



November 16, 2023 | [Fire Weather Subcommittee](#) Meeting

### **Members/Invited Attendees:**

Darren Clabo (NASF/SD State, Chair), Jim Wallmann (USFS, Vice Chair), Larry Van Bussum (NWS), Calvin Bailey (NASF/SC State), Dennis Burns (NASF/CA), Kari Fleegel (NWS), Colby Neuman (NWS), Brian Potter (USFS), Paul Sopko (USFS), Robert Swofford (BLM), Dave Schultz (NWCG Coordinator/BLM)

**Actual Attendees:** Darren Clabo, Dennis Burns, Colby Neuman, Kari Fleegel, Larry Van Bussum, Dave Schultz

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

### **Agenda**

1. Membership change discussion (Darren Clabo)
2. Coordination within NWCG to discontinue use of the Haines Index and Lightning Activity Level (Darren Clabo)
3. Cefa gap-filled data and fire modeling (Darren Clabo)
4. Round Robin (all)

1. Membership change discussion (Darren Clabo)  
Dave Schutz (NWCG Coordinator/BLM) is the new representative to the Fire Weather Subcommittee. He replaces Katy O'Hara.

Primary Member Mike Stavish is looking to step down from our subcommittee and has nominated Colby Neuman. Colby Neuman is the NWS Science and Operations Officer (SOO) out of the Portland, OR office. His past work included being in Intern at NWS Salt Lake City, 3 years at NWS Spokane, and over 11 years at NWS Portland. Prior to this meeting, Darren Clabo spoke with Nick Nauslar (Chair of the Fire Environment Committee/BLM) about any concerns swapping out an NWS Primary Member with another. There were no concerns. We voted unanimously to make this change. The NWCG webpage had been updated with the new roster information by November 17.

2. Coordination within NWCG to discontinue use of the Haines Index and Lightning Activity Level (Darren Clabo)  
Two memos were created, [Recommendation to cease using the "Lightning Activity Level" in Wildland Fire Forecasts](#) and [Recommendation to cease using](#)

the “Haines Index” in Wildland Fire Forecasts. A copy has been sent out to our subcommittee members by Dave Schultz. We had been coordinating this effort internally and formally discussed both the Haines Index and Lightning Activity Level (LAL) with the Fire Behaviour Subcommittee at our joint meeting in October. It has also been brought up to the Fire Environment Committee (FENC), with a recommendation to be passed up the chain and presented to the NWCG Executive Board at their November 14 meeting. Darren Clabo presented at this meeting. Recommendations will be coordinated at the next NWCG Executive Board meeting, with the removal of the products geared to NWS products.

Dave Schultz mentioned that the next step is to create a timeline or transition plan about when the Haines Index and LAL would be or could be removed from different NWS products. This can be presented to the NWCG Executive Board as early as their December meeting. Dave has a document showing quick search results of both terms in NWCG documents/pages, including 6 publications, 6 training courses, and approximately 30 other locations. He will share this list with those who need it.

It is expected that the NWCG Executive Board would be able to support the plan, with a suggested date of January 2025 when both the Haines Index and LAL would no longer be mentioned. This would time out with the publication of the next edition of the IRPG (Incident Response Pocket Guide Handbook).

Larry Van Bussum spoke to both NWS Fire Weather Headquarters personnel, Heath Hockenberry and Robyn Heffernan about their removal. The official process would include a 60 to 90 day public feedback period. Larry highlighted that it will be important to educate folks why they are being removed, with the public notice including much of the same verbiage as our memos to the NWCG Executive Board. Given the public feedback period, the Haines Index and LAL may still be in fire weather forecasts for Spring 2024, due to the required documentation. Colby Neuman asked to be included in the conversation about the process of getting rid of the Haines Index and LAL, to get a better understanding of the process.

Darren Clabo will speak with Patrick Marsh, Chief at NWS Storm Prediction Center (SPC). Dennis Burns noted that the timing of the removal of the Haines Index and LAL would align well with the S-course revision schedule.

3. Cefa gap-filled data and fire modeling (Darren Clabo)

Tim Brown, Research Professor, Climatology and Director of Western Region Climate Center, continues to work on answers to our questions on the gap-filled data. Darren Clabo will send his answers to our subcommittee members when he receives them.

Dennis Burns asked why we are creating data for a station that only goes back 10 years to fill it all the way back a full 20 years? Darren Clabo noted that the

Fire Environment Mapping System (FEMS) will initially be set up to hold all of the RAWS data and have only 1 stream of data where you would turn on or turn off the gap-filled data (or flag).

Larry Van Bussum was wondering if we are addressing a point issue and not finding solutions to a map based issue. He noted that currently, all of the fire forecast systems are using the point data. In the future, gridded/mapped data may be the solution. Dave Schultz has spoken to Cheryl Bright (Chair of the Fire Danger Subcommittee/BIA) and stated that she is interested in moving to a gridded or mapped database. Darren Clabo added that model output in complex terrain is a large concern.

4. Round Robin (all)

Darren Clabo and Dave Schultz added that the NWCG annual meeting will be held February 21-22 in Boise. Both Darren Clabo and Jim Wallmann are expected to attend in person.

Next meeting January 18, 2024 at 10am MT (*December meeting is canceled*)  
\*\*3rd Thursday of each month\*\*