

TERMS OF REFERENCE

COMMITTEE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, OPERATIONS, AND RESEARCH NEEDS (CESORN)

JOINT ACTION GROUP FOR THE NATIONAL WILDLAND FIRE WEATHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT (JAG/NWFWNA)

1. BACKGROUND AND DOCUMENTATION OF ANTECEDENT ACTIVITIES.

a. In 2001, the Interagency Federal Wildland Fire Policy Review Working Group, at the direction of the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, reviewed the *1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy & Program Review* and its implementation. The review's recommendation was: "A national plan should be developed that articulates the weather products, standards, and services needed to support the entire spectrum of wildland fire responses, and the best means of meeting these requirements." It was further stated that "The OFCM (Office of the Federal Coordinator for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research) is uniquely qualified to develop such a plan."

b. In June 2005, the Western Governors' Association (WGA) approved Policy Resolution 05-04: National Wildland Fire Weather Program. Within the policy, the WGA urged the OFCM to complete a National Needs Assessment Report of federal, state, and local fire managers' needs for weather information in the wildland fire and prescribed fire decision-making processes. In addition, the WGA suggested a framework to meet those needs by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS), federal land management/research agencies, and other partners.

c. Shortly after the WGA's meeting (June 2005), the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Weather Services contacted the Federal Coordinator and solicited help in conducting a National Needs Assessment.

d. On November 18, 2005, a meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research (ICMSSR) resulted in Action Item 2005-1.1:

ACTION ITEM 2005-1.1: National Wildland Fire Needs Assessment. ICMSSR concurred that OFCM should move forward to form a Joint Action Group (JAG) under the Committee for Environmental Services, Operations, and Research Needs (CESORN), to review the needs and requirements for wildland fire weather information, to include identifying organizational responsibilities and addressing the following issues: data collection, fire weather research, weather forecast services, data assimilation, **air quality**, information dissemination, education and outreach, and user response.

2. PURPOSE.

a. An abundance of accumulated biomass in forests and rangeland and persistent drought conditions are contributing to larger, more costly wild fires. Although wildland fires are now recognized as being both naturally recurrent and healthy in many ecosystems, they pose serious threats to safety and the protection of life, property, and public health. To effectively manage fire in the wildland environment, fire and air quality managers need timely, accurate, and detailed fire weather and climate information. The Joint Action Group for National Wildland Fire Weather Needs Assessment (JAG/NFWNA) is part of an effort underway within the OFCM to respond to direction provided by the ICMSSR to undertake a national wildland fire weather needs assessment of stakeholders' needs for weather and climate information in wildland fire decision-making.

b. The primary goals of the national wildland fire (i.e., wildfire, wildland fire use, and prescribed fire) weather needs assessment are to:

(1) Conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of weather and climate needs of providers and users in their wildland fire and fuels management activities.

(2) Assess the capabilities of the provider and research agencies to ensure that needed weather and climate information is available to fire and air quality managers and other users.

3. STAKEHOLDERS.

a. To meet the above goals, the assessment will involve a number of federal stakeholder agencies, which include:

- Department of Commerce
 - National Institute of Standards and Technology
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Department of Defense
 - All Service components
 - National Guard / Reserve
 - United States Army Corps of Engineers
- Department of Energy
- Department of Homeland Security
 - Federal Emergency Management Agency
 - U.S. Fire Administration
- Department of the Interior
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - Bureau of Reclamation
 - National Park Service
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - U.S. Geological Survey
- Department of Transportation

- Federal Aviation Administration
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Railroad Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Health and Human Services
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- National Science Foundation
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - Forest Service
 - Natural Resource Conservation Service

b. In addition, the above agencies provide support to many state and local constituents, including, but not limited to, the following:

- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- Intertribal Timber Council
- National Association of Counties
- National Association of State Foresters
- National Fire Protection Association
- Non-Governmental Organizations (e.g., The Nature Conservancy)
- The State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators and the Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials
- Western Governors' Association
- Western States Air Resources Council

4. RESPONSIBILITIES.

The JAG will:

- a. Identify stakeholders and their constituents and assess their wildland fire weather and related programs.
- b. Develop questions to assess the weather and climate information needs of the stakeholders and constituents. The questions will provide the baseline to gather data for the assessment. Data gathering will be accomplished by many means, to include conducting of mini-workshops (see next paragraph) and telephone interviews.
- c. Conduct mini-workshops to bring in subject-matter experts on specific functional areas covered in the assessment.
- d. Develop a comprehensive assessment report that documents the wildland fire weather and climate information needed by the fire weather and air quality stakeholders; the functional areas covered in the assessment will include:

- Data collection, integrity, processing and archival
- Fire weather research and development
- Forecast products and services
- Modeling, prediction, and data assimilation
- Information dissemination and technologies
- Education, training, outreach, partnering and collaboration
- User response, decision support, and resulting user impacts
- Funding and human resource considerations
- Socioeconomic impacts

e. Identify gaps in meeting identified weather and climate needs.

f. Develop recommended strategies to resolve deficiencies.

g. Outline basic and applied research and development needs and priorities for science application (two-way interaction between researchers and operational users) .

h. Consult with subject-matter experts based on the needs of the JAG members.

5. DELIVERABLES.

a. Generate a draft national wildland fire weather needs assessment report. (1st Quarter FY2007)

b. Plan and conduct an interagency forum/workshop in November or December 2006 to bring together the responsible federal agencies and stakeholders, together with representatives of the user communities, academia, and the private sector to review the framework for the wildland fire weather needs and to further identify priorities and issues for needed research and development to fill gaps in our capabilities. (1st Quarter FY2007)

c. Complete the final report and provide to ICMSSR, Federal Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research (FCMSSR), and the WGA. (3rd Quarter FY2007)

6. MEMBERSHIP.

a. Membership will be drawn from all federal agencies that are stakeholders in the development or use of wildland fire information; each agency will be invited to provide a primary and alternate member.

b. The JAG/NWFWNA will be augmented as needed by additional federal and non-federal personnel to provide subject-matter or other expertise.

c. Cochairs will be selected by the Federal Coordinator.

d. The Federal Coordinator will provide the Executive Secretariat.

e. The JAG membership will be approved by the Federal Coordinator.

7. PROCEDURES.

a. Meetings shall be called by the Cochairs and shall normally be convened in facilities provided by the Federal Coordinator. A final agenda item for each meeting will be to establish a tentative date for the next meeting. Dates and agenda will normally be finalized two (2) weeks prior to meetings. The JAG will normally meet monthly until its business is completed.

b. JAG decisions will be by consensus agreement of all members whose agencies are stakeholders in the decision. Members may abstain from voting without prejudice to the decisions of the JAG. Members may reserve their position pending agency clearance or instructions. Decisions may be reached in formal session or through correspondence (including e-mail) circulated to the members by the Cochairs or the Executive Secretary (on the Cochairs' behalf).

c. If all members whose agencies are stakeholders in the decision are unable to reach agreement, the Cochairs will report the matter, with full documentation, to the CESORN.

d. Action items will be reviewed and agreed upon at each meeting. The Executive Secretary will send the draft action items to the JAG members to review and comment within five working days after a meeting. The Executive Secretary will document the action items along with other major decisions in a brief, informal record of actions (ROA) within 15 working days after a meeting. This record, which may be distributed by e-mail, may also include copies of presentations and other important documentation.

e. Amendments to these Terms of Reference (TOR) will be approved by the CESORN.

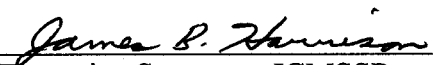
8. REPORTS AND RECORDS.

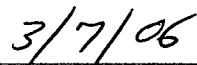
a. The JAG shall prepare reports and publications identified in this TOR and others as requested by CESORN.

b. Records of the JAG shall be maintained in the OFCM.

9. TERMINATION.

The JAG should complete its assigned tasks within 18 months and shall be terminated by the CESORN when assigned tasks are complete, unless additional tasks are assigned.


Executive Secretary, ICMSSR


(Date)

REFERENCES

The following policy and guideline documents may be helpful for background understanding of agency missions, priorities, and activities:

1. Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2001) [http://www.nifc.gov/fire_policy/history/index.htm]
2. Interagency Agreement for Meteorological Services among the Interagency Wildland Fire Agencies [the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior; the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture] and the National Weather Service of the Department of Commerce, valid October 31, 2002 through October 30, 2007. [Available from the National Weather Service.]
3. 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy & Program Review (1996) [<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/wdiap.htm>]
4. A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (2001) [http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/fire/final_fire_rpt.pdf]
5. A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan (2002) [http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/fire/implem_plan.pdf]
6. Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems – A Cohesive Strategy (2000) [<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-IMPACT/2000/November/Day-09/i28509.htm>]
7. National Wildfire Coordinating Group National Fire Danger Rating System Weather Station Standards (PMS 426-3) [<http://www.fs.fed.us/raws/standards.shtml>]
8. Quadrennial Fire and Fuel Review Report (2005) [http://www.nifc.gov/nimo/backgrnd/qffr_report.pdf]