



Connections Call

October 2, 2025

Executive Board: Erik Litzenberg (IAFC), Greg Smith (NASF), Heath Cota (USFS), Casey Teske (NPS), Heath Hockenberry (NWS), Eric Fransted (FWS), Annie Benoit (OWF), Steven Weidner (NASA)

NWCG Staff: Katie Wood (NWCG Program Manager), Sarah Lee (NWCG Deputy Program Manager), Erica Lamb (Coordinator), Steven Gaskill (Coordinator), David Schultz (Coordinator), Chelsea McKinney (Publications Manager), Toni Suminski (Training Program Manager), Omaira Falcon (Webmaster), Michael Rodriguez (Executive Secretary —Acting)

Committee Chairs/Reps: Vance Anderson (RSUSC), Andrew Bailey (IFPC), Cole Belongie (DMC), Martin Cassellius (WUIMC), Kristen Corkins (NIMSIC), Craig Daugherty (IPSC), Beau Dobberstein (NIAC), Peter Dutchick (TDC), Benjamin Evans (6MFS), Eric Graff (IHOPS), Kerry Greene (PIOSC), Michael Guarino (HTTFS), Don Hannemann (DMC), Mark Hilton (RSUSC), Mark Hnat (EMC), Justin Jager (IFUASS), Victoria Leshuk (IATS), Mack McFarland (RMC), Christopher Moore (FBSC), Nick Nauslar (FENC), Julie Osterkamp (FRSC), Kimberley Owczarzak (IASC), Gina Papke (UIB), Pete Lahm (SmoC), Sean Peterson (NCSC), Kara Stringer (UIB), Travis Verdegan (FDSC), James Wallmann (FWSC), Matthew Woodwick (NIAC), Shawn Zimmermaker (WFISC)

Topic & Notes

Agenda Review and NWCG Staffing Update:

- Staffing Update
 - Pending offers for NWCG vacancies include Incident Performance and Training Modernization (IPTM) Project Manager, and two NWCG Training Specialists.
 - Detailers include: A Writer/Editor, an Instructional Systems Specialist (ISS) Supervisor, and the Executive Secretary position.
 - Current vacancies include:
 - ISS Supervisor
 - Audio-Visual Supervisor
 - Audio-Visual Specialist
 - Training Specialists (multiple)
 - Writer/Editors (multiple)

Incident Performance and Training Modernization (IPTM) Update:

- FY2025 Closeout/FY2026 Strategic Priorities
 - Evaluation and Maintenance Plans
 - NWCG has 110 unique courses, each requiring ongoing maintenance.
 - These plans will create consistent oversight and outline responsibilities.
 - No course should go more than three years without review.
 - Revisions are timely and manageable.
 - A standardized evaluation feedback tool will be added to the NWCG website.
 - Feedback will be triaged using a criteria-based process. Some updates would be handled immediately. Others may require committee decisions.

Additional information beyond these meeting notes (i.e., handouts, presentations, maps, etc.) will require a FOIA request to ensure proper privacy regulations are followed.



Topic & Notes

- Continue implementation of IPTM effort.
 - Revision of internal SOPs for the NWCG Training Program.
 - Improved engagement with the training delivery community to bridge development gaps.
 - Improvements for NWCG online courses and course catalog.
 - Implementation of the NWCG Training Program 2026 Annual Work Plan.
- Non-IPTM Course Progress
 - S-290, Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior (Blended): Certified and available; debut scheduled for Texas Wildfire Academy the week of October 7, 2025.
 - L-280, Followership to Leadership: Materials under final review; debut scheduled for Texas Wildfire Academy the week of October 7, 2025.
 - S-390, Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior Calculations: Final materials complete; portal launch expected by December.
 - S-490, Advanced Fire Behavior Calculations: Test course week of October 20, 2025, at National Advanced Fire & Resource Institute (NAFRI). Portal launch is expected by December 2025.
- IPTM Course Development
 - M-280, Resource Advisor, Fireline: Alpha test held in August 2025; certification expected by Dec 1, 2025, for *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1 inclusion.
 - S-219, Firing Operations: Certified and live in portal.
 - S-131 & S-231: Alpha tests scheduled for the week of October 7 at Texas Wildfire Academy; completion by year-end.
 - S-203, Incident Information: Alpha test November 17-21, Las Vegas, NV; Beta test tentative February 2026, Rocky Mountain Area; certification projected for May 2026.
 - S-229, Single Resource Boss: Delayed; target completion March 2026. Will affect initially anticipated 2026, *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1 updates.
- Planning
 - Call Order 8: Delayed to January or February 2026, due to staffing shortages. Positions confirmed: Incident Commander Type 4 (ICT4), Helicopter Manager, Single Resource (HMGB), Heavy Equipment Boss, Single Resource (HEQB), Single Engine Airtanker Manager (SEMG), Ramp Manager (RAMP).
- Courses slated for revision:
 - S-200, Initial Attack Incident Commander
 - S-236, Heavy Equipment Boss
 - S-273, Single Engine Airtanker Manager
 - S-372, Helicopter Manager
- Call Order 9: Initiation phase begins late spring. Focused on low-effort updates for positions lacking formal training-deliverables include updated Incident Position Descriptions (IPDs) and Position Task Books (PTBs). Positions are tentative.



Topic & Notes

Committee Reports:

- **Communication Education and Prevention Committee (CEPC):**
 - Preparing for their virtual October meeting.
 - The Fire Cause task group is currently paused and expected to start back up this fall/winter.
 - Public Information Officer Subcommittee (PIOSC):
 - Working on S-203, Introduction to Incident Information Alpha/Beta test courses.
 - Planning to submit a Request for Change for the Public Information Officer Technician (PIOT) name.
 - Proposal due to concerns about the terms “Officer” and the “T” mnemonic indicating a “trainee.”
 - Fire Prevention Education Teams Subcommittee (FPETSC):
 - As of last update, eight teams had been deployed in 2025, with one team active in Colorado at the time.
 - Wildland Fire Investigation Subcommittee (WFISC):
 - Updating the FI-210, Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Determination course, with nearly all materials submitted to publications.
 - Collaborating with Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) on funding proposals for research on fire pattern indicators.
- **Data Management Committee (DMC):**
 - Focused on data standards and organizational kinds/categories.
 - Drafting business rules for data centers and terminology.
 - Expanded documented data standards from ~100 to nearly 500.
 - Working to integrate standards into the website.
 - *NWCG Standards for Unit Identifiers*, PMS 931 being expanded to include organizational data.
 - Document to go out for review this month.
 - Major data cleanup completed in California with over 62,000 attributes updated.
 - Coordinating with the Department of Defense on military unit identifiers.
 - Added a new wildland role: Landowner Only.
 - Geospatial Subcommittee (GSC):
 - Preparing GISS position for IPTM (timeline may shift).
 - Gathering training materials for S-341, GIS Specialist for Incident Management, as the course is regularly updated due to technical complexity. Two virtual deliveries scheduled for spring, 2026.
 - Collaboration with MYRTA, Interagency Fuel Treatment Service, and Spatial Fire Planning Service.
 - Jurisdictional Unit data standard went out for review on September 9, 2025.
 - Additional standards in progress include Protection Unit and Fire Danger Rating Area.
 - Fire Reporting Subcommittee (FRSC):
 - Drafting a Fire Data User Guide for release next month.
 - Developing the first annual wildfire statistics report which will include data such as agency acres burned, number of fires, etc., by state and GACC.

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- Upcoming Data Summit hosted by DMC.
 - Scheduled for November 4 – 5 in Boise (virtually).
 - Subject to change depending on shutdown status.
- **Emergency Medical Committee (EMC):**
 - Top Priority: Rapid Extraction Module Support (REMS) tasking (25-001 TM):
 - On track to deliver to the Executive Board by December 2025.
 - Will finalize during a virtual meeting in late November 2025.
 - Addressing equipment specification questions with contracting for the upcoming season.
 - Developing FAQs for *NWCG Standards for Rapid Extraction Module Support*, PMS 552 based on field and social media feedback.
 - Clarifying REMS standards and implementation.
 - Collaborating with RMC on:
 - Reorganization impacts.
 - Incident Within an Incident (IWI) standards and medical incident report updates.
 - Incorporating lessons learned to improve field products.
- **Equipment Technology Committee (ETC):**
 - Several advisories released, including:
 - ETC-EA-2025-01: Pre-2006 Fire Shelter Degradation and Discontinuation of Use
 - ETC/RMC Safety Bulletin 25-001: Laundering to Decontaminate Wildland Fire Clothing
 - ETC-EB-25-004: New Aquatic Invasive Species – Golden Mussels
 - Fire Shelter and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Subcommittee (FSPPEs) projects underway:
 - Helmet comparisons and other PPE evaluations.
- **Fire Environment Committee (FENC):**
 - S-290, Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior certified earlier this year.
 - S-390, Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior Calculations nearing certification; expected within the next month.
 - S-490, Advanced Fire Behavior Calculations still on track for December 2025 certification.
 - Test course scheduled at NAFRI.
 - Fire Environment Mapping System (FEMS) transition from Weather Information Management System (WIMS).
 - Official transition occurred yesterday.
 - Minor issues expected; data is flowing successfully.
 - Some state concerns about station data are still being addressed.
 - Fire Behavior Field Reference Guide:
 - Collaborative effort across subcommittees (including Smoke).
 - Will be submitted to NWCG Publications by December 1.
 - PDF and online versions will be consolidated into one document.

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- **Fuels Management Committee (FMC):**
 - Continued support for IPTM-related work:
 - Firing Boss (FIRB) and S-219, Firing Operations course development and completion.
 - Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO) IPTM prep underway, targeting April 2026 for potential analysis week.
 - Ongoing project to review all stewarded positions and their training requirements:
 - Focused on identifying differences across agencies. Aiming to establish common training standards and improve agency alignment.
 - Long-term goal: inform updates to *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1 qualification requirements.
- **Incident and Position Standards Committee (IPSC):**
 - *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1 finalization is underway.
 - S-420, Intermediate Incident Management, will have an Alpha test course in December at NAFRI.
 - S-320, Introduction to Incident Management Teams transition plan finalized:
 - Recommended January 2026.
 - Required in January 2027.
 - L-280, Followership to Leadership was approved as a requirement for Single Resource Boss positions beginning January 2027.
 - IPTM-Driven Changes: Significant coordination is required with other committees due to IPTM changes.
- **Incident Business Committee (IBC):**
 - Preparing for the evaluation of various AD pay rates this fall/winter.
 - Collaborated with National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) this summer on Buying Team operations and purchasing restrictions.
 - Finalizing an updated instructional video to match the new *Emergency Equipment Shift Ticket*, OF 297.
 - Updating forms related to the *Property Loss or Damage Report – Fire Suppression*, OF 289, as well as the *Emergency Equipment Rental Agreement Form*, OF 294.
 - Working with Risk Management Committee (RMC) on fatigue management and firefighter health, including hygiene and decontamination practices.
- **Interagency Fire Planning Committee (IFPC):**
 - Resource Advisor Subcommittee (READSC) has been supporting the 2025 fire season and responding to IPTM-driven changes.
 - Monitoring the status of the DOI Fire Planning Memo.
 - Exploring alignment opportunities between DOI and Forest Service.
 - Tracking changes in fire danger metrics and their impact on planning policy.
 - Engaged in Next Gen WFDSS:
 - Evaluating its role in decision support and strategic planning.
 - Providing recommendations based on current observations.

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- Upcoming engagement:
 - Michelle Riley (Wilderness Program) will talk about fire in wilderness training and is seeking input on a training initiative.
- Anticipating potential changes to committee structure after October's quarterly meeting.
- **Leadership Committee (LC):**
 - L-280, Followership to Leadership course was recently certified and being delivered at the Texas Wildfire Academy. Aligns with the upcoming requirement for all Single Resource Boss positions, effective January 2027.
 - Updating "Leading in the Media" tools.
 - 2025–2026 Leadership Campaign includes quarterly updates – Q1 and Leadership Campaign kickoff information posted on the NWCG website.
- **National Coordination System Committee (NCSC):**
 - Annual Meeting scheduled for February 2026, in-person, in Boise.
 - National Dispatch Academy:
 - Basic Academy successfully delivered in spring.
 - Intermediate Academy scheduled for November 3, 2025, in Redmond (16 days long).
 - Advanced Academy planned for fall 2026 at NAFRI.
 - Collaborating with National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC) on a national flight schedule request and standardized flight strip form:
 - Approved and awaiting NWCG publication.
 - D-312 (Aircraft Dispatcher Course): Fully redesigned. First Alpha delivery will occur at the Intermediate Academy.
 - D-510 (Supervisory Course): Offered twice every other year. Nominations are currently open.
- **National Incident Management System Integration Committee (NIMSIC):**
 - Focused on endorsement development and updates, currently working on logistics positions. Coordinating with Incident Logistics Subcommittee (ILSC) to:
 - Align endorsement timelines with IPTM changes.
 - Avoid evaluating positions undergoing IPTM revisions.
 - Acknowledging Secretary Order and Memo language. National Incident Management System (NIMS) Integration will play a role in endorsement processes moving forward.
- **National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC):**
 - Seeking exemption from the NWCG Pause on New Incident Positions and Courses for Helicopter Manager Limited Use/Restricted (HMLR) position — proposal to be presented to the Executive Board.
 - *NWCG Standards for Aerial Ignition*, PMS 501 has been updated and is with NWCG publications.
 - Six positions have significant change recommendations in progress (primarily UAS-related). Targeting inclusion in *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, 310-1 for 2026.
 - Airtanker Base Operations Unit:

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- Proposed creating an instructor-led course for the Fixed Wing Parking Tender (FWPT) position.
- Interagency Aerial Supervision Subcommittee (IASS) will present a potential Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO) Academy modeled after CAL FIRE's program, with curriculum updates.
- Standing up a Light Fixed-Wing Standards Team:
 - Will develop cooperator standards for light fixed-wing aircraft.
- Planning an in-person meeting in February or March 2026.
- **Risk Management Committee (RMC):**
 - Planning an in-person meeting in February 2026, to align with the NWCG annual meeting.
 - A work group is updating the SAFENET program.
 - Finalized the Safety Officer, Field (SOFF) position. Updates will be reflected in the 2026 *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1.
 - Wildland Firefighter Health & Well-Being is collaborating with the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP).
 - Drafting an IMT exposure letter template (inspired by smoke events in California).
 - Voluntary Respirator Use Memo will address the lack of approved respirators for fireline use.
 - Safety Officer Toolbox is getting high traffic on NWCG website. Frequently used by ADs and field personnel.
 - Gathering feedback from IMTs on sleeping areas and fatigue-related concerns.
 - Working on risk management glossary terms.
 - Hazard Tree & Tree Felling Subcommittee (HTTFS):
 - Faller 3 (FAL3) transition plan approved in August. Updates will be reflected in the 2026 *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1.
 - *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Chainsaw Operations*, PMS 212 has been updated to reflect new course content and will continue to evolve with course development.
 - S-212, Wildland Fire Chain Saws (Faller 2 Course) initial development completed in September. Sent to ~25 external SMEs for review.
 - Faller 2 (FAL2) IPD was approved by the subcommittee.
 - 6 Minutes for Safety Subcommittee (6MFS):
 - Preparing new topic areas and coordinating with the Lessons Learned Center.
 - Mental Health Subcommittee (MHSC):
 - Completed the September Suicide Awareness Week campaign.
 - Currently redefining direction and priorities.
 - Lessons Learned Center (LLC):
 - Fully staffed.
 - A new podcast was released.
 - Encouraging the use of the Rapid Lesson Sharing Tool to submit field-based lessons and help disseminate critical information.

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- **Smoke Committee (SmoC):**
 - Experienced a pause in activity over the summer due to member availability. Planning to resume regular meetings and engagement this fall.
 - Leveraging Forest Service funding to support an external review of smoke-related training across IPDs, PTBs, and other platforms.
 - Attempting to integrate key smoke messaging into broader training.
 - Addressing media and public concerns related to smoke exposure.
- **Training Delivery Committee (TDC):**
 - Educational Technology Subcommittee (ETS) is transitioning from a subcommittee to a working group. Will operate on a call-as-needed basis.
 - Considering another revision of *NWCG Standards for Course Delivery*, PMS 901 to update course numbering, titling, and information standards. Coordination with IPSC is planned, as they were involved in the original document. Aims to improve clarity around coordinator roles and feedback mechanisms.
 - Continuing to support IPTM implementation from a delivery perspective.
- **Wildland Urban Interface Mitigation Committee (WUIMC):**
 - *NWCG Wildland Urban Interface Mitigation Field Guide*, PMS 053 has been published and is available in the fire cache system to order.
 - Completed the intake form for a new RT-130, Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR) module featuring the Starwood Mitigation Video.
 - WUI Mitigation Team Positions (2) are currently listed in the *Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement*. Still in early adoption phase. May be further developed and recommended for *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1.

Closeout:

- Next Connections Call will be replaced by the in-person NWCG Annual Meeting:
 - Dates: February 18 – 19 2026.
 - Location: Boise, ID.
 - Attendees: Chairs and vice chairs of primary and subcommittees, Executive Board, and NWCG staff.