



# Notes

## May 1, 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, Shelly Greniger

**Guests:** Caleb Schreiber, 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 report. The report did not include MNICS cooperative funding for the elevator project.</li><li>- A line item of \$6,500 for the MNICS annual meeting guest speaking fees and refreshments will be added for the state fiscal year 2026.</li><li>- The training room upgrade project is in process and reflected as a pending project in the report. The original planned contribution for each MNICS agency is \$5,000.</li><li>- The dispatch infrastructure project is pending. MNICS cooperative funding is set aside to install cradle points and the additional C-Soft software. The Forest Service radio communications specialist is looking into the project requirements to ensure MNCC has the necessary extra channels installed.</li><li>- The MNICS Type 3 IMT challenge coin project is progressing. Carlisle is working with the vendor to apply for state vendor status.</li></ul>
<b>MIFC Building Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The elevator contract is on hold due to an unexpected expense increase. The MNICS partners are working to secure additional funding to keep the project moving forward. The Forest Service will look for funding from other projects to reimburse MNICS.</li><li>- The upgrades of MNICS Type 3 IMT trailers are complete and provide more workspace.</li><li>- The Forest Service engineer knows about the recent roof leak in the training room.</li><li>- The first aid kits will be consolidated locations next to the AEDs.</li><li>- The Forest Service identified a missing cover on a low voltage electrical box during the annual safety inspection.</li><li>- The NEK cache warehouse doesn't have adequate climate-controlled facilities that meet Forest Service hazmat storage requirements for flammable ignition materials. NEK is working to address the issue through a programmatic review. The Grand Rapids Fire department knows where the stored materials are located inside the warehouse.</li><li>- MIFC building committee is working on return to office space requests. The Forest Service has one employee starting next week. BIA is unsure where the regional fire management officer position will be located. The intelligence workspace provides an option for to create two office spaces with doors.</li></ul>
<b>MNICS Working Team Reports Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The Task Force reviewed the Public Information and Prevention Working Team charter. The Task Force chair will sign and return to the working team chair.</li><li>- Petrack will follow up with the Operations Working Team and request the chair and vice chair to meet with the Task Force in June.</li></ul>



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<b>MNICS Annual Meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The planning group reached out to two interested guest speaker contacts.</li> <li>- Close the Gap Wellness presents on a mental health-focused topic and quoted \$4139 for speaking, travel, and lodging expenses.</li> <li>- Matt Holmstrom is a federal employee who speaks about human dynamics in wildland fire. Due to ongoing federal system changes, he won't know availability until closer to the date, and he asked to stay in contact.</li> <li>- The planning group plans to contact Jack Cohen, a retired research scientist who studied the relationship of fire and the urban interface, and the National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center directors.</li> </ul>
<b>FDOP &amp; Decision Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Travis Verdegan provided an update on the WIMS to FEMS transition and its impact to the MNICS Fire Danger Operating Plan (FDOP) wildfire staffing and prescribed burning decision support. He also differentiated the fuel moisture model differences FEMS. The Task Force will draft talking points on the topic to share among MNICS fire staff.</li> <li>- The Task Force discussed adjusting the MNICS FDOP, similar to the prevention restriction levels adjustments MNICS made last year.</li> <li>- The DNR forestry areas use the MNICS FDOP run cards, while the Forest Service adjusts staffing using indices based on three years of observed data.</li> <li>- The Task Force will task the operations and prescribed fire and fuels working teams with reviewing the chapter on staffing and run cards and consider adjustments to develop a matrix that aligns better with MNICS partner needs. The Task Force is also considering forming a subcommittee to work specifically on the staffing chapter.</li> </ul>
<b>MNCC Center Manager Delegation of Authority and Staffing updates</b>	<p><b>MNCC Delegation of Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The new MNCC center manager is now onboarded, and the Task Force is updating the delegation of authority document for MNICS Board of Directors signatures.</li> </ul> <p><b>MNCC Staffing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Forest Service has selected a 120-day detail candidate for the assistant center manager operations open position, but the start date is on hold. The Forest Service has also advertised the assistant center manager position, which closes at the end of April.</li> <li>- Minnesota DNR plans to advertise the position through the state hiring system.</li> <li>- Minnesota DNR intends to re-fill the aviation dispatcher position which will become vacant in late May.</li> <li>- The Task Force discussed the current challenges with hiring that will impact the effort to strategically fill MNCC vacancies among the MNICS partners. The Department of Interior has more time to plan ahead and can work with the State on refilling upcoming positions due to retirements. The Forest Service is more tied to national fire hiring events and has less ability to plan ahead. The latest Forest Service fire-hiring event is expected to be the last one for 2025. If the BIA has funding available, they may be better positioned to fill upcoming assistant center manager vacancy in logistics.</li> <li>- Ideally, newly hired assistant center managers for MNCC will be filled to support any of the dispatch functional areas.</li> <li>- The Task Force discussed what options may exist to add additional dispatchers to the organization chart in the future.</li> </ul>



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<b>MNCC Intelligence Products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Task Force reviewed the products that the MNCC intelligence shares out daily – morning daily situation slides, the daily prescribed fire update, and the afternoon briefing that shares information on how many fires occurred during the day and the evening points of contacts.</li> <li>- The evening briefing originated from the DNR northwest region and became a helpful tool to share who was available as the region duty officer.</li> <li>- With tools like Wild Web, most folks who receive these communications already have access to what is going on throughout the state.</li> <li>- The Task Force agree the morning update is useful and consolidate information into an easy to find communication source and provides situational awareness for non-fire managers like agency administrators.</li> <li>- The prescribed fire notifications are derived from the 24-hour notification published in the national situation report, the Eastern Area Geographic Area references. It also helps fire team leaders to see what the partners are planning for prescribed burning for the day. There are times agencies don't know if they will burn 24-hours in advance and may not updated the report until right before the prescribed burn is implemented.</li> <li>- The Task Force has tasked the MNCC center manager to work with MNCC intelligence to provide guidance in the MNICS Mobilization Guide that established agencies will submit the next days planned prescribed burn information and report completed prescribed burn acres that occurred within the last 24-hours by 16:00 daily.</li> <li>- Moving forward MNCC Intel will provide the following daily products – a morning briefing with PowerPoint slides, planned prescribed burns as reported by 16:00 the previous day, and the afternoon briefing through email distribution.</li> <li>- McCuskey requested MNCC Intel add the State Emergency Operations Center operations email to the daily distribution list and will provide the current email address to MNCC Intel.</li> </ul>
<b>MNICS Master Cooperative Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Caleb Schreiber meet with the Task Force to provide and update on the status of the Minnesota Master Cooperative Agreement.</li> <li>- Due to recent staffing changes, the process is expected to take a little longer. The current agreement has been extended through June of 2026, and if the agreement is not completed by then, an additional extension will be requested.</li> <li>- The Task Force will brief the MNICS Board of Directions on the current challenges facing the progress of the Minnesota Master Cooperative Agreement.</li> </ul>
<b>MNICS Working Team Reports follow-up discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Task Force reviewed the Public Information and Prevention Working Team charter. The Task Force chair will sign and return to the working team chair.</li> <li>- Petrack will follow up with the Operations Working Team and request the chair and vice chair to meet with the Task Force in June.</li> </ul>
<b>Task Force Summer Meeting Schedule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Task Force will hold the July meeting on June 26 as a virtual meeting due to the conflict with Fourth of July holiday.</li> <li>- The two-day Task Force meeting will be held August 6-7. HSEM will reach out to contacts at the State Emergency Operations Center in Blaine to inquire about meeting room availability.</li> </ul>



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Agency Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>BIA</b> – BIA reports moderate initial attack fire activity, including in areas that recently received two inches of rain. Based on the drying trend forecast, BIA submitted a long-term severity request. BIA is holding in bringing in the water scooping aircraft while the large air tanker is position in Minnesota. BIA has a couple of fire investigators on order and a couple of out-of-state engine modules are in Minnesota. The agency is reviewing the fiscal year 2025 budget, which includes some fuels funding.</li><li>- <b>DNR</b> – The DNR is working on approval authority to use the Kodiak for air attack on wildfires on federal land in Minnesota. If an extended dry pattern returns, DNR will restrict staff supporting out-of-state needs. The fire section working to fill an integrated communications coordinator and an Inform and WildCAD integration coordinator position. Radio engineer or an IT project manager with radio communication experience will be required. The will advertise the MNCC assistant center manager position. DNR fire aviation plans to refill the aviation dispatcher position. The agency faces a budget shortfall and project spending may adjust. The bill-funded tanker base project pre-design work is complete, and ramp work is expected to start this summer. Temporary lease space may be needed while the project is ongoing. Two confirmed wildfire fatalities reported in Minnesota this year, and the local county sheriffs are investigating. DNR will issue a SafeNet next week focused on the rise of AT20 vehicles breaking through in swamps during wildfire response. The fire program ordered a FireBX fire box that will be tested out on skid steers and tracked vehicles in the northwest region.</li><li>- <b>FWS</b> – The agency is experiencing considerable staff changes. The local region received approval to fill 120-day detail assignments. The region plans to bring on a UAS operator through the Department of Interior’s national agreement for detailers. The agency is awaiting the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. The Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC) is supporting local prescribed fire efforts this spring, and the last rotation arrived on Thursday. The normal compliment of detailers are supporting prescribed burning in Minnesota. Prescribed fire efforts are ongoing throughout Minnesota, though the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is nearing the end of their open burn window.</li><li>- <b>HSEM</b> – The St. Paul staff are preparing to move into the Blaine facility on May 19-23. The new director, Allison Farole, starts her new role on May 7.</li><li>- <b>NPS</b> – The seasonal fire crew are staffing and heading to North Dakota this weekend. The lakes are ice-covered. Park staff are completing fire refreshers. The fire program is completing the readiness review and gearing up for the summer season.</li><li>- <b>FS</b> – Both forests are seeing some light initial attack response and completing some light prescribed fire. With the anticipated drying trend, there is currently a range of conditions from open lakes to ice and snow cover. The forests have brought in out-of-state resources to support prescribed fire. The east zone has enough firefighters to staff two engines this year. Between the two forests, the agency has five positions in the next round of fire-hire including the Superior assistant fire manager, MNCC assistant center manager, two engine captains, and an East Zone assistant fire management officer. Significant reduction in staffing levels are notable forest-wide. The new patrol captain will cover both forests.</li><li>- <b>MNCC</b> – A strong pool of detailers are supporting operations and aviation.</li></ul>

Next MNICS Task Force Meeting is scheduled for June 5, at MIFC.