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June 26, 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, Shelly Greniger

Guests: Caleb Schreiber, Travis Verdegan

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
MNICS Budget Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Task Force reviewed two MNICS coop funding spreadsheets for the 2025 fiscal year (FY) end, and the upcoming FY 2026, which includes agency contributions, average monthly expenses, and the remaining FY 2025 rollover. The projected rollover funding will be applied to the pending projects, bringing the total rollover closer to \$5,000 for FY2026.- Training room agency contributions - The recently released Forest Service budget includes the \$5,000 agency contribution toward the MIFC training room upgrades. The BIA has an additional \$12,000 available that can be used to cover any shortfalls for the training room upgrade project, specifically any other MNICS agency that may not receive approval for the additional contribution. The Task Force will consider HSEM's donation of training room tables as an in-kind match, and the Minnesota DNR and BIA will work together to cover the remaining \$5,000.- The BIA and DNR are working on an agreement to hire Chuck Maxwell, a retired Department of Interior employee with considerable fire science and predictive services knowledge. The DNR will hire Maxwell as a smoke chaser, and BIA will contribute funding toward his salary and costs.- The Task Force requested updated information on the shared percentage and current amount of agency contributions for the shared MNCC center manager and lead logistics dispatch positions and the MIFC facility. Johnson will work with Kingsley to calculate the MNCC amounts and will email all Task Force members with the current information. Greniger will provide the Task Force with similar data for the MIFC facility.
MIFC Building Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The training room smartboards installation will be wrapped up by the end of the week.- The tamper switch in the compressor room was replaced.- The annual spring HVAC maintenance was completed.- One roof leak was detected and fixed.- MNCC requested new blinds for the dispatch area windows. The estimated cost is \$600. The Task Force approved the request.- The USDA Forest Service approved funding for the pump shop upgrades. The upgrade will occur over the next two years and stay within the current cache footprint.- The elevator project is still under consideration. The Forest Service contract officers and engineers are working with the contractor to request they install the automatic door openers in the training room to meet handicap accessibility compliance, which is estimated to add \$40,000 to the project cost
2026 MIFC Financial Operating Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Task Force reviewed the current draft of the 2026 MIFC financial operating plan and will ensure that it includes a reference to the agreement and the budget rather than specific projects. Greniger will forward the updated copy to Glesener.



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Master Cooperative Agreement Update and VFD IA billing procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caleb Schreiber met with the Task Force and provided a Minnesota Master Cooperative Agreement update. He expects the agreement review will take place in the next couple of months. Schreiber advised the review process is taking less time than it did in the past and expects it to be in place by the next fire season. - The Task Force discussed with Schreiber adding the volunteer fire department reimbursement agreement language. The agreement does not specify agencies and will allow for immediate reimbursement for fire department and equipment through the DNR. The rates follow the cooperative fire department agreement rates or default to current smoke chaser rates when an agreement is not provided. - The Task Force requested that the language on <i>the initial attack zone notification for counties</i> be revised to be more consistent with the 2025 fire response guide. <i>MNCC and Minnesota dispatchers will utilize the closest available resources.</i> - The Task Force will incorporate the language on equipment shift tickets found in the DNR's agreement with fire departments into the MNICS Mobilization Guide.
Fire potential seasonal outlook and storm blowdown discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travis Verdegan met with the Task Force to discuss the National Significant Fire Potential Outlook coordination and the potential for increased fuels resulting from the recent blowdown in the northwest region of Minnesota. - Verdegan participated in the National Interagency Coordination Center's discussion with the geographic areas for the next issue of the National Significant Fire Potential Outlook releasing on July 1 and projected through October. - Based on current conditions, Kittson and Roseau will be the only two counties in Minnesota reflected in the July 1 outlook due to dry conditions. Depending on precipitation trends August, September, or October, other areas of Minnesota could be added later. - Discussions are underway to revise the fuels and fire advisory template to serve as a proactive alert tool and provide more effective messaging. - Fuels from recent storm damage in the Northwest part of Minnesota will start to become more concerning in two to three months as needles begin drying and receptive to wildfire. - The Task Force discussed the aerial storm damage observation and mapping efforts by the Minnesota DNR, U.S. Forest Service, Beltrami County and Leech Lake and agree more coordination and data sharing among response agencies can happen. Verdegan will reach out to the DNR's resource assessment to connect them with MNICS partners. - Ordering a Firewise team to help local communities and tribes coordinate mitigation efforts like setting up chipping sites and other efforts to help reduce problematic fuel loads was recommended. - Glesener shared the Copernicus browser, a web-based satellite imagery tool, as another blowdown monitoring resource. - The Task Force will compile a list of counties impacted by storm damage and work with their agency staff to develop prevention talking points on debris removal. They will revisit the topic following the July 1 Task Force.
MNICS Annual Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The planning group has connected with potential guest speakers and awaiting information on guest speaking fees.



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Minnesota Wildfire Academy After Action Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MNICS Task Force will host an after-action review with Taylor Schenk or an alternate Training Working Team representative during their August Task Force meeting. - The discussion will focus on how to coordinate with the college under the new proposed plan, including daily or half-day rates per course, alternative dates to better align with planned college breaks, and the college's decision to adopt or reject the new plan model. - The Task Force will also discuss proposing to host singular classes at the college throughout the year, as space becomes available, as well as the possibility of MTFB supplementing academy costs and prioritizing registrations.
MNCC Technology Upgrade update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MIFC radio communications has all the cradle points hardware. The plan is to test the installation of the cradle points before completing the full installation to troubleshoot any issues before proceeding with the full upgrade on the dispatch floor. - Jalonen will be consulted on the timeframe for purchasing C-soft. - Lundgren met with the DNR commissioner's office about the MNDOT request. The commissioner has scheduled a meeting for July 29 with MNDOT to make a formal request. Glesener will coordinate with Lundgren to determine meeting details.
August Task Force Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force will hold a two-day meeting at the new State Emergency Operations Center in Blaine in August. - The agenda items will include a budget and building update, the Minnesota Wildfire Academy AAR, completing the 2025 MNICS financial plan, discussing MNCC Tier-4 planning, MNICS Type-3 incident management team recruitment and contingency planning, and MNCC and fire workforce retirement succession planning.
MNICS Type 3 National Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force supports the MNICS Type 3 Team request to organize an ad-hoc team for a national mobilization rotation in July as long as Minnesota remains at a PL- 2.
National Type 3 Incident Management Team restoring standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Multiagency Coordinating Group (NMAC) released a letter announcing national mobilization standards for Type 3 incident management teams. - Teams will be required to have a minimum of 10 rostered team members, including the core command and general staff. Teams may roster up to 25 team members, or up to a maximum of 35 rostered team members with pre-approval and documentation from the host agency. - The Task Force will relay the new guidance to the MNICS Type 3 incident commanders.
Agency Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIA – The agency is seeing drier conditions in Red Lake, resulting in fires in green grass. The BIA has not yet received a comprehensive assessment of the total storm damage. While considerable rain was received, it dried quickly. BIA is moving aviation and engine resources to support national needs in the north and southwest. The agency received a budget and are working to allocate funding to the tribes. - DNR – The DNR has fire staff supporting two GLFFC crews in Manitoba. The crews are expected to demobilize in the next couple of days. The DNR is considering sending a few more groups. - FWS – The agency received approval to fill Vice Boschees's position. The agency is still awaiting their budget. Locally, FWS is working on a fire management plan for the northwest hub spanning from Detroit Lakes to the Canadian border.



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Agency Updates cont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- HSEM – The agency is working through significant storm damage response supporting the Leech Lake Tribe and Cass and Crow Wing Counties. HSEM director Farole is planning to visit MIFC. HSEM is conducting an integrated FEMA management course, and the capstone exercise will focus on a wildfire in Jay Cook State Park; the exercise is open to MNICS partners interested in attending.- NPS – Voyageurs National Park’s fire danger has improved with the recent rainfall. The park extends its gratitude to the MNICS partners who helped put out the small fire in the park a couple of weeks ago. The agency has not received any guidance on what the DOI and USDA fire consolidation will look like for the agency.- USFS – The agency has received a preliminary budget. The Jenkins Creek fire is now contained as of June 21, and the Superior is now working with a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team. Currently, there are 12 fire program vacancies between the Chippewa and Superior National Forests. Both forests have submitted their priority position request lists, including the training specialist and the initial attack dispatcher. Petrack will be out of the office and offline for two weeks, and Greg Gulan is acting FMO.- MNCC – MNCC currently has vacant positions in operations initial attack, and aviation. The Minnesota DNR advertised the aviation dispatcher position on June 25.

Next MNICS Task Force Meeting scheduled for August 6 – 7, hosted at the State Emergency Operations Center.