryan will work through the USDA Forest Service to obtain quotes through a GSA vendor.
Building Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- ProTech is installing the security system and cameras. ProTech will replace the panels, which will require disabling the key code option at entry ways through the installation.- The bid solicitations for the elevator project were sent out February 1 and will close on March 1. The awarded bidder must agree to a project completion date of January 2025. A couple of contractors have already expressed interest in the project.- The Task Force will review the MIFC building committee's office space guidance at the March meeting. The document was shared with the Task Force members in January.
MNCC Survey Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The MNCC Center Manager reviewed the MNCC survey results. Overall, respondents recognize positive change dispatching coordination is being met MNICS-wide.- Coordination changes identified from the survey:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ MNCC Center Manager work to develop a dispatch-specific RT-130 training and seek opportunities to include logistics and travel document components to include at all MNICS-wide RT-130 sessions.▪ Continue to cross-train dispatchers into all area including fire intelligence training.▪ Improve information sharing between managers and field-level staff that focuses on clarifying subtle differences between the interagency coordination center, fire center, and the Minnesota Incident Command System.▪ MNCC Center Manager has reached out to the Eastern Area Coordination Center to set up a mock coordination center review to help prepare MNCC staff for official reviews in the future.
WildCAD-e Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The BIA and DNR are developing an agreement for the Tribal fire agencies that dispatch through the DNR area offices.- The MNCC Standard Operating Procedures covers coordination, but it does not yet reference how MNCC will use WildCAD-e for interagency coordination.- All of the memorandum of understanding currently in place meet the Red Book standards.



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Master Cooperative Agreement and Annual Operating Plan Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Caleb Schreiber provided an update on agency signature status, noting signatures are still needed for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service. A UBI number is also needed for the Bureau of Land Management.- The plan is set to expire at the beginning of June.- Caleb is working on obtaining a protection map of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). Nick Petrack will send an updated map to Caleb.- Nick Petrack will confirm the fire reporting responsibilities between the DNR and the USDA Forest Service for BWCAW fire response coordination.- Caleb plans to move the most recent version of the agreement back to the Pinyon file-sharing server because it is easier for the USDA Forest Service Regional Office to complete final edits.- Caleb inquired about the restrictions section of the agreement and the Task Force and Travis Verdegan explained it is a work-in-progress to develop a Fire Prevention Plan that will be an appendix to the Minnesota Interagency Fire Danger Operating Plan. The MNICS Prevention Working Team is tasked with developing the prevention plan components.
Fire Danger Operating Plan Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Forest Service fire management officers (FMOs) have requested the Minnesota Interagency Fire Danger Operating Plan indices be reviewed with empirical data collected over the past three years.- Travis Verdegan presented to the Task Force on the Fire Environment Mapping System (FEMS), which is targeted to replace the current WIMS system. Travis has become a business lead advisor to the design team. He shared the link to a national project beta site - https://fems.fs2c.usda.gov/ui.- FEMS will have enough historical data to no longer rely on two calculators. The fire danger parameters will change the approach to fire data analysis, weather station management and how we use the information in fire intelligence.- He explained any changes to the current FDOP involving break points with NFDERS would be changed in a couple of years when the project is finalized and decided to stay focused on building a better application before proceeding with FDOP revisions.- Greg Carlson and Cory Berg will work on developing a task for the Prevention Working Team to create a document that outlines the fire restrictions changes MNICS partners agreed to and incorporate them into the fire prevention appendix of the FDOP.- The Forest Service proposed consolidating a group of interagency samplers under one group and coordinate with MNCC and Predictive Services, including an easy to share location for data and photos.- Data from the FEMS program can easily be shared during the weekly planning calls, along with MPCA smoke updates during high wildfire smoke conditions.
MNICS and All Hazard Incident Management Team presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- HSEM shared a request for MNICS representatives to present on the MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Teams to the Minnesota All Hazard Incident Management Team. Aaron Mielke has volunteered to present.- The Task Force supports the representation and also recommend Jacob Beauregard and Ben Roy attend and support the presentation.
MOB Guide Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The MNICS Mobilization Guide is in a final draft state. The MNICS Type 3 IMTs will review the draft during the spring team meeting February 13 – 14.- The goal is to release the finalized 2024 MNICS Mob Guide by March 1, 2024.



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Minnesota Wildfire Academy Course Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taylor Schenck, MNICS Training Working Team representative, presented a list of the 18-course offerings available for the 2024 Minnesota Wildfire Academy. - The training working team is seeking lead instructors for the Initial Attack IC and Engine Boss courses. - The academy brochure is tentatively scheduled for release on February 26 and course registration will open to MNICS priority on March 1. - The ICS 400 course has been added to the course offerings in addition to the ICS 300. - The academy will offer the Incident Management course to fill the academy IMT roles with qualified mentors to guide the process. - The Task Force noted the increase in course fees. They will invite the Minnesota North College coordinator, Meadow Kouffeld, to the March meeting to discuss. Before the meeting, they will meet with the MNICS Training Working Team to gain more perspective on the fee increases and establish a set of questions to ask Minnesota North College.
Seasonal Trends Fire Conditions Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travis Verdegan, Predictive Services Specialist, provided a season outlook based on past and current trends. - Notably, since 2015, there has been a slight shift to an earlier start to spring fire season and a shift in early summer fire seasons that trend toward later and longer summer seasons. - Based on 129 years of data, the fall of 2023 ranked the 124th warmest fall on record, and due to the December rainfall, became the wettest. - The average temps in January were above average, and conditions were dry with a minimal snowpack. - Drought trends cover a significant portion of Minnesota. - The short-term outlook calls for cool and dry conditions. The season outlook through the spring fire season calls for warm and dry conditions and the Eastern Area has placed much of Minnesota on a significant fire potential outlook for March and April. - Travis noted that fuels in place are likely standing and not matted and requests more observation data from the field to confirm.
Agency Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIA – The local agency is supporting prescribed fire needs in Oklahoma. Many Tribal Fire Agencies and local BIA are completing refreshers and gearing up for an early start with rapid snow cover decline occurring. There will likely be a short window to conduct prescribed burns this year, and the focus is on updating and finalizing burn plans. The regional fire analyst position is still in progress. - DNR – The fire program has completed the three regional WildCAD-e trainings and plans to offer one more with virtual coaches. The DNR Fire Section will host the annual Fire Team Leader meeting next week, followed by the aviation workshop. The annual safety refreshers are ongoing, and new offerings are published to the combined training calendar. Minnesota has established state-to-state agreements with North Dakota and South Dakota. - FWS – Much of the local agency are focusing on prescribed fire planning and checking pile burns. Most areas are snow-free. Providing local fire staff to support the prescribed fire needs in Florida and Texas. The upcoming national fire hire effort will release the West Zone Fire Management Officer position.



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Agency Updates Cont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- HSEM – Jacob and Kara Behr are available to present on behalf of MNICS at the All-Hazard Incident Management Team meeting. Plans are in progress for an EMAC to support the July Republican National Convention in Wisconsin. HSEM is working on updating the State Standard Operating Guides. Work is underway to train staff through the Emergency Operations Center training program, and because there are a limited number of trainers, the training is being offered online. Kara will work with Taylor to identify any HSEM training support they can provide during the MNICS Wildfire Academy.- NPS – Voyageur's cattail burning efforts have been delayed due to poor ice conditions. Burn plans and medical plans are the current priority focus. The seasonal hires will start in May. The new fireboat is expected to be delivered in May.- USFS – The Superior National Forest is focused on completing pile-burning projects. Fire resources from both forests are off-unit supporting prescribed burn efforts on the Mark Twain National Forest. Jeb Backe was selected as the West Zone Fire Management Officer. Between the two forests, fire staffing is down 18 positions. Currently, six positions are open for fire, including the assistant fire management officer position on the Chippewa. The Regional Fire Management Officer meeting will be held in Milwaukee next week. We are making it a priority to prepare burn plans.- MNCC – Focused on providing training and development opportunities for staff and filling potential holes with a pending earlier fire season start. An operations dispatcher is scheduled to travel to support the Eclipse event the first week in April.

Next Task Force Meeting will be held during the MNICS Meeting March 7, 2024, at MIFC.