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April 4, 2024, MNICS Task Force Meeting

Task Force: Greg Carlson, Cory Berg, William Glesener, Darrin Franco, Jacob Beauregard, Kara Behr, Ben Roy
Non-Task Force Attendees: Ryan Kingsley, Leanne Langeberg, Brian Wise, Kevin Carlisle, Shelly Greniger,
Special Guests: Taylor Schenk, Wayne Lamoreaux, Bill Hirte, Caleb Sturgill, Mike Hill, Aaron Mielke, Jeb Backe

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
Budget Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Mission Center Solutions courses were originally miss-coded on the MIFC budget spreadsheet. The error will be corrected, and funds returned to the MIFC coop funds. - The Task Force confirmed that the USDA Forest Service will purchase the MNCC dispatch floor office chairs and plan to bill back cost to the coop funds.
Building Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MIFC security system upgrade is close to completion. - The elevator project will be awarded soon. - The roof replacement will begin in June. MNCC has a coop plan to relocate dispatchers during roof construction. MNCC is working with MIFC radio technicians to get the Forest Service radio network on the state network so dispatchers can work out of the DNR facilities in Grand Rapids. - The office space plan for the Nature Conservancy (TNC) module has changed to Ely, Minn. - The BIA plans to advertise an aviation manager position before October, with the option of Bemidji or Grand Rapids as the primary work location. - The HAMM radio group has moved its equipment out of the MIFC office space.
Aircraft status change reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force revisited the discussion on federal air tanker use changes, which now require replacing an off federal contract aircraft (requested during initial attack as the closest resource to a federal land-managed fire) with a federally contracted aircraft. - The Board of Directors has contacted Steve Miller, the USDA Forest Service Region 9 Director of Fire and Aviation. Miller clarified that a justified option to request cooperator aircraft is warranted when they are the closest resource for the initial attack. He explained that the cooperator aircraft may continue supporting a federal land-managed fire until a federal aircraft arrives to backfill and could be requested to stay if there is a need.
Academy Financial Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taylor Schenck represented the MNICS Training Working Team. - The Task Force reviewed the Minnesota Wildfire Academy cost analysis spreadsheet that Meadow Kouffeld, Minnesota North College, provided. - Concerns about the rising tuition rates and the overall costs associated with hosting the Minnesota Wildfire Academy at the Minnesota North Itasca campus were discussed. - The MNICS Training Working Team will meet with college staff at the conclusion of the academy to review the final cost breakdown and identify where cost reductions can be made by 2025, including costs for reusable items like instructor guides and DVDs. - The Task Force will meet with the MNICS Training Working Team in August to review the meeting outcome with Minnesota North academy coordinators and discuss alternate venues the Training Working Team is considering for 2025.



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FEMA - Fire Management Assistance Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) staff met with the Task Force to discuss grant funding opportunities through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Fire Management Grant (FMAG) program. - Traditionally, FMAG has not been a successful avenue for Minnesota because the majority of non-federal land fires are contained within the first 24-hour operational period. Increased awareness and support through Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Minnesota can help MNICS partners be proactive in seeking FMAG grant funding. - FMAG provides cost-share funding up to 75% for uninsured losses on non-federal managed land. All suppression costs for the State of Minnesota are uninsured, including full-time employee overtime and all temporary employee time while responding to the fire. Residential structure loss is limited to primary residence structures. - A grant request must be submitted and approved before the fire is declared contained. - FEMA has specific forms that must be filled out. Documentation for FMAG grants is an important requirement, and the ICS SIT-209 form can be included as some of the required documentation. - Minnesota DNR expects impact to Minnesota’s wildland-urban interface assessments can be completed more rapidly through the Northeast Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal. The Department of Public Safety also has points of contact that MNICS partners can work with to determine estimated loss impacts. - HSEM will coordinate a Task Force meeting with the Chicago Region FEMA FMAG Team July or August. The Task Force wants to learn more about the types of Tribal land that can be included (e.g., Tribal Trust Land) and how grants can be applied when shared protection agreements are in place. The Task Force would also like to learn if FEMA bases approval timeframes on a fire being declared controlled or contained. - William Glesener will transfer FMAG informational resources and the county emergency managers directory to the MNICS Task Force FireNet Teams account.
Master Cooperative Agreement Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MNICS cooperative agreement is near completion. The cooperating agencies are awaiting a final signature from the Bureau of Land Management.
2024 Department of Public Safety communications exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Department of Public Safety’s 2024 Emergency Communications Network exercise will run August 19-22 at Camp Ripley. It will focus on a wildland fire urban interface scenario. MNICS communications working team members are encouraged to participate. Interest in attending the exercise can be coordinated through Jacob Beauregard or Kara Behr.
Additional MNCC DNR dispatching requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minnesota DNR’s Hibbing and Tower forestry areas have requested that their fire dispatch coordination be transferred to the Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center (MNCC) operations section. - MNCC is at staffing capacity and does not have the infrastructure to take on the additional workload. Its reviewing staff and infrastructure requirements to determine a reasonable timeframe to implement changes necessary to assume increased dispatching capability. It is unlikely MNCC will have capacity before the calendar year 2025. - The Task Force recognizes the need to develop a well-thought-out framework and vision for an effective Tier 3 dispatch center. Effective service will also involve infrastructure upgrades, increased staffing, and standardizing radio communication coordination and dispatching capabilities (already in progress with WildCAD-e).



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<p>Additional MNCC DNR dispatching requests cont.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force will focus its July 2024 two-day meeting on tier-3 strategic planning. Specifically, they want to decide what an MNCC model operating fully at tier-3 structure capable of servicing all dispatching coordination in Minnesota should entail, then start laying out what the footprint of tier-3 coordination for Minnesota must look like to achieve success. Within the strategic plan, they want to establish who oversees the infrastructure coordination and upgrades and define the expected number of overhead necessary to implement the desired outcome. - The Task Force will invite technical specialists from the State of Minnesota’s MNDOT and MNIT, radio communication specialists from the USDA Forest Service and Minnesota DNR, and DNR’s regional fire team leads to help determine what agreements must be in place to achieve interagency communication capacity.
<p>Type 3 Incident Management Team Out-of-State Rosters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incident Commanders (ICs) Mike Hill, Aaron Mielke and Jeb Backe met with the Task Force to discuss out-of-state team rostered positions. - The discussion results from an Eastern Area Operations Working Team task to the MNICS Type 3 ICs to provide recommendations for a baseline roster of required positions any Eastern Area Type 3 Incident Management Team (IMT) planning to be available for assignments outside the geographic area. - The MNICS teams currently roster 23 positions (including trainees) for in-state assignments. The out-of-state roster includes 11 additional positions, which they feel will better prepare a MNICS team for high-demand positions (food unit leader, fire behavior analyst) that are likely to be assigned to higher priority fires at planning level 3 or higher. - Cory Berg presented the Geographic Area Coordinating Group’s proposal (initiated in 2016) with the MNICS ICs and the Task Force. The proposal identifies three alternatives for the Type 3 IMT rosters. - The group agreed that determining an appropriate roster is challenging due to the varying scenarios a team may take over, from staging ahead of and taking on a new emerging incident to a assuming a declining incident from a complex incident management team. - Aaron Mielke, MNICS Team B, prefers alternative 3, which he explained provides a solid base to work from and the additional positions that MNICS has identified can always be negotiated with the agency administrator during the team in-brief. - Of the 11 additional positions, the FBAN and GIS positions could be negotiable because they can be supported by a remote incident support team (RIST). - The ICs feel that a team that doesn't provide a rostered planning operations or air operations team members will be set up to fail. There is also concern with pushing the limits of food service when a food unit leader is not available. The finance section is concerned about transitioning into a fire where a larger team is leaving, based on previous experiences that left significant finance clean-up for the Type 3 team to manage. - The MNICS ICs will work on their recommendations over the weekend and provide a revised list to Cory Berg by April 11, 2024.



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<p>Agency Updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIA – The Red Lake and White Earth reservations are snow-free. The remaining reservations are expected to be snow-free by the weekend. The long-term severity extension has been approved. Prescribed burning opportunities are starting to open at White Earth. The larger planned prescribed burns have been paused this spring due to dryness. The aviation exclusive use aircraft will start this weekend at Bemidji and staffing to begin next week, this is in addition to the two SEATs the DNR has available in Bemidji. The GS 0456 aviation position description has been written. BIA is also working on additional aviation positions, and hopeful to have those position descriptions completed in the next couple of weeks. The budget for preparedness is likely to increase, which will allow some tribes to create additional fire positions. The BIA’s new superintendent, Heidi Gordy, started this week. - DNR – DNR is in the process of hiring technicians and entry level forester field staff positions. The fire program has filled the aviation training position. The third training position is still in progress. Areas are working through WildCAD-e and having a positive reaction to the new process and improved data flow. Larry Himanga is retiring. His retirement celebration will be held August 9 at the central office in St. Paul and all MNICS partners are welcome. The Wildfire Administrator position has been advertised and interviews held. DNR is getting a lot of information added into the Northeast Midwest Wildfire Risk Assessment program, which provides more useful data for planning and preparedness. Division of Forestry plans to train all prevention technicians on how to use to the tool. DNR is working through the tribal wildfire response agreements process. DNR sent a module of four to help North Dakota with pile burning projects. - FWS – The agency is starting to see fire activity increase in areas where the snowpack has melted. The mid-west region is moving a lot of resources around, and Minnesota staff are supporting prescribed fire in Iowa. Some detailers are starting to travel to Minnesota, mainly from Texas and Florida. The agency will bring in a UAS platform on Tuesday that will be used to support prescribed burning, including smaller pieces of the 11,000-acre unit in Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge. The west zone FMO position hiring is in progress. - HSEM – An offer for the Region 3 program coordinator position has been made. HSEM plans to hire another school safety intelligence position, and four additional school resource officer training positions. Regions 2 and 3 will host their regional meetings with county emergency managers on April 11 and 18. HSEM has selected an alternate location to run the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) mini-drill that will test capacity for full operation by 2025. The SEOC building project should be completed by 2025. The qualifications review board comprised of Departments of Public Safety, Natural Resources, State Fire Chiefs Association and the MN Chiefs of Police, will meet April 30 at the Annual Minnesota Association of Emergency Managers. The School Safety Conference will be held mid-June. FEMA plans to conduct a resiliency tool training in Duluth on May 21. - NPS – Voyageurs National reported partial snow cover, mainly in the woods, with some areas clearing or open. The park does not expect fire danger to pick up for at least a couple more weeks and is working on getting caught up on burning plans. A GS-05/06 Geographic Information System position will be advertised soon. The park plans to send an engine to North Dakota to support prescribed burning. Greg will be supporting the Isle Royal fire refresher scheduled for mid-June.



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<p>Agency Updates Cont.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USFS – The agency is working on hiring efforts. A tentative assistant fire management officer position for the Chippewa National Forest has been offered. The duty station will be located at MIFC. A type 6 engine has been ordered for the Superior National Forest west zone as they prepare to complete burning projects. The east zone remains snow covered. The Superior National Forest has been working steadily on Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Program grant funded projects. The Chippewa National Forest has some pine understory prescribed burning to complete, but the snow has delayed any burning work for at least another two weeks. The final budget has not been released. The Nature Conservancy staffing location plan has moved from the MIFC location to Ely, MN. - MNCC – The final formal WildCAD-e training has been delivered. The course was well attended with 20-25 students. The majority of fire dispatchers have been trained on WildCAD-e state-wide. MNCC will offer a few individual trainings for those who were unable to attend the regular sessions. The virtual refresher went well with 45 people who attended. The refresher has been recorded. The MNCC dispatch forms have been updated on the MNICS website. Ryan has created an MNCC YouTube page and uploaded WildCAD-e session videos. MNCC staffing will return to 7-day staffing with aircraft availability. MNCC recently signed off two of the three trainees that supported dispatch efforts at MNCC. A fire apprentice and two additional dispatchers will detail in to support MNCC in the next couple of weeks.
<p>Upcoming MNICS Task Force Meeting Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working Team Chair updates – Wednesday, May 1, 2024, at MIFC - May Task Force Meeting May 2, 2024, at MIFC. - June Task Force Meeting June 6, 2024, tentative location - Minnesota Wildfire Academy. - July Task Force Meeting 2-day meeting – July 10 – 11, location to be determined.

Next Task Force Meeting will be held May 2, 2024, at MIFC.