North Dakota Fire Council Meeting Wednesday, November 14th

USFWS Doug Downs and Jeff Dion

NDFA Renee Loh

BIA Dave Hall, Marle Baker, Steve Ipswitch, and Jeff Casey

NWS Janine Vining, Ken Simosko, and Lindsay Tardif-Huber

USFS Maure Sand, Oscar Knudtson, and Nicole Bresnahan

NDSF Ryan Melin and Sarah Tunge

NPS Rod Skalsky and Cory Andvik

NDC Andy Randall and Marti Dahlin

ND Game and Fish

Parks and Recreation

Chairman Doug Downs started the meeting with introductions and then requested a review of the past fire season from each agency present at the meeting.

* USFS – Report given by Maure Sand. 46 fires for approximately 5600 acres on DPG and private/multi jurisdictional – 1600 acres was FS, 4000 acres was private and state land. Four of these fires were T3 fires. Out of the norm resources ordered were; smoke jumpers, a hot shot crew, T2 helicopters, and contract engines. This season was busier than the 10 year average for fires. Accomplishments reported for the prescribed burn spring season was 7200 acres. No prescribed burning took place this fall. What went well – ND Interagency support. What didn’t go well – Learning curve of contract equipment.
* Standing Rock Agency – Report given by Steve Ipswitch. 350 fires for 9000 acres. 50% above average. Prescribed burning \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What went well – Having an IA dispatcher and SEAT’s. New Fuels Specialist for Standing Rock Agency is Jeff Casey. Welcome Jeff.
* NPS – Report given by Rod Skalsky. Dealing with 3 burning coal veins. IR flights being done on these. Prescribed burning\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. First time this year that there has been on WF on each unit in the same day.
* Fort Berthold Agency – Report given by Marle Baker. 168 fires for 12000 acres. 10 year average is 62 WF’s. Prescribed burning, 1200 acres. Marle discussed the Little Swallow WF. What went well – ND Interagency support. What didn’t go so well – Having to answer the phone when out in the field to deal with media and emergency manager hourly updates, T2 crew not showing up with radios, What could have made things better; a media liaison, logistical and finance support. Marle also reported that this is the first time since he has been with the Fort Berthold Agency, that a hand crew went out on an assignment.
* NDSF – Report given by Ryan Melin. 534 fires for 60,880 acres. Average year. 17 in state responses. Overall operations went good.
* ND Game and Fish – Report given by Doug Downs. 5 WF’s for 1100 acres and 6 prescribed burns for 424 acres.
* ENDFD – Report given by Jeff Dion. 15 WF’s for 500 acres and 32 prescribed burns for 11,000 acres. No fall burning due to the RO’s burn ban. Down 2 staff personal. Chris Roed and Colleen Graue. Chris is now the Refuge Manager for the Devils Lake Wetland Management District and Colleen has accepted a position as the Visitor Center Manager for Sully’s Hill.
* Turtle Mountain Agency - Report given by Steve Collins. Out of 239 incident numbers, we had 225 Wildfires for 1,426.8 acres, 12 false alarms, one RX burn for 68 acres and 1 Support Action (Mutual Aid to Dunseith RFD – 300 acre fire) What went well: Excellent cooperation between BIA and the local fire departments in Rolette County as well as the Tribe and BIA on declaring a ‘burn ban” under Very High to Extreme fire danger. No lost-time accidents, no “close calls” and no injuries other than cuts or scratches and a case of poison ivy, after 225 wildfires. The Bobcat T300 with dozer blade has turned out to be an invaluable piece of equipment that has enabled us to control large fires with a limited budget and small GS staff. We received new Bendix-King mobile and portable P-25 radios from Great Plains Region BIA and now have them installed on the primary engines. What did not go well: Need more support with illegal burning and wildland fire arson enforcement and prosecution. Way too many “Human caused” wildfires for such a small area. (225)
* Fort Totten Agency – Report given by Dave Hall. 300 plus fires. This year was the first on record that the Fort Totten Agency utilized aircraft for suppression efforts.

General consensus after agency reports were given, was that most agencies didn’t think to use the dispatch center for assistance during an incident and also that we need to create a list of resources from each agency that would be willing to help with local incidents in areas such as logistics and timekeeping.

BIA purchased Bendix-King mobile and portable P-25 radios.

VFD Burn over Incidents: Would like to incorporate a Lessons Learned at State Fire School, similar to how the state and federal agencies handle their incidents. Not intended to point fingers, but to help everyone learn from the incident and stay safe while fighting fires. Question was brought up as to who investigates the burn overs for the VFD’s?

Weather was the next discussion held. The main topic was Red Flag Warnings that were issued this past season. Janine gave a power point presentation that explained what information and other decision factors the NWS utilized to determine if a Red Flag Warning should be issued. Lengthy discussion took place with inputs and questions from the group, Janine and Ken, who is currently working on his IMET qualification. Some conclusions that were presented; on the ground people need to be communicating with the weather service to provide information of what is going on with the fuels, Rod would work with the NWS in helping them learn how to work with the Behave software, Maure is going to be part of a Focus group that will work with the NWS. Rod, Nicole, Steve and Doug also volunteered to assist the NWS. Lindsay gave the outlook forecast for this winter into next season.

NDFC Charter: Need to update. Andy will resend the NDFC charter and also place it on the website. A deadline for comments is January 25th, 2013. Some questions presented at the meeting were; Do we need both of these chairs and if so who are they, Board of Directors and Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee is needed then there needs to be representation from each entity. Rotation of Agency Chair; How is this done? Current is Doug Downs/USFWS and he has served for 1 year. Definitely need a signature page and question arose; whose signatures are required?

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| **Committees** | **What do we currently have?** | **Do we need a charter?** |   |
| Training | does not have a charter | Yes |   |
| Business | draft charter | Yes |   |
| Fuels | draft charter | No |   |
| Prevention | draft charter | Yes |   |
| Communication | does not have a charter | No | Suggested that this be a working group |

Annual Operating Plan – Maure has the draft AOP that he is currently working on. Signatures needed, but at what level are they required. Doug is going to work on this.

ND Coop Fire Agreement/6 Party Agreement – Was decided that Maure and Sarah will check with Cathy Scolfield on the status of this agreement.

Neighborhood Agreement with Minnesota was suggested. Tried several years ago and nothing transpired and at that time Minnesota stated that they will honor their compacts first. Is it worth looking into? Maybe for overhead resources.

Nature Conservancy – Maure commented that he was currently working on an agreement with them for prescribed burning and wildfire support. Doug stated that the FWS has a national agreement already in place.

NDC Website – Looked over the website as to locations were links or items can be found, changes and additions that had been made since the last meeting. Andy commented to the group that NDC is open for suggestions to improve the website. One suggestion at the meeting was to put a link to the NR Equipment Guide.

Voice over Internet – Maure explained how this concept works and that it will provide IA capability for the FS. In time there could be the possibility for other agencies to utilize the Voice over Internet. Fairly new and we are still in the learning and definite growth stages with this feature.

Aviation – Doug informed the group at the meeting that FWS has a plane and pilot that are certified for fire and possibly could be used for aerial observation and recon flights. Ryan Melin mentioned a private helicopter business (MM) that would possibly be interested in doing these types of flights as well. Also discussed was; is there a need for a SEATBASE in ND and if so, we need to identify a location. BIA used aviation on Fort Totten and Standing Rock this past season and had great incite to this matter. SEATBASE Committee was formed; Steve, Oscar, Rod and Sarah.

Trainings that are going to be held at the state fire school; S130/190, S215 and S212 (hands on portion). Janine inquired about S390 class. Would we know where there is going to be one held this year? FS will more than likely put on a S130/190 the first part of June and possibly a S131 and S211. NDC website is willing to post all trainings if we are notified.

Oil Impacts – Not as many WF’s from oil activity as thought. Gas flares are the main cause of WF’s. Traffic and staying safe on the road seems to be the largest impact from the oil activity.

Dave Hall suggested putting together a task log to keep committees moving forward and tasks getting accomplished in a timely matter. Doug is going to put together a task log.

Doug is going to put together an email list and will add DES to the list.