



# Notes

## February 6, 2025, MNICS Task Force Meeting

**Task Force:** Cory Berg (Chair), William Glesener, Darrin Franco, Kelvin McCuskey, Nick Petrack, Greg Carlson

**Non-Task Force Attendees:** Ryan Johnson, Ryan Kingsley, Kevin Carlisle, Shelly Greniger

**Guests:** Todd Manley, Minnesota North College, Taylor Schenk, Travis Verdegan

- DISCUSSION TOPIC	- NOTES
- <b>MNICS Budget Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Task Force reviewed the monthly budget expenses and uncommitted funds.</li> <li>- The budget includes the MNICS Type 3 incident management teams meeting, which will be held at the Radisson Inn in Duluth.</li> <li>- The training room upgrade has been sent for bids.</li> </ul>
- <b>MIFC Building Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MIFC logistics is helping the DNR fire training staff with office equipment upgrades. DNR handled all the equipment purchasing.</li> <li>- A MIFC-wide building clean-up is scheduled for February 13. The clean-up will include removing non-asset number (state) or government sticker (federal) equipment staff no longer want.</li> <li>- The rooftop heating and cooling systems have been serviced. The maintenance service for the VAB HAVC unit that covers the building's dispatch, predictive services and information portion is on hold.</li> <li>- The MIFC building elevator project is moving forward, though an official start has not been decided.</li> <li>- The MIFC radio building is now second on the infrastructure priority list, and a proposal will be submitted <b>on February 22</b> to replace the current structure with a new building. The request is an initial proposal and will not include a funding request. There is strong support from the Superior National Forest leadership.</li> </ul>
- <b>MIFC Building Office Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agencies are receiving more requests from traditionally remote staff for onsite office space. The USDA and Forest Service are aware of six staff in the Grand Rapids area needing office space. Petrack is working with NRCS and the research center to determine available office space. He knows only one employee with fire in their title may need a space at MIFC.</li> <li>- The building committee has a building space plan that requires dedicated office space to be granted to staff who report 60% or more of their regular schedule. The Task Force requested to be notified as the building committee receives requests.</li> </ul>
- <b>2025 Annual Meeting Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The planning committee has met and started to divide up tasks. Regular meetings with FWS staff committed to wildfire and RX burning projects will be challenging through the spring.</li> <li>- The planning committee and Task Force agreed the Wednesday evening social hour and keynote were a good addition.</li> </ul>
- <b>MOB Guide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Updates have been received for all chapters, except for a few agency directories, which were updated for chapter 70.</li> </ul>



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<p>- <b>IMT Meeting/AA Participation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DNR plans to involve three to four staff from the Division Management Team in the agency administrator exercise. BIA also plans to include their new agency administrator, but it depends on current travel approvals. The Forest Service remains uncertain if their staff can travel overnight.</li> <li>- The plan will focus on the Incident Strategic Alignment Process (ISAP). The decision to include this topic was based on all three MNICS incident commanders' experiences last summer.</li> <li>- Agencies will send a list of those planning to attend to Paulson as soon as they know who has approval for overnight travel.</li> </ul>
<p>- <b>Logistics Workshop</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The logistics working team plans to host a virtual workshop that spans over a month and will fill four days sometime in the late summer or early fall of 2025.</li> <li>- The Task Force supports the plan.</li> </ul>
<p>- <b>Academy Course Review</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Task Force invited Todd Manley, Minnesota North College, and Taylor Schenk to review the 2025 Minnesota Wildfire Academy course offerings.</li> <li>- The current lineup of courses is similar to 2024 academy courses.</li> <li>- Taylor is working with the training working team to ensure all course instructors have been secured.</li> <li>- The academy incident management team will be led by Kelly Sande this year. The IMT has not been formalized yet. The Task Force requested that Sande reach out to the agency task force rep to see if he plans to fill any roles with ADs before contacting the AD.</li> <li>- Manley provided some background on his new role as the college's coordinator this year, filling a temporary vacancy vacated by Vice Kouffeld. He also shared some insight on how the college provides a budget to secure the supplies and vendor contacts associated with the academy.</li> <li>- The college is considering a per-day rate but acknowledges that the previous coordinator had worked with the college's business manager to develop the matrix she worked from.</li> <li>- The food service, community and Visit Grand Rapids have all been contacted and on board for the year.</li> <li>- The Task Force requested to meet again with Manley and Schenk in March to go through a cost analysis of course fees and identify offsets to rising academy costs.</li> </ul>
<p>- <b>FDOP</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Predictive services specialist Verdegan met with the Task Force to share an update on the Minnesota Fire Danger Operating Plan (FDOP) status.</li> <li>- The WIMS program will tentatively shut down between December 1, 2024 to November 1, 2025, which will change the scope of the FDOP and any data MNICS uses from FEMS. CFDRs is still available for analysis.</li> <li>- The Forest Service policy will provide the most detail for their decision making, but they may need subject matter experts with analytical skills to help with the analysis.</li> <li>- The current public fire restrictions plan language has been added to Appendix D of the FDOP and is accessible through the MNICS website.</li> <li>- There's been discussion among the Minnesota wildland fire community the FDRAs aren't helpful for some break-point decision-making, specifically staffing. The Forest Service is working to adjust for the Zones and plans to complete the project sometime in 2025.</li> <li>- The Task Force will look at their agency preparedness level policies and make adjustments that can help achieve standardized criteria across the GACCs.</li> </ul>



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- <b>Logistics Working Team</b>	- The Logistics Working Team submitted an updated charter and noted the change from meet as necessary to meet quarterly. The Task Force approved, and the chair signed the updated charter.
- <b>Annual Smoke Management Report</b>	- The Task Force requested predictive services work with Trent Wickman to assure all MNICS inputs have been submitted for the annual Smoke Management report review.
- <b>Dispatch Working Team Tasking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Dispatch Working Team plans to host their workshop as virtual sessions this year. The DNR will host a separate WildCAD-e training session for their staff.</li> <li>- Johnson and Glesener will reply to the Dispatch Working Team assignment sheet.</li> </ul>
- <b>Tier 4 Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lundgren has a draft request letter for MNDOT inquire if MNICS can tap into their radio communications network. The letter should be sent in the next couple of weeks.</li> <li>- Glesener will follow up with Theisen on the status of the cradle points for MNCC.</li> </ul>
- <b>Agency Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>BIA</b> – The agency is working through the many changes in the federal workforce and systems, including bill funding that impacts fuel treatments and cooperative agreements with the tribes. The agency is also working through the return to office executive directive. When completed, the White Earth facility is progressing through phase 1 and will be a great meeting and training facility. BIA Midwest region is finalizing a new helicopter contract agreement. A fire meeting will be held in Bemidji for BIA staff and tribal agency staff.</li> <li>- <b>DNR</b> – The MNCC center manager position will likely be posted within the next week. The DNR budget is holding, but federal grants are impacting budgets. The training team will coordinate a WildCAD-e training, and DNR will open it for all MNICS partners. The High to Land communication tower is still in the planning phase. Glesener attended the M-580 ecology and fire management course at NAFRI and shared that the course is not designed for fire staff on the operation side of fire. DNR is working on a skid steer tank that can be attached to a large loader. Once it is operational, DNR will make it available for other agencies to test. The DNR’s Type 6 engine is ready for service and has stainless steel boxes for equipment. DNR plans to test it out in as many areas as possible.</li> <li>- <b>FWS</b> – No agency update.</li> <li>- <b>HSEM</b> – The BIA requested HSEM communicate with MNDOT that there are no gaps in the ARMOR communication coverage, and McCuskey will contact MNDOT. The Mutual Aid and Logistics coordinator position has been advertised. Neuberger retired on January 12. HSEM’s director resigned, and Kevin Reed serves as the interim director. The State Emergency Management conference will be held the second week of February. HSEM asked if DNR plans to have a representative cover a breakout session on what to expect when an Incident Management Team shows up.</li> <li>- <b>NPS</b> – Brink is on a fire assignment in North Carolina. All travel for conferences has been canceled agency-wide, but travel for training remains in place. Federal funding and hiring freezes have affected the National Park Service’s seasonal fire hiring. All bill-funded projects are on hold. The FMO position remains vacant, and the agency is unsure how the funding freeze will impact it.</li> </ul>
- <b>Agency Updates cont.</b>	- <b>USFS</b> – Both the Chippewa and Superior National Forests have sent an engine each down to the Mark Twain National Forest. The agency is optimistic that the certifications for the MNCC center manager and the East Zone fire management officer positions are still being



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- **DISCUSSION TOPIC**

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*Next MNICS Task Force Meeting scheduled for March 6, 2025, at MIFC.*