

# **FIRESCOPE Predictive Services Weather Specialists Group**

Meeting Notes for the spring meeting held at the Forest Service Training Center at McClellan in Sacramento on May 8-9, 2013

## **Day 1 – Wednesday, May 8, 2013**

### Introductions

#### North Ops presentation – John Snook

- Wrote Annual fire Weather Summary
- Attended National Predictive Services meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in November 2012
- Taught 10 classes
- Wrote 350 SPOT forecast so far this year
- Preparation for morning Podcast continues
- Russ Gripp continues to travel for RAWs, PAL, etc.
- Starting 7 day coverage May 12<sup>th</sup>

### Updates from Fire Agencies

#### LA City Fire Department – Dan Curry

- The department is moving personnel around
  - 22 less people per shift on engines (down 16-17 engines per day)
  - 1.6 million dollars added to the budget to account for the reduction in personnel through June 30<sup>th</sup>

#### CALFIRE – Mike Doi

- No new personnel changes
- Proposition 30 passed which reverses a 60 million dollar loss to the budget
- There has been more fire activity than normal at South Ops so far this year
- Transitioning into summertime staffing
- Gave last year's fire statistics

#### Orange County Fire Authority – Jeff Shelton

- Implemented 6 hour BI
  - Would like to switch to hourly but there are initialization problems
- There has been a collaborative effort with NASA and JPL to develop a program for remote sensing of
  - real time live fuel moisture
- There has been a heavy exodus of wildland fire personnel
- Recent fire activity is corresponding with current fuel conditions
- Information distribution policy on protocols for fire weather information gathering like Red Flag Warning and High Risk days
- Collaborate effort for fuels program VMP burn in Rancho Mission Viejo

#### CALFIRE – Chris Waters

- 6 statewide teams now instead of 10
  - Team members may come from different portions of the state and may take longer to assemble
- Fire Environment Handbook being rewritten and should be available by June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013
- Fire Danger Ops Plan used for decision support
- Chris is bringing a national cadre together this December to hold a one week CALFIRE Advanced NFDRS course

#### Forest Service – Bob Bell

- 22-28 air tankers available for this year
- There continues to be hiring issues within the agency
- There are 11 type 1 or type 2 IMTs available in Region 5
- Changes have taken place within the personnel staff at the regional office
- Most resources will be on by mid-May
- ERC at most Forest Service station are at record levels for this time of year

#### National Weather Service – Dan Keeton

- Western Regional Office Director Vicki Nadolski Retired
  - Rusty Billingsly to fill in as director
- Kevin Baker is the new MIC at the Monterey office
- Todd Laricose is the new MIC in Las Vegas
- Each NWS employee may be forced to take 4 furlough days this summer
- Hiring and travel freezes are in place
- Making more use of social media
- There is a Facebook page for IMETs
- All forecast offices now participate in partner emails to notify customers of significant changes in weather conditions
- National SPOT forecast request page will be reviewed this summer
- Bullet version of the Fire Weather Forecast is now available

#### FIRESCOPE Task Force Updates – Bob Bell and Gary Lane

- Positions- Chuck Butler of LA County FD, is the Chair of the FS Task Force. Kirk Wells (OCFA) is the vice-chair. Steve Winter of Ventura FD is the new secretary. Ken Hood of NOPS is the new DOI/BLM representative to the Task Force. The updated Field Ops Guide (FOG) should be out soon
- There are now new standardized formats for Plans of Work, Charters, Rosters, etc.
- Review of MACS 410-4

#### Review Plan of Work – All

#### CARB – Jason Branz

- Changes to forecaster's schedule
- PFIRS
  - Mandatory by May 15<sup>th</sup> for Forest Service prescribed burns
  - Most prescription burners will be using PFIRS by this fall

- Bluesky will be incorporated next spring
- Better map functionality

#### Hourly Fire Danger – Tim Brown

- CANSAC
- Hourly BI Project
  - Funding issues – logistics in getting the money to DRI
  - Prioritize tasks for phase 2

#### RAWS Updates – All

- New RAWS near Lone called the “CFA” RAWS - CALFIRE
- Plans are in place to move the Chico, Mt. Diablo, and Beaumont stations. The Esperanza RAWS has already been moved
- All Cleveland NF RAWS moves have been completed. These included Alpine, Corona, Temescal, Oak Grove, and Goose Valley. It was noted by Steve Vanderburg of SDG&E, that the new Alpine site is considerably windier than the old. John passed this on to Russ, and Russ’s recommendation was that we rename the new site to ‘Alpine 2’ and get it a new WIMS ID number. SOPS seemed fine with this plan, and Russ said that if Station manager wanted to make it a formal recommendation, he would be happy to work with the CNF to make it happen. Site evaluations continue at these USFS sites: Blue Mtn on the Modoc NF, Blacks Mtn on the Lassen NF, and Rice Canyon on the Tahoe NF.
- Orange County Fire Authority is working with a local agency to put a new RAWS in Aliso Woods State Park
- LA City FD is working with LA County to put a new RAWS in Porter Ranch

### **Day 2 – Thursday, May 9, 2013**

#### Santa Ana Index Classification Project – Tom Rolinski and Steve Vanderburg

- This was a thorough and well-done briefing to bring everyone up to speed, and lay out the next planned steps. This work in progress will eventually be a true landmark accomplishment benefitting the southern CA Fire weather and Fire agency communities, as well as the general public. The principal partners involved are Predictive Services at South Ops, San Diego Gas and Electric, Desert Research Institute, UCLA, the NWS, and the fire agencies. The catalyst for this project was the large, damaging 2007 Santa Ana wildfire event in SoCal. Tom shared the basic equation that will be used to predict Large Fire Potential (LFP). The LFP comes from the multiplication together of 3 factors, representing wind speed, an air dryness number, and the Fuel moisture component (FMC). The FMC itself further breaks down to be affected by the 7-Day Sig Fire Pot. Dryness Level, Live fuel moistures, and a greenness factor in the annual grasses. Tom explained that in the meantime, what presently remains on their website is the older Index, the OFSI, which has some value but uses a more simplistic approach. It forecasts the chances of a new ignition exceeding 250 ac, and splits offshore winds into 5 categories.

#### AOP Update – Tom Rolinski

- Demonstration of the new AOP webpage and redesign

#### Updates from Russ Gripp – John Snook

- RAWS program
  - All FS RAWS (NFDRS and portables) will meet the May 31, 2013 transition date.
  - Plans are being developed to accomplish the life cycle replacement of the Vaisala hardware by the December 2016.
  - Cleveland NF station moves have been completed – Alpine, Corona, Temescal, Oak Grove, and Goose Valley.
  - Site evaluations are continuing at USFS RAWS at Blue Mtn (Modoc NF) and Rice Canyon (TNF).
  - Site evaluation is spooling up at Hidden Valley RAWS (NOD – Susanville area).
  - Forest Technology Systems (FTS) has been making their spring visits to users.
  - FY14 RAWS training is being impacted by FS travel caps.
- WIMS program
  - 34+ students completed the interagency WIMS training at WFTC in March.
  - FY14 WIMS training is being impacted by FS travel caps.
  - Consistency and quality of daily NFDRS observation have improved greatly over the past 4-6 years. Thank you.
  - Assisting DOFAW (Hawaii) with WIMS/RAWS issues with their 20+ RAWS.
- NFDRS program
  - 38 students passed the S-491 course presented at WFTC in April.
  - FY14 NFDRS course is being impacted by FS travel caps.
  - Assisting Forests with the challenges of “managing PAL values” on their units as part.
- FireFamily Plus
  - Version 4.1 released several weeks ago. Users should begin using this version.
- NFDRS, WIMS, RAWS training
  - Courses will be impacted by travel caps
  - FTS will provide local training for their products. Contractors available for Vaisala training
  - On line WIMS training will be available for FY14
  - “There is no currently-identified work around for S-491. It really needs to be taught in the Region in FY14.” 40 students is a full class. Will work to make that happen. Agencies need to vocalize support for the course to GATRs and WFTC.

#### SDG&E Updates – Steve Vanderburg

- Discussion of SDG&E’s network stations
- Fuel sampling program – run by retired Forest Service employee
- Purchasing wind profilers
  - Plan is to put the profilers on trailers so that they can be mobile and moved to different locations for different weather events

#### WFDSS – Larry Hood

- Updates
  - New map layer interface
  - 7-Day product incorporated
  - NWS Planning forecast added
  - ERC Charts now can be displayed
  - MOB Guide was modified to show changes to WFDSS protocols
- WFDSS Fire Behavior Analysis

- Basic – snap shot in time
  - Short-Term Fire Behavior – 1-3 days
  - Near-term Fire Behavior – 4-6 days
- FS Pro – Most people don't understand it
  - Calculates probability of fire spread
- Why FS Pro?
  - Uncertainty in weather
  - Long duration fires
  - Large fires
  - Risk assessment
- How does FS Pro work?
  - Simulates fire growth under many weather scenarios
  - Uses minimal travel time
- California Fire Behavior Analysts
  - 68 total
  - 20 non-fed fire behavior specialists
  - Computer security requirements
    - Only 12% compliance among non-fed users
- WFDSS is a perishable skill
  - The user needs to use it a lot.
- Understanding WFDSS
  - Security issues
  - Educating users as to what the outputs mean

#### Miscellaneous Issues – Jeff Shelton

- Incident Management Teams
  - Now that there are only 6 state teams, response time will be longer because it will take more time to assemble the team since members will be coming from opposite ends of the state.
- Bringing Fire Behavior Analysts to the GACCS
  - Need to develop a plan to do this

#### Next Generation Incident Command System (NICS) – Chris Waters

- Specific Issues
  - NICS environment
  - Mapping tool
  - Can't rely on the Situation Status unit from the IMT to keep NICS current
  - Information can come from different sources and can be inaccurate
  - Is used for a reporting tool
  - Not used for "official" fire perimeter information
  - There may come a time soon when the funding source ends

**All action items have been captured in the Plan Of Work document**

**The next meeting will be November 20-21, 2013 in Los Osos which is near Morro Bay**