



# PREDICTIVE SERVICES OVERSIGHT GROUP

## PSOG NOTES

March 17, 2023

0900-1200

### Attendees:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facilitator: Megan Kephart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chair/NICC: Hartman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NMAC: Fransted
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Co-Chair/GACC: Tomaselli	<input type="checkbox"/> CGAC: Nuttall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fire Management: Achziger
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fire Management: Hinckley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OWF: Fallon	<input type="checkbox"/> FMB: Russell
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS FA: Gardunio	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS Intel: SeLegue	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS Met: Strader
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LTP: Nauslar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Admin: Johnston	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Additional Attendees:** Scott Mayer, Robyn Heffernan, Cheryl Bright, Heath Hockenberry, Charles Maxwell

Topic	Presenter(s)	Purpose
Long-Term Plan Concepts	All	Decision

### Schedule:

**NEXT MEETING: March 31, 2023, 1000-1130**

### Agenda:

#### Long-Term Plan

Currently, time is running out for these conceptual topics and documents to be presented to Congress from the FMB tasking.

Ultimately, FMB as a strong parent group will have the final say and decision-making capacity, PSOG needs to decide what concepts the group agrees on to push forward to FMB for discussion.

On the Commission, there are 50 entities trying to come to a consensus on these topics. We are looking for agreement, in principle, to the concepts knowing that there will need to be additional discussion and vetting on the specifics in the future.

#### Integration with NOAA:

1. Support the concept of having future integration with NOAA/NWS for Fire Environment Decision Support Services, this would include:
  - An all of government approach, facilitated by legislation and appropriations that break down the barriers between DOI/USDA/USGS/EPA/NASA and NOAA, and establishes perhaps one (NFEC) or two Fire Environment Centers (East and West) analogous to the other National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) excellence Centers.
  - Transforming "Fire Weather" services into "Fire Environment" services.
  - Promoting involvement in a robust, supported, and trusted Fire Weather Testbed that feeds into the Operational Proving Ground (OPG) validating innovation, and incorporation into operations that transforms products and service, and earns the trust of wildland fire enterprise operational practitioners.

This specifically has not yet been discussed or vetted through NOAA though there are related, coordinated responses already being started.





No comments or questions.

**Consensus: Support**

## Interagency Governance and Standards

2. Request an interagency governance board to oversee operational implementation and integration of science and technology for fire environment, adherence to fire environment data and product standards, and coordination with fire environment science and technology partners (e.g., NASA, NOAA, USFS RD&A, USGS, WFIT).

This would be a governance board that doesn't currently exist.  
No comments or questions.

**Consensus: Support**

3. Promote development of comprehensive fire environment data and product standards through NWCG Fire Environment, Smoke, and Data Management Committees, while coordinating with PSOG to develop standards for Predictive Services products and services.

No comments or questions.

**Consensus: Support**

4. Support RSFWU Proposal: Regionally located crews perform maintenance for all federal NFDRS RAWS with one uniform standard. The Unit changes from providing services through contracts, except for State needs, to a holistic cost-shared federal program that can provide a higher level of service, including emergency services, because of more crews and regional locations.

Include the full description naming of the programs in addition to the acronyms.

Some of this is already happening, we would just like to add additional support and ensure this continues to happen.

Many of the agencies (FS, NPS, FWS, DOD) are partially switched over, but none of them are fully committed at this point.

Non-federal RAWS stations would not be included, it would only apply to federal stations at this point. There should maintain space to incorporate state RAWS stations through contracting abilities in the future though the decision would be on a state-by-state basis and capability.

**Consensus: Support**

## Infrastructure

5. To ensure infrastructure that can provide accurate, reliable, objective and science-based fire environment data and products – Support physical and management improvements or





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changes to components of the fire environment infrastructure that result in a more functional, coordinated, interagency Fire Environment Monitoring and Prediction System. This would include:

- Providing business requirements for 24/7 on call operational technical support for integral fire environment data and applications (WX-Weather/WFMI, FEMS, etc.).
- Requiring infrastructure be managed by technical specialists: RAWS Electronic Technician Crews, Mets and Analysts, WFIT Fire Environment Business Area Program Managers & Business Leads.
- Promoting proper technical support and oversight for development, operations, and maintenance of key fire environment applications (e.g., FEMS).
- Supporting WFIT Enterprise Data Architecture development that would standardize and centralize data for applications providing coordination of data flow from one application to another.

This has several moving pieces in it that are already occurring from different angles, but the goal is to ensure a stable infrastructure with standards.

There aren't currently many designated Business Leads, and most of the duties are collateral duties in the current system.

Some of the people assigned to the products and applications don't have the technical expertise or the operational setting to consistently provide the necessary support.

This would clean up the overall program.

Currently, there isn't anyone designated to quality control quality assurance data. Someone may flag the data if they see it, but there is no one assigned to the duty of monitoring the data if it looks incorrect or needs to be fixed.

One of the biggest topics within NOAA is making decisions on the red flag danger side, so this would be highly beneficial.

**Consensus: Support**

## Integration Unit

6. Support a proof-of-concept organization of 1–3-year NTEs from BIL funding that are hired for integration projects of a medium range time span that support Predictive Services mission and data infrastructure. More capacity could be added to the unit through staffing with detailers and short-term assignments. It could also act as a training ground for Predictive Services and help with recruitment of necessary skillsets.

The integration project needed almost immediately would include the Unit working under direction of the WFIT Data Management Program with their Fire Environment Business Area Lead to accomplish tasks including:

- Mapping the entire Fire Environment Monitoring and Prediction System
- Updating Fire Environment Capabilities and Priorities for applications
- Creating data standards and requirements for current application development in





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coordination with NWCG Fire Environment committees

- Evaluating the 20-year gap-filled RAWs data algorithms through standardized analysis in coordination with Predictive Services and DRI

This proof-of-concept could serve as a mid-term plan since it will help to update, stabilize, and ensure the data capabilities that Predictive Services relies on.

The integration project would tackle things that have been identified as one time clean-up duties.

The NTE would be a pilot to gauge the necessity of the position and what it would take to keep things running.

The decision on whether the position became FTEs would be based on how the NTE goes.

**Consensus: Support**

## Prediction Services Mission and Support

7. Predictive Services Program provides Decision Support at all levels – National, GA, and Agency Regional/Local. Decision Support defined as synthesis of available data or products into forecasts, assessments, or reports, then providing briefings, visualizations (charts, dashboards, story maps) or products to the customer.

- National Customers: NMAC, NICC, FMB, FEC, WFLC, DOD, White House inquiry, Congressional inquiry, international inquiry, private industry, public
- Geographic Area Customers: GACG, GACC, States, State legislation inquiry, adjacent international inquiry, private industry, public

Is the mission that we have on the charter appropriate and correct as we interpret it?

Not all GACCs or PS units have the same list of customers. The goal is to have a standard of what PS are supposed to do and to who the products are being provided for.

This is to codify and clarify the PSOG mission statement.

**Add to bullet #2 local government and local federal units. – Unanimous support**

Is NOAA considered a customer? NOAA is seen more as a cooperating partner and collaborator rather than customer.

**Consensus: Support**

8. Predictive Services Program provides integration of best available data, science, and research into its decision support and products, while also supporting Research to Operations (R2O) processes.

This speaks to no more “good enough” and the use of what ever you can get your hands on being used to provide products. Band-aids would not be considered SOP.

**Maintenance should be added as part of R2O -> R2OM.**





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## Consensus: Support

9. Leverage existing Research and Development conduits and provide funding for specific Predictive Services needs or to boost R2O and tech transfer capacity. This would include the already interagency supported USFS Wildland Fire Management Research, Development and Application (WFM RD&A) Program and BLM Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP).

Conversations have been had about this partnership and all parties agree on the idea of forming this partnership. This R2O is currently non-existent.

The R2O is important but the maintenance should also be included as it is just as vital.

NOAA has a robust research bed that is moving along, so that could be an avenue to an interagency opportunity.

PS is the only fire environment operational body that exists within wildland fire and the RD&A should reflect that importance.

Accountability needs to be added, especially for the maintenance piece of it as well as verification of the maintenance performed.

The amount of money being dumped into research for fire is astronomical but where we sit, there isn't a growth in funding. There needs to be an avenue to get the funding to operations rather than the current bottleneck PS faces.

Will there be integration with PCAST? These concepts are touching on a lot of what they have, so PCAST will definitely be a support.

Validating that we are acknowledging the issues and are working on them through PSOG will be integral.

## Consensus: Support

10. Update and standardize position descriptions and ensure proper communication about hiring and strategic PS planning via PSOG. Develop national and GA-level training and SOPs to ensure continuity of operations during transitions and new hires.

Talking to the mets and analysts, this is a huge priority.

With the current national efforts on PDs, some of these may already be in review. Add "along with current efforts."

Does this only include the current PDs or does this expand to creating a career ladder and adding additional positions in the future? -Yes, we need to look forward strategically and update the entire PS program.

Across all programs, all PDs, some standards need to be created in order to bring cohesion.

Agencies aren't aligned with unilateral PDs – add something about Department level alignment.





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**Consensus: Support**

## **Predictive Services Program Oversight and Staffing (Follow up Questions)**

11. National Predictive Services Program Oversight (lead, pilot, manage, and supervise). This is also referred to as the Predictive Services Program that is located at the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC), which is managed by the NICC Center Manager. There might also be an additional question(s) or discussion(s) on what a program manager is and or does.

**Change Oversight to Manager – Unanimous support.**

NICC center manager is currently in charge of Predictive Services when previously there has been a Fire Weather Program Manager (up until 2018) which was also when PSOG was created.

Ultimately does PSOG support some sort of national PS Program Manager here at the NICC? – Eventually it could potentially expand into a national Weather Support Program Manager and an Intel Program Manager.

Here at the national office, the meteorologist and intel coordinator are being asked to fulfill the duties that a program manager would normally have, which takes time away from the products they are responsible for putting forth year-round.

NICC Center Manager doesn't have the time to dedicate to also overseeing the PS Program Manager.

At the very minimum, there should be a PS Program Manager that is not operational giving them full focus capability for PS.

Don't lose sight of the potential of a director over the program with stand-alone units beneath such as the Director of FFS.

Who oversees these programs? A barrier in PS has been that every time there is a problem, there is no budget etc. to solve it without bringing in a coordinating group or center manager. Bringing someone in with technical expertise and the leadership space would help the program and the overall functionality.

**Consensus: Support**

12. National Predictive Services Program Staffing. This is the type and number of Predictive Services Positions that exist (proposed) at the NICC.

Several positions, including a website czar, have already been proposed.

This refers to an overall increase of the staffing at the national level, whether that be meteorologists, fire analysts, intel positions, etc.

What would the differences between the staffing at the GACC level vs the national level? - TBD

NICC can provide the staffing analysis that shows how the duties are being distributed and how much over their current FTE they are having to work to fulfill all the jobs.



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Having more staffing at the national level could solve a lot of the issues as they might be able to provide more support and help to the GACCs as well.

This needs to be expanded to describe what is being looked at, how it's going to work, how it ties into the LTP, the accountability, verification, etc in addition to the analysis.

There could be additional asks from NOAA to the agencies to provide more, so the additional staffing would be supportive of that.

Brief to FMB that we realize we need more help and that we still need some additional time to decide exactly what that looks like. – Is there a minimum recommendation of positions (as long-term details) that we can put forth while working through this.

Cannot continue to rely on current positions to fulfill collateral duties.

Thinking about budget cycle, coming to FMB initially with a minimum ask would be helpful to promote more immediate action.

**Consensus: Support**

13. Geographic Area Predictive Services Program Oversight (lead, pilot, manage, and supervise). This is also referred to as the Predictive Services Program that is located at each Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) and are managed by the GACC Center Managers (in most cases). There might also be an additional question(s) or discussion(s) on what a program manager is and or does.

**Change from "Oversight" to Program Manager.**

Currently, everything PS falls under the Center Manager.

Some GACC center managers will not accept having a program manager and take away the lead/manager terms from the PDs.

Under the coordinating groups, some have miscellaneous committees, so there should potentially be an additional PS committee.

Who does the Program Manager answer to? Will be flushed out later, though will ultimately be up to each GA and the agency that is funding the position.

**Change the concept to "Geographic Area PS Program Manager" with the expectation that every GA will have a Program Manager rather than leaving it open-ended and allowing the potential for sharing as that could cause some GAs choosing to forego having one.**

A PS Program Manager PD would need to be created that could specify be anything (intel, met, fire analyst, etc.) to create standardization but would need some sort of technical and subject matter expertise.

The lack of a standardized positions is partially responsible for the current situation and taking this to FMB with a basis for cost estimate would help future planning purposes.



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## Consensus: Support

14. Geographic Area Predictive Services Program Staffing. This is the type and number of Predictive Services Positions that exist (proposed) at a GACC.

What is the minimum needed to meet the obligation to the national office as well as the standardization requirements to keep the program afloat?

A standard baseline is what we want but it can create friction with the center managers when trying to tell them what positions they need to have despite.

There is currently no “bench” to pull the help from when other areas need help. While a certain position is not busy in their own GA, they could be assisting other GACCs. The staffing minimums in the GACCs would help support not only their own GA, but others as well.

Our duty is to come up with the minimum standards and not to worry about the accountability piece.

NOAA is currently being asked to fill the NFDRS position holes year-round which adds strain to their workforce.

The goal is to describe the standards, and the minimum needed to fulfill the needs of the customers and partners.

Identify long-term details in critical positions to fill the needs identified now, while working through the analytics of personnel needs at the GAs.

Can simply let the GACC center managers know that we are working on the critical NTE staffing while working on the bare minimum requirements for the LTP staffing.

FMB will want to know:

What do we need to keep the STP from falling apart and how much is it going to cost?

If moving towards standardized staffing, give rough estimates on how many positions to start working on funding that is going to be needed.

## Consensus: Support

### Additional:

**CGAC on March 29** – They would like a briefing on the progress.

Derrek will work with Nick on a short powerpoint outlining things that have been agreed upon and next steps.

Will be clear about the fact that these ideas are conceptual.

This is an opportunity to start a dialogue and get opinions before finalizations happen.

The sooner we can publicize what is going on and where we’re headed with this, the better it could be for buy in so people who are directly impacted aren’t surprised.

Present a one-pager in addition to the documents attached for feedback would be in the best interest of the group.





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Sharing the ideas in the documents could cause issue as they are only concepts rather than anything solid.

-This is the first time there has been consensus on principles/concepts and the documents don't necessarily reflect the agreed upon ideas.

Need to decide what exactly should be shared at this point and create some sort of story board in addition to a feedback form.

**Presentation to FMB on April 19** – Updated LTP will be taken forth

This is just a draft as FMB ultimately has the final say before anything moves forward.

## **Moving Forward:**

Work with comms shop to start going through the vetting process that only has as much detail as it needs to have.

Nick did review #1-5 with the PS group earlier this week to let them know what was being discussed.

Derrek will discuss with Brian a long-term facilitator for PSOG moving forward.