



Notes

March 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, Leanne Langeberg (Notes), Ryan Kingsley, Kevin Carlisle

Guests: Todd Manley, Minnesota North College, Taylor Schenk

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
<p>MNICS Budget Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force reviewed the monthly budget expenses and uncommitted funds. - The building maintenance spending increased last month with HAVC system maintenance. - The Task Force discussed the budgetary constraints several partnering agencies are facing. They acknowledge the constraints are impacting their agreement to contribute an additional \$5000 per agency to the coop account that was agreed upon at the end of 2024. The Task Force also acknowledged the MNICS coop contingency funds are available for times like this and may have to be tapped to cover shortfalls this year. - Carlisle provided an update on the MNICS Type 3 incident management team trailer. DNR is looking at a possible gooseneck mobile command center style trailer available through the FEP in Georgia. If it is in good condition, the DNR would consider trading the current IMT trailer. The upgrade to the new trailer is expected to stay under \$4,000.
<p>MIFC Building Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The upstairs copy machine will be replaced with a fully functioning copier (color copy, scanner, fax) that will be on a monthly service plan, including toner. - The HAVC system services included replacing a heating coil in the upstairs predictive services area. The sensor on the unit that heats and cools the dispatch area was lowered to a location that will provide a more consistent temperature. - The engineer has received the elevator replacement project drawings from the contractor. The project is expected to be completed by May 1, 2025. - The MIFC roof has developed several new leaks since last summer's repair project. The roof is under warranty, and the Superior National Forest engineer has contacted the roofing company about the recent leaks. - As federal agencies navigate the return to office executive order, the Forest Service has one potential regional Forest Service employee who may need a workspace at MIFC. The individual is a regional fire training specialist and has dispatching qualifications. USDA employees outside of fire in the Grand Rapids area will be directed to coordinate with the Research Station or District Ranger office space.
<p>Center Manager position update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The DNR is awaiting a list of applicants. Once received, the DNR plans to expedite the interview process. The Forest Service advertisement closed six weeks ago, and based on the latest update, the list of candidates will likely be provided to the local Forest Service within the week
<p>MNICS Incident Management Team Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due to federal agency budget and staffing constraints, federal ADs will not attend the in-person MNICS Incident Management Team meeting. ADs will have the option to attend virtually.
<p>MNICS Mob Guide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MNICS Mobilization Guide for 2025 has been published and distributed.



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<p>Radio Shop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The radio shop facility upgrade has moved to the top of the Superior National Forest’s priority list for infrastructure improvement needs, and they have made the region aware of the priority. - The region advised the forest to consider expanding the scope of the project to meet a 50-year project level. - Projects involving partnership contributions, (e.g., the state considering bonding bill funding for MIFC infrastructure) can be included. - The forest may include the paved parking lot expansion along with the communications building to bring the funding request closer to the 50-year project level. - A new facility for training and MNCC may stretch too far beyond the 50-year project scope and risk not being funded. - Kingsley shared there may be some additional project work identified from the upcoming National Cache Program’s programmatic review that could be included in the proposal.
<p>MNDOT and Cradle Point update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The DNR has requested to meet with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, though a meeting date has not been set. - The communications staff have received the cradle points and are waiting for the state’s MNIT staff to program them. MNCC has a coop plan ready to move Forest Service dispatching to Deer River if needed. - Glesener will follow up on the cradle points programming status with MNIT and Theisen.
<p>Academy Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Todd Manley and Taylor Schenk met with the Task Force to review the Minnesota Wildfire Academy course pricing matrix. - Manley shared the current spreadsheet and how the college determines academy costs by course. He also shared a look at the registration portal. - Manley plans to set up separate registration links through the registration portal for the instructors and the incident management team. - Manley will work through some of the pricing with Schenk and provide final numbers for the final brochure before the scheduled release on Monday, March 10. - Schenk confirmed that the academy IMT will not involve any ADs this year. All ADs who plan to fill a lead instructor role have worked out their availability for the academy. Schenk will send a message to all leads to advise them not to fill unit instructors with ADs.
<p>Agency Updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIA – Most Tribes are reporting snow-free or close to snow-free, though there is still a lot of snow in the woods. Red Lake is actively conducting prescribed burning and has completed approximately 2,300 acres. Annual safety refreshers are ongoing. BIA is working on implementing the plan to get the final code for the code plug, followed by the frequency pairing, and will wait until after the spring fire season to conduct any testing. BIA is working with the national office to learn when the 2025 aviation funding may be approved. The helicopter contract is on track to be awarded in April, but the agency cautions the final contract is dependent on any potential contracting office changes. Fond du Lac hired a fire management officer. The individual has expressed interest in instructing. Due to current limitations, hiring, including ADs, remains uncertain.



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<p>Agency Updates Cont.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DNR – Glesener shared the news about the recent passing of Olin Phillips, retired DNR Wildfire Section Manager. The DNR’s MNCC center manager position posting closes on March 6, and the fire section expects a list of candidates will be available in about a week. The WildCAD-e SMEs plan to host 30-minute brown bag lunch tutorial sessions. The 741 engine is in service. It will be stationed at the fire center this summer and will be used for crew assignments. Fire activity is picking up in southern Minnesota. - FWS – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s ability to hire ADs is restricted this year to 100 across the board nationally. The agency has experienced staff reductions across offices among the non-fire personnel. Franco hopes to replace the FMO position at Fergus Falls WMD, but shared the agency is not approving 120-day temporary details, and he’s not sure how long the process will take to fill the position. The 1039 seasonal fire positions have been approved and will be starting soon. Agency staff are allowed to travel for suppression support only. - HSEM – HSEM has selected a new director, Allison Farole. Vice Neuberger’s operations and training bureau chief position is on hold, and the agency may fill it with a temporary hire. Vice Beauregard’s mutual aid and logistics coordinator position announcement recently closed, and the agency is compiling a list of qualified applicants. - NPS – The agency is proceeding with hiring temporary seasonal fire positions, and the park's fire seasonals will come on board at the end of April. The National Park Service is progressing through the return-to-office orders. The ability to use bill funding for prescribed fire work has been reauthorized. The park is seeing good ice conditions and snow in the wood and hopes to conduct some cattail burning at the end of March. Carlson is unsure if Voyageurs National Park's current snow-covered status excludes them from the region's fire season and how that may impact resource ordering of park staff to support regional needs. - USFS – The Superior and Chippewa National Forests are undergoing organizational changes. The Mark Twain National Forest is experiencing fire activity, and two local forest service engines have been sent to support. The Forest Service contract helicopter that was stationed in Ely has been repositioned to the Mark Twain National Forest. Both national forests have been advised to proceed lightly with prescribed burn project planning until the agency has a better sense of budgets. Fire hire has not been frozen, but positions in the queue have not moved forward. The forests will not hire any new seasonals this year. - MNCC – MNCC is awaiting information on the center manager position and possible details that will fill behind the current detailer. Next week, the intelligence class is coming to MIFC, and all but one of the MNCC dispatchers will be attending. Staffing will be limited to the MNCC center manager and one dispatcher.

Next MNICS Task Force Meeting scheduled for April 3, 2025, at MIFC.