

NWCG Fire Environment Committee

Date: 27 August 2025

Attendees:

- Cheryl Bright
- Chris Moore
- Robert Clark
- Nick Nauslar
- Ben Hatchett
- Robyn Heffernan
- Travis Verdegan
- Tim Brown
- Dave Schultz
- Natalie Kerhwald
- Pete Lahm
- Billy Guardino
- Darren Clabo
- J Kevin Hiers

290/390/490: Chris Moore: 290 certified in mid-August, need to figure out revision schedule with NWCG. 390 certification for Dec 2025, NWCG testing functionality on the portal. 490 contractor submitting materials to NWCG on Friday, test course set up for Tuscon, 2025 certification also December, may get pushed back.

S-491: Chris Moore: 491 was cancelled for October (491 now a pre-requisite for 590), checked with co-lead instructors, material has been re-written the last few offerings (due to FEMS?). Cheryl and Chris thinking about re-writing to make a more analyst-specific class. Been in discussion about what to do...Nick and Chris spoke with Jen Anderson about what to do, being a co-lead on constantly changing class is tough. Ideas about re-writing the class, NWCG has a pause on re-writing classes, and no timeframe on IFPM going to remove requirement for center manager or not. Upcoming class in spring in California then another April or May in Missoula. Want to make it more incident-specific, replace steering committee with FBANS/LTANS to make it more applicable to fire danger on incidents.

Cheryl: Fire danger operating plans are not part of NWCG, one problem with 491 since a mix of day job and incidents. Fire danger is more geared to day job stuff, going to have to figure out where this is going to go. Maybe get NWCG out of the middle of this since is causing confusion and problems.

Nick: Can we do this to make it more specific to analysts? What would that look like from NWCG perspective?

Dave: makes a lot of sense, would be supported path forward, may be a few years before can dive into this. Nick: Next year could not start re-writing process, may be an issue given 491

situations? Dave: would be hard to meet timelines of re-write during 2026 given staffing/IPTM, but steering committee could help, he will check on this though. Chris: LTANS/FBANS need to have a voice if going to be incident-specific. Cheryl: Class is a bear since doing analysis for planning, gearing it towards analysts would be shorter, easier to teach, and may be able to teach at the GACC again (also not requiring a steering committee). Has been teaching so much about NFDRS, and needed the steering committee. Could get down to 2-3 days if focused (FEMS and other tools). Nick: Will need to get approval to remove center managers. Lots of changes with WIMS going away and FEMS taking over. Lots of moving parts. Chris: Office with dispatchers, support taking it out of 491, but want some class on how fire danger affects dispatch procedures (in case of delay or if IFPM does not support it). Cheryl noted a Red Book revision for fire danger is occurring right now for 2026.

LTAN/FBAN/IPFM: Chris: approved/finalized a few weeks ago. New taskbooks out for each one. Improvement, 71 tasks in old taskbook and many were not relevant. Will update IPDs and send along by end of week.

Peter Lahm: What is the AD pay rate rising to? Chris: From a J to a K rate has been proposed.

Safety Zone/Safe Separation Distance: Nick: memo did not go to exec board, as they deemed it unnecessary since no official tasking. Exec board will not issue a 'no adoption'. FENC put together memo that there is no agency consensus support, went through vetting but not supported, distribute out to partners and agencies to close the work on what Dan has been championing the past few years. Anyone opposed?

Robyn: Supports the path, but wants to make caveat that we don't have consensus for operational implementation of it (work itself, but not implementation).

Robert: Is this what is being used in trainings? Nick: since not approved, everything that was updated in 390 was removed, went back to old 'standard' (not technically a standard, this is a training).

Dave: OK to go this route from NWCG perspective.

Nick will draft this up before next FENC meeting.

Round Robin:

Pete/Smoke: International Smoke/all things smoke! Tallahassee! IAWF call for papers/abstracts coming soon. USFS adding 750 clarity sensors to system, in addition to purple airs/other obs. Canada has new information in their map. On NWCG re-org, have a lot of non-committal partners, tasking as a trigger, self-driven work, seeing the light at end of tunnel but not sure how this will look. Can I get copy of LTAN/FBAN taskbooks?

Chris/Fire Behavior: Reminder that will re-write fire behavior field reference guide this winter. Was messing around with it to see what it would take.

FBFRG Rewrite Assignment

Splash Page - Chris

Weather - FWSC

Fuels - Andrew/ Steve

Fuel Moisture - Andrew/ Steve

Mapping - Nate

Surface Fire - Greathouse

Crown Fire - FCESC

Fire Assessment - Chris

Best Practices Fire Modeling - Nicole

Fire Danger - FDSC

CFFDRS - FDSC

References - Tonja

<https://fs-prod-nwcg.s3.us-gov-west-1.amazonaws.com/taskbook/pms311-29.pdf>

<https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/position-taskbooks/pms311-124>

Nick: each subcommittee has different sections.

Travis/Fire Danger: Met last week or so about transition and set up of Fire Family Plus. Recurrant need to do analysis versus starting from scratch. 491 would be nice to build the course we want. A lot to figure out about fire danger things. Talked a lot about pieces of information we have (Websites/documents/etc), trying to bring those together, and get up to standards. Having standard for fire danger rating needed, a little hesitant to push things forward until see what happens with NWCG.

Dave/NWCG: NWCG restructuring status: couple exec board members incorporating feedback from listening sessions, talked through that to finalize the draft and move back to agency review stage. Still working through some edits, should be new version coming out, hoping somewhat soon for subcommittees to take another lap, still aiming for Feb 2026. Lots to figure out (websites, etc). Vice coordinator position now filled by Steven Gaskill (sp)? Starting to fill in Katie's committees.

Nick: With the exec order to combine/streamline fire agencies, is that being reflected or still operating as if things are the same?

Dave: Too many unknowns with agency consolidation, so moving forward as is and will adjust after the fact.

Darren/Fire Wx: No updates, just trying to figure out how NWCG going.

Robert/States: FEMS new updates, changing data updates, breaks everyone's spreadsheets, so would like more communication from the FEMS team on updates/releases. CAL FIRE sponsoring 491 class at end of January (hard to send out of state).

Nick: still on track for Oct 1 transition for FEMS from WIMS, so please make adjustments! Service change notice from NWS (relic from WIMS), switching to gridded output pull that FEMS is using.

Billy/Predictive Services: Trying to project out when next annual meeting will be (Nov/Dec/Jan).

Robyn/NWS: Awareness that NWS director will be coming to NIFC next week, will be meeting with agency leadership on the base, taking him out to an incident if possible to see end-to-end services.

Tim: Usually ignore climate change papers these days since talking about things we already know. The persistence PDO pattern seems to be anthropogenic, made a good case to seeing more extended drought periods in the west. Other fun thing, Olympics coming up in 2028, IOC, some convos suggest they are interested in extreme weather but nobody asking about fire and smoke given locations of other events.

Nick: Fire and fuels conference will be in Tasmania this? Next? Year.

Tim: IAWF human dimensions in Calgary in late October.

Kevin/DoD: DoD wrapped up VR prize challenge, some spectacular results, may be worth talking about that (final selection will be in September in Florida). Nick: can you send more info about this and selection process? Selection event, now opening up to observers in fire community. Having access to this is great for the community. Other thing of interest, have money to expand east's 3d fuels (fast fuels), creative remote sensing for high res fuels, hoping to operationalize vegetation mapping tools to complement LANDFIRE.

Nick/NWS: RH biases in NWS operational models are being worked on.