



June 26, 2025 | [Fire Weather Subcommittee](#) Meeting

Members/Invited Attendees:

Darren Clabo (NASF/SD State, Chair), Jim Wallmann (USFS, Vice Chair), Dennis Burns (NASF), Larry Van Bussum (NWS), Drew Daily (NASF/OK Forestry Services), Kari Fleegel (NWS), Colby Neuman (NWS), Brian Potter (USFS), Paul Sopko (USFS), David Schultz (NWCG Coordinator/BLM), Nick Nauslar (NWS), Tom St. Clair (BIA), Eamon Engber (NPS), Robert Field (NASA/Columbia), David Church (NWS)

Actual Attendees: Darren Clabo, James Wallmann, Brian Potter, Kari Fleegel, Dennis Burns, Colby Neuman, Nick Nauslar, Eamon Engber, Robert Field, Drew Daily

****These and past notes are also available internally in our [Google Drive folder](#).**

Agenda

1. **Proposed NWCG Restructuring** (Darren Clabo/Nick Nauslar)
2. **Fire Behaviour Field Reference Guide, PMS 437** (Darren Clabo)
3. **Fire Weather Handbook Updates** (Darren Clabo)
4. **Mixing Height Climatology Parameter from NWS Salt Lake City** (Darren Clabo/Nick Nauslar)
5. **Round Robin** (all)

1. **Proposed NWCG Restructuring** (Darren Clabo)

Overview: The June 2, 2025 proposal from the NWCG Executive Board goes from 17 parent committees to 10 management committees, with a maximum of 4 subcommittees. The Fire Weather and Fire Behaviour, and Fire Danger subcommittees would go away. They would be folded into the Incident Command Branch II - Plans Management Committee - Fire Environment Subcommittee (FESC). Underneath that, there could be subgroups of SMEs, but there wouldn't be any outward facing web presence on the NWCG page. Committee group roles of the chair and vice chair would become limited to primary agency members. Primary Members would be represented by only 1 person per Primary Member agency, with the same with Associate Members. There is room for Advisors, but they would be closely monitored. Only leadership driven tasks would be worked on by the lower levels of the organization, instead of subcommittees planning their own tasks and direction. The goal is to bring more structure to the 1,200-

1,700 folks involved in NWCG. After a review process, a plan is expected to be revealed in February 2026.

Nick Nauslar added that the focus on this restructuring is on the mission and priorities, and to limit change that may be for change's sake. This would be the 3rd rework in around 18 years. Our specific tasks in this restructuring may be mainly focused on IMET/FBAN position descriptions.

Any feedback we have will be collected by Darren by July 2nd via email. Darren will then send a bulleted list to Nick by July 7th for FENC review.

Group discussion of this proposal commenced. Nick Nauslar, in speaking with Cheryl Bright, noted that research to operations is part of the proposed process. A separate conversation with Robyn Heffernan brought up that structures and organizations can help facilitate, but the process is what is most important.

The primary fire groups include the NWCG FMB (Fire Management Board), National Multi-Agency Coordination Group (NMAC), FEC. The NWS is not primarily in any of those groups.

Brian Potter brought up how difficult it may have been to get rid of the Haines Index and Lightning Activity Level parameters with this proposed structure, and said that 2-3 other groups would need to be involved with delegation authority to even start working on the process. He proposed that under 7. b. that the weather and behaviour subcommittees at a minimum to allow for additional weather knowledge. The NWS wouldn't be able to be a committee chair, as they are not a primary member, they are an associate member. Restricting membership to only 1 representative per agency was also a concern. For example, if USFS gets only 1 representative it restricts them to either operational or research focussed personnel. Brian was also questioning how this reorganization would align with the National Wildfire Agency, and proposed waiting for at least another year to figure out how the National Wildfire Agency would be structured and where NWCG proposals would fit.

With a top/down approach, Drew Daily wants assurance that scientific integrity is followed, as many changes are usually from the bottom/up.

Kari Fleegel noted that this reorganization would slow down discussions and changes overall as was concerned about the workload of a select few at the highest levels. Another concern was losing out on some of the lower level discussions and ideas gathering that goes on in some of the subcommittees that would be going away.

Jim Wallmann said that the biggest thing is who would be in charge of the coordination and decision making.

Dennis Burns is concerned that there may not be full knowledge of what all of our subcommittees do, and that there would be fewer folks to highlight scientific research and operationally validate the ideas.

Darren Clabo said folks may have a difficult time justifying their time with NWCG to their management if their involvement is no longer forward facing (no longer part of a subcommittee) but an SME.

Nick Nauslar noted the lack of access regarding topics that need to be discussed at different levels through the proper chain of command. Basically, we would have less access to the decision makers.

Eamon Engber noted that it's important to have FBANs and IMETs both separately and together in the subcommittees, and Brian Potter brought up a discussion topic on if weather should be a part of NWCG?

2. **Fire Behaviour Field Reference Guide, PMS 437** (Darren Clabo)

[Fire Behavior Field Reference Guide, PMS 437 | NWCG,](https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms437/fire-behavior-field-reference-guide-pms-437)
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We have been officially delegated to review the fire weather section of the Fire Behaviour Field Reference Guide (PMS 437). There are currently 437 and 437-1, plus a PDF version. They will be combined into 1 version, with changes due by mid November. There is a lot of material under the Weather section. We have been asked to review it and bring up suggested changes for our upcoming meetings.

3. **Fire Weather Handbook Updates** (Darren Clabo)

The Fire Weather Handbook is nearly completed. Darren will send us all the framework with 3 different components: Basic Principles, Fundamental Processes, and Moisture. Topics include items like upslope/upvalley winds and the details on what causes them. He is looking for verification that this non-chapter type of approach makes the most sense for the Fire Weather Handbook.

4. **Mixing Height Climatology Parameter from NWS Salt Lake City** (Darren Clabo/Nick Nauslar)

This is an update to the presentation by NWS Salt Lake City Science and Operations Officer David Church. FENC would like to hear our opinions about how to scientifically vet the creation of the Mixing Height Climatology before it becomes operational. The main concern is that it should be scientifically based, to limit any issues that came about because of the quick implementation of the Haines Index. Additional concerns were noted during our May 22nd meeting

([meeting notes](#)). We will strongly suggest to Heath Hockenberry that the project doesn't move forward without published, peer reviewed research.

5. **Round Robin** (all)

Nick Nauslar: Weather models, RRFS and the REFS (ensemble version), evaluation period ends in a few days. These models are expected to replace the NAM, NAM-nest, and an additional hires model. Some concerns have been mitigated. The 2-meter dewpoint is too moist in post processing, around 5-20 degrees too high during peak heating/well mixed environment. This has been worked on with a lower dewpoint being used. Winds aren't as strong as they need to be. It's a priority for version 2 that fixes or best practices are implemented for the winds. REFS is underdispersive, which means that it can not catch some of the more extreme outliers. The HRRR and RAP13 models will continue for now.

Dennis: The S-490: Advanced Wildland Fire Behavior Calculations rewrite continues and is 92% complete with a final exam and geospatial modelling sections still being worked on. Julie Rutherford, USFS/North Ops Meteorologist presented the weather section yesterday and did a good job of discussing the mixing height as a smoke dispersion tool.

Brian Potter: There is a Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) call for proposals that came about cataloging fire potential indices and scales, and evaluating them. Brian will not be putting in a proposal, but is coordinating with Jay Charney. Overall, research is in flux at this time. AirFire has little to no research dollars, but the ARA program does have additional funds for tools and researching those tools.

Jim Wallmann: The Geographic Coordination Center (GACC) 7-Day Significant Fire Potential graphics high risk triggers have been simplified across the country. Wind is on its own. They are looking into additional research to improve the product.

Drew Daily: Zack Tolby has moved on from the Director of the NWS Fire Weather Testbed.

Darren Clabo: With the NWCG proposal asking for chair and subchair folks of the subcommittees being more involved with interagency coordination, it could limit our ability to be in those positions. Thomas St. Clair hopes to make next month's meeting. **Darren is really proud of all of the work we have done with the Fire Weather subcommittee!**

Next meeting July 17, 2025 at 11 am MT **typically the 3rd Thursday of each month**