

# **2015 REGIONAL FIRE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LINE OFFICER TEAM, WASHINGTON OFFICE FIRE & AVIATION LEADERSHIP MEETING**

October 27 - 29, 2015

McClellan Training Facility, Sacramento, CA

## **Introduction**

The National Line Officer Team (NLOT), the Regional Fire Directors (RFDs), and the Washington Office Fire and Aviation Management leadership (FAM) met in McClellan, CA on October 27-29. While these groups have met concurrently in the past, this meeting was the first where all three groups were together for the entire meeting, working through a common agenda with mutually shared goals.

The overall purpose of the meeting was for participants to be energetically introspective about the current state of affairs in Fire and Aviation and to ask a series of questions that required deep thinking about topics that matter. The topics were introduced through six “Discussion Themes”, and throughout the course of the meeting these were further refined to three primary themes of **Caring for Our People**, **Chief’s Intent**, and **Risk**. Each of these theme areas now has a work group assigned to champion long and short-term progress.

As the meeting progressed, it became apparent to many of the participants that meeting together with shared goals, working on the really big issues, represents a shift in how the three groups view each other and understand each other’s perspectives. It also became apparent that this model of true partnership was the new paradigm under which we should continue to work together on developing the strongest possible response to the serious questions and issues we face. To that end, moving forward, it is the intent that future meetings will follow this model.

In order to reinforce that the three groups are joined together as one partnership, the entire group will now be called the **National Fire Leadership Council**.

Following are the summarized notes from the meeting. Additionally, a briefing paper further describing the National Fire Leadership Council is included as a supplement to the notes.

## **GROUP THOUGHTS & OPENING QUESTIONS**

- Is there a new normal?
- What is the new normal and how do we respond to it?
- How are our automatic/automated responses and culture setting us up or serving us?
- Who is missing from the conversation?
- How do we reinforce our old culture and why and when do we want and need a new system?
- How will we get comfortable with so much fire?
- Is FAM providing the right skill sets to Agency Administrators?

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2015**

- In the heat of the moment, people are asking ‘how can we do this better?’
- (We need to) understand the context so we can lead the change
- Took C-130s/Sherpas and operationalized them
- Troops did well; made good choices about who, when, where on Initial Attack, dealt well with an escape, it’s (the message is) getting down to the troops
- Forest (level) feels it had big picture and accurate focus
- Managed for multiple benefits during peak season in R3. We did fantastic this year nationally, integrating into the flow of business, i.e. wildlife biologists
- Great relationships, partners telling our story
  - Understanding each other’s values, cohesive strategy work paying off
- Proud of line officers
- Proud of Incident commanders
  - Trained one more woman
- Proud of making sense out of chaos
- We are opening to learning, rather than blaming and shaming
- Initial attack tone is changing
- Journey continues - are we responding to the new normal in old ways? We are beginning to respond in new ways.
- We are an agency that honors its fallen
- Asked my folks to do the impossible and they did it
- Federal/state IC meeting; Ken, Dave and I got together, assigned liaisons to timber companies, developed our own ICS. Our RO staff, ICs are stepping up to be leaders, proud of firefighters being so resilient

## **OVERALL IDEAS / OPPORTUNITIES / WORK GROUP CONCEPTS**

- Annual two week meeting in the off-season, along with community and fire representatives, to look at values and prep for fire readiness, town by town
- State and national values, sharing in meaningful way
- Engage public in process-social/human factors- preparedness for ‘new normal’
  - Change ‘fire is bad’ Mental Model and expectations of the public
  - Truth in lending disclosure for homeowners
- Conduct Firefighter preparedness- day of mourning
- There is an overarching agency ‘acceptance of casualties’
- Fundamental agency reorganization
- Restructure PIO organization/coordination
- Forest Service and Fire marketing strategy
- Truly shift investments from fire response to landscapes and communities, as per cohesive strategy
- Revamp training/taskbook/qualification system
- Shift response investments to prioritizing current available resources
- Include fire in LMRPs, need to work with planning, provide national direction for inclusion in LMRPs

## **SIX DISCUSSION THEMES**

1. Reducing Casualties

2. Serving the Land
3. Risk in Landscape Management
4. Caring for Our People
5. Achieving the Chief's Intent
6. Open Group

## **REDUCING CASUALTIES**

The Frame – Broad, integrated holistic approach (bigger than the FS)

The 3 Questions and Creative Recommendations:

1. How does culture/social-political factors influence decision making at
  - System/strategic level?
  - Individual/tactical level?

### **Creative Recommendations:**

**The Who:** John Phipps, supported by others

- Convene community of practice panels at appropriate scales and locality to uncover/discover/decode the reinforcing practices running in the system/in our culture, etc. (i.e. social scientists, local officials, firefighters, etc.)

**The Who:** Office of learning? Diagnostics? Academia?

- Sense-making at interagency scale. Discover and implement new reinforcing practices/behaviors for desired intention (reducing casualties)
- Attend to the ongoing effort to shift behaviors/practices. Check-in and monitor effectiveness

2. How does the relationship of perceived values-at-risk affect the level of firefighter engagement and exposure?

### **Creative Recommendations:**

**The Who:** T & D Center

- Market survey of technology to improve situational awareness
- Implement and deploy appropriate technology

3. How do we measure, weigh and incentivize good outcomes?

### **Other Questions:**

- What is our role in an interagency context?
- How do we weigh and compare values?
- Why do we continue to staff fires during critical periods (in the heat of the afternoon)?
- How do we fold in uncertainty within the margins?
- Why do we shy away from human related factors?
- How do we prepare our employees for casualties?
- How do we reconcile Chief's goals with realities associated with base rates?
- How do we determine whether we should be there in the first place?
  - Are we doing enough with what we have?
- How do we examine the role that culture is playing on decision-making?A
- Are other agencies assuming our responsibilities as we assume theirs- and if so, are we letting them?
- How do we know that firefighters know what they need to about values in order to make risk-based decisions?

### **Other Notes/Thoughts:**

- Explain benefits of fire
- Zero fatalities transfer to employee
- Understanding values (partners/us)
- Paid for service
- Framing (values/conversation/communities)

- More resources does not equal less risk
- Do we take more risk in IA? Or are more structures involved?
- Uncertainty in evaluating the risk equation:  $R = \text{probability of success} + \text{values at risk}$
- Risk management installed at all preparedness levels and across actions (RX/WF)
- Personalities that are attracted to adrenaline
- Culture?
  - How do we look at the ‘ever present uncertainty’ around risk management.?
  - How do we build adaptability into a changing system?
- Robots/dumb luck
- Emotions/can-do attitude/ lack of leaders intent/politics
- Anytime/anyone/leadership
  - Fear of
- Equipment/structure/resources
  - Inconsistent objectives/opinions
- Fatigue exposure
  - Unintended consequences
- Human dynamics
- Culture (leader/FAM)
- Communication (are ‘we’ hearing)
- Technology use – public info, location of personnel
- Risk vs. values (measure how?)
- When is it okay to risk employees’ lives?
- LCES works
- Can tracking devices on people and equipment save lives? Is it worth the liability?
- Behavior
  - Personal responsibility, treatment of others
  - Pre-season engagement- policy/intent
- Prep for bad outcome- What does this look like?/emergency
- Social science
- ‘We are in an identity crisis. Hanging onto our traditions
- ‘We will risk a life for...’
- Are other agencies assuming our issues and do we let them?
- There is no acceptable loss?
- Hard truth: we will lose people regardless
- Would all values being equal be okay?
- RX vs. Wildland fire
- Are we doing enough given the tools we have now?
- Human factors
- Weak signals

## **SERVING THE LAND**

The Frame – ‘All lands’ approach, long-term, resilient landscapes

The 3 Questions, with Creative Recommendations:

1. What is the common vision to ‘Serving the Land’ that includes a shared understanding of the challenges, agreement of size, scope and location, a plan for future learning and is adaptable?

### **Creative Recommendations:**

- More integrated approach/shared expectations at W.O.
  - Depend on/utilize a ‘neutral’ party to compile the common vision, i.e. FLNs through agreements
2. What do we need to do to be more proactive in order to manage fires more effectively on landscapes to achieve resiliency?

### **Creative Recommendations:**

- Advance ‘planning/simulations’
  - Build social license
  - Include strategic placement of fuels treatments
3. What is the ‘new’ definition/measure for success?

**Creative Recommendations:**

- Measure participation
- Measure changes to state legislation

**Other Questions:**

- What is the right ‘frame’ for discussion of ‘Serving the Land’?
- How do we work together to serve the land?
- Do we know where we want to go and how do we get there?
- How do we increase understanding and develop support in Beltway?
- How do we influence people who think short term?
- How do we create fire adaptive landscape with 2 million acres of treatment?
- Where are we uniting around common goals?
- When stove-piped internally, how can we expect partners to integrate?
- How do we sell our story?
- How do we define the community?
- Why doesn’t fire play a more significant role in land management planning?
- How do we care for people who care for the land?
- Can we be more transparent to our partners?
  - Can we really afford not to be?
  - Are we willing to prioritize with hard facts in mind in order to make the necessary tough decisions (surrounding prioritizing funding efforts)?
- How do we capitalize on joint efforts?
- Are land managers hearing these messages or are they still in the mode of getting work done?
- How do we prioritize with increasing urbanization in mind?
- Are folks struggling to get a seat at land management planning efforts as fire managers?
- How do we re-frame what to fear?
- Are we assuming responsibility for something we can’t control?
  - What are the assumptions we/public use?
- What portion of the ‘problem of fire’ can we own?

**Other Notes/Thoughts:**

- ‘Firefighter do no harm’ to the land, code of ethics
- Where is the sphere of influence in this complex system?
- Human dynamics and values matter
- To safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed. Use fire where allowable to manage our natural resources and as a nation, to live with wildland fire
- Does anybody really care about NFS land management?
- People ‘afraid’ of the woods
- Does our nation even know the kinds of ‘things’ that come from wildlands?
- Prioritization
- Return internal for restoration?
- Capacity
- Human hubris – we act as if we have a lot more control than we really do
- How does the trend to increasingly urban populations impact natural resource management?
- We change to help us serve the lands? It’s not just restoration, maintenance also
- Air quality
- No established process for getting fire into land management planning
- How to establish priorities for treatment?
- Smokey and Woodsy with drip torches
- Prioritize where and when greatest values are threatened, chance of success is high,

- Property infrastructure
- Natural resources
- Smoke is one place where land management objectives and community values collide
- Cohesive wildfire strategy
- Partners in All Lands approach
- Priority treatments on priority landscapes
- Can we really maintain nearly 200 million acres ‘fire-friendly’?
- Prioritize limited resources in conjunction with state and local requirements.
- Have we convinced ourselves that we need to change the way we manage fire and ‘culture’?
- As a leader in the agency how does your risk tolerance affect your land management actions, goals? Related to fire?
  - How do we come alongside new line officers to strengthen knowledge of fire and trust with fire staff?
- When we are stove-piped within the agency based on budget, how can we really integrate and how does that affect our work to engage partners?
- Is it possible to make the ‘hard’ decisions based on landscapes, partners’ dedication and resources-at-risk in regards to prioritizing fuels dollars- rather than divide it into small, insignificant allotments?
- Current funding initiatives feel like ‘initiative du jour’, disconnected from events, or rolled up into ‘grand plan of initiatives’

## **RISK IN LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT**

The Frame – Risk to responders more hazardous now than in the past, because of landscape conditions; fuels, snags (fire, insects, etc.)

### **The 3 Questions:**

1. How do we move ahead with our partners on the amount of risk we will take? Zone of agreement? Acknowledging shared risk exists along with shared responsibility. How do we achieve a common understanding in our workforce around risk?
2. How do we balance trade-offs and transfer of risk? Temporal and long-term? Under conditions not seen before? In uncertainty?

### **Creative Recommendations:**

- Inviting partners into WFDSS
- Pre-season conversations/simulations with partners
- Take advantage of ‘fresh-in-mind’ moments
  - After action/after-season with partners
- Provide mechanism for sharing risk management ‘success stories’
- Disincentives for risk management
- Take credit for meeting forest plan objectives via wildfire
- Tell the story (long-term)
  - How wildfire or prescribed burns modify the ‘next’ fire to not be as threatening
  - Be clear on expectations to public – ‘not able to save your house’

### **Other Questions:**

- How do we develop a common system to measure across agencies/partners? (shared values)
- How do we develop shared language of risk management?
- How do we learn what we need to from our actions and what are down-stream consequences?
- How do we understand political and social issues?
- How do we balance trade-offs and transfer of risk? Temporal and long-term
- How much is enough change to manage risk and can we ever achieve it?
- Are we looking at this the right way?
- What’s right equation and framework and how do we find it?
- What is society’s share of risk acceptance?

- How do we celebrate fuels management accomplishments?
- Are we fooling ourselves with plans for actions that are no longer relevant with changed conditions?
- How do we use science and technology for benefits to risk management/land management across agencies?
- How do we adjust our expectations?
- Who is missing/needs to be invited to conversations?
- How do we achieve common understanding of risk?
- How do we change the perception of risk to be in a better place next year?

#### **Other Notes/Thoughts:**

- We must change our thinking and actions around risk management to anticipate the ‘new normal’
- How/by whom:
  - Risk management summit
  - Create tools for use
  - Training course
  - In concert with partners? WFLC? NWCG? All levels
  - Make sure non-fire folks included
  - How do we measure progress in applying these principles?
- Is there a common understanding around risk in our workforce?
- How do we move risk management ahead into future?
- Are we conveying an accurate definition of success to our folks/ i.e. ‘losing Initial Attack’
- How do we change/mature our thinking/actions around risk management to anticipate a ‘new normal’?
- How do we teach our folks to evaluate hazards? Risk to themselves?
- Need more nuanced thinking about exposure (not all exposure hours are equal)

### **CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE**

#### **The 3 Questions and Creative Recommendations:**

1. How do we integrate ‘Caring for our People’ as a core value in the Agency?
2. If the statement ‘Caring for People’ is about more than EAP and wellness, how do we discover what that might look like?
  - Assumptions- it is more because;
    - EAP and wellness are not sufficient as they are and we need to specify why
    - They are only two of the number of tools in the necessary toolbox

#### **Creative Recommendations:**

The Who: National workforce succession committee

- Could analyze cost/benefit and do metrics
- Look at professionalizing FF job series
- Continue discussion and dialogue

**The Who:** Entire Agency

- Train employees to deal with others and integrate into leadership (ex. PTSD)

#### **Other Questions:**

- Where does agency responsibility end and personal responsibility start?
- How can we make CISM more effective?
- Does the new generation expect more; how do we engage with the new generations expectations?
- How do we look at 1039s relative to ‘our people’?
- What do the employees expect from the agenda; do they know what to expect?
- How do we take care of our employees who are taking care of others?
- How do we determine the value of caring for our employees and what do we invest?
- ‘You will not stand alone’ is one piece of puzzle, what are the others?
- What are we doing now that we could make more effective (i.e. EAP)?

- Have we lost our own sense of community?
- How do we take into account off-duty actions?
- How do we prepare employees for what we are exposing them to?
- What messages are we providing employees with our self care?
- What kind of conversations do we need to have about work/life balance?
- Continue doing what we are doing, but what are we missing? Taking care of our people and the structures to support them. What other elements are missing?
- Are we thinking about tomorrow? Prepare our people for what will happen. Will help our people think about risk more seriously
- How do we continually improve what we are already doing? Culture of learning. What else do we need to do?
- What conversations do we need to have regarding seasonal employees?
- How do we improve a demoralizing model – the fire hire model? What new model will get us where we need to be?

#### **Other Notes/Thoughts:**

- ‘Caring for the people who serve the land’
- How important is this to us?
- How good are we at this?
- What do we do well?
- What do we need to do better?
- How do we share best practices?
- How is the change in our nation affected caring for our people?
- Where have we been?
- Where are we going?
- “Here I am” to serve
- Are we kidding ourselves with the work/life balance idea?
- Where is the boundary/balance between our off duty /off-season employees and our leadership/management?
- Old ways – supervisor demanded no accidents; ‘I hired you to work safely.’ No accidents were reported.
- On average, ten times more FS employees die each year off duty than die in the line of duty
- We know what the agency expects of us (employees) what do the employees expect of the agency?
- In order to be good at this, we would need to be intentional about it.
  - Army/motorcycle example
  - Look at other organization’s response/structure to these issues.
  - World’s greatest job. Provide the hard truth so employees can make the choice recognizing there can be dire consequences
  - Orientation discussions and training to prepare ourselves ‘YWNESA’ a great piece of the puzzle; need the rest of the puzzle
  - ‘I have time to talk with you!’
- What commitment are we giving to the family as family liaisons? Do we really give liaisons the gut wrenching truth to do right by the family over time?
- Develop a family liaison reference book “tool box”
  - Being worked on by Steve Gage
- CISM- needs more capacity and more management of CISM teams (training, who is on team? Who is control?)
- Connection and Coordination!
- Off-duty/off-season, what is our role and our responsibility, okay to help, but needs to be limited.
- Do we care for our people?
- Varies by where one sits, common understanding, EAP/other resources
- Ask all employees – another series of discussions
- What are your expectations of the agency?

- What does ‘caring’ look like?
- NLC – Is it important to reduce/address off-duty deaths and PTSD?
- HR/hiring capacity adds to stress and workload
- Is the concept of seasonal work obsolete?
  - Maybe use them on projects
  - Develop soft-skills as we do technical
    - Learning journey?

## **ACHIEVING THE CHIEF’S INTENT**

The Frame – The occurrence of fire is a problem that needs to be stopped- negative impacts, costs

### **The 3 Questions and Creative Recommendations:**

1. It appears we are outside of our lane, offering or sending resources to protect values on local jurisdiction; are we willing to change – get back in our lane? If so, what are the consequences? What would it take to clarify our role/responsibility?

#### **Creative Recommendations:**

The Who: Senior fire leaders

- Review and update 2007 letter, consistent application through socializing; NLOT, IC/AC, FMO meeting
- Chief’s video, part of refresher
- Take care of our people so they know what we do, don’t do, and where they should/should not be
- Share R5 re-framed letter of intent to lay out the policies in a briefing paper with regional fire directors, NLOT, AC/IC

2. How should agencies share interagency intent while managing with different missions?

Creative Recommendations:

**The Who:** WFLC

- Short-term- prepare intent letter for WFLC to sign
- Be more deliberate about agency missions during pre-season meetings
- Long-term- training module for new generation

3. How can leader’s intent encompass all efforts including off-season work including fire adaptive communities and resilient landscapes?

Creative Recommendations:

**The Who:** WO-FAM

- Rework attachments
- Professional campaign for marketing; internally and externally, messages about living with fire in your neighborhood, changing behaviors

### **Other Questions:**

- Who’s paying their fair share and who’s paying for most of it?
- What about the acres being ‘restored’ with wildfires on the landscape?
  - Are we telling that story? That positive part of the story?
- How do we get ‘buy-in’ from partners when our missions are different?
- Interagency intent
- What’s driving our intent?
- How do we fold prescribed fire into the mix?
- By what metric should it be measured?
- What is okay to lose? A structure, watershed, etc. a strong message to our people- we don’t want you to lose your lives
- What does the forest of the future look like? Need this conversation to guide our decision making and give us consistency

### **Other Notes/Thoughts:**

- If fire is the ‘problem’ then more stuff will not solve it. Reframe: problem is high value resources next to flammable vegetation. Prioritize these values and protect them. Send ICs to them before they burn.
- Think about shifting entire culture – Ad Council
- Reasonable objectives to protect ‘what values?’
- Letter is an aspirational success statement
  - How do you measure aspiration – cross section/survey
- Given most fires are multi-agency, does the Chief’s Letter resonate?
- Federal fire policy, WFLC back
- Stakeholder support, relationships need to be at the local level
- Preseason relationships
- The less intent changes year to year, the better. “Poetry”
- Individual priorities. Reasonable objectives interpretation of doctrine (unspoken), reasonable to us vs. stakeholders
- Good definition of success but implementation?
- How do we enhance stakeholder support at multiple levels and sustained, local effort and messaging
- Unspoken: multi-cultural variability
- Leader’s intent is understandable to the field and acceptable to leadership
- Confidence of experience, the hero, can do, responsiveness
- More discussion of improvement
- Not measureable intent
- Could be doing more to work with stakeholders and understand pre/during/post seasons
- Make it real
- Relationships
- Everyone comes home
- How we measure firefighter safety
- We are minimizing risk better
- Politics and public pressure drive actions
- Every agency has a different mission
- How do we measure firefighter exposure
- People in proximity to a hazard
- Did we have a successful fire season?
- Knowingly accept risk/respond
- Definition of success is unachievable and un-measureable, ex. How is stakeholder support measured? What is reasonable?
- Politics/public managing expectations, not landscape objectives
- Community outreach team
- Public meeting/fire sim exercise using community and fire module
- Chief’s letter is written for ‘green people’ on ‘green lands,’ but that rarely happens
- Subjective
- Trade-offs – what are we measuring against, bias to action

### **OPEN/REFRAMING GROUP**

The Frame – “The occurrence of fire is a problem that needs to be stopped- it has negative impacts, costs”

#### **The 3 Questions:**

1. How can the ‘fire problem’ in the U.S. be re-framed?
2. How would this shift change our actions and investments?

#### **Creative Recommendations:**

- Potential re-framing; fire is going to occur and cannot always be stopped or should be stopped; focus shifts from stopping the fire to protecting the values at risk

**Other Notes:**

- What are the necessary conditions to be successful?
- Why/how does change happen in the FS?
- Someone from outside tell us who we are through their eyes
- Point-protection fire suppression
- Focus energy on the prescription around CAR
- New paradigm: Keep fire from impacting the values
- Old paradigm: Keep fire from doing bad things
- Is a national fire service inevitable and if so, how can we influence that/
- What is our 9/11 or black Saturday
- Are there different categories of values?
  - Bucket a: socio/economic/political – life, property, infrastructure, communities
  - Bucket b: Natural resource/cultural – T and E species, cultural sites, recreational opportunities, view sheds

**MOVING FORWARD**

- Charter Teams to develop sideboards, outline the work to be done, and identify work that can be accomplished before next fire season
- Seek out and engage SMEs/partners

**Three Teams / Workgroups to take the next step:**

<b>Caring for our people</b>	<b>Chief's Intent</b>	<b>Risk</b>
1. Shawna Legarza (FAM) 2. Julian Affuso (FAM) 3. Tawnya Brummet (NLOT) 4. Ralph RAU (NLOT) 5. Frank Guzman (FAM)	1. Sue Stewart (FAM) 2. Carol Hatfield (NLOT) 3. Scott Russel (NLOT) 4. Dale Deiter (NLOT) 5. Judy Palmer (FAM)	1. Kevin Martin (FAM) 2. Tom Montoya (NLOT) 3. Larry Sutton (FAM) 4. Bill VanBruggen (FAM)



# U.S. Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



15 November 2015

## Considerations for Deputy Chief/Regional Forester Discussion in San Diego

### Questions and the National Fire Leadership Council

#### Questions:

Good answers come from good questions. Good questions come from deep thinking about the issues which confront us. Good questions come from challenging current thinking.

#### National Fire Leadership Council:

The National Fire Directors/WO FAM meeting in late October took a different shape and resulted in a different outcome. The National Line Officer Team (NLOT) was invited to work with this group for the entire 3 days. After the eventful and tragic year, there was a recognition that we needed to spend the meeting thinking about the future.

It was the first time these groups met together for an entire meeting with the same goal. The Chief tells us "this is our new normal" and so we ask "then what is our new response?" this question and the questions and issues around it formed the basis of our three days. It was hard work, imagining what could be different.

We explored issues, asked hard questions, challenged each other's thinking and assumptions and stretched our imaginations.

Our work led to 17 Big questions related to six general areas (1) Caring for Our People (2) Reducing Casualties (3) Risk in Land Management (4) Serving the Land (5) Achieving the Chief's intent, and (6) Re-framing thinking.

Elements of these questions ranged from tactical to strategic, short term to long term. We were able to prioritize and sort to where three groups were formed around some pressing short term needs. Many of the answers to questions will require long term changes, some of the answers to these questions could be implemented by the summer of CY2016.

These groups are led by 2 Line Officers and 2 Fire leadership representatives. They are currently beginning work and have oversight from an "executive" leadership group which includes the chair of the NLOT and the National Fire Director. The NFLC is poised to assist the SFCL and NLC in improving our FAM program.

#### Contact:

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