

**INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES AND
SUPPORTING RESEARCH (ICMSSR)**

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

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

Meeting Summaries

- 1. Purpose:** To provide a summary of the first two meetings of the Joint Action Group for the National Wildland Fire Weather Needs Assessment (JAG/NWFWNA). The first meeting was held January 25-26, 2006, in Silver Spring, Maryland; the second meeting was conducted March 1-2, 2006, in Boise, Idaho, in conjunction with the National Wildfire Coordinating Groups' (NWCG) Fire Environment Working Team (FENWT) meeting. The JAG/NWFWNA is Cochaired by Mr. Eli Jacks, DOC/NOAA/NWS, and Dr. Allen Riebau, USDA/FS. Membership on the JAG/NWFWNA includes DOC, DOD, DOI/BLM, EPA, HHS, NASA, NSF, and USDA/FS. Other participants included federal constituents from the state and university entities.

On November 18, 2005, a meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research (ICMSSR) resulted in the following ***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. Objectives:**
 - Review the background information and charge from the ICMSSR, including the Western Governor's Association (WGA) Policy Resolution on the National Wildland Fire Weather Program.
 - Provide a review of agency programs related to wildland fire needs and requirements.
 - Review and approve the draft Terms of Reference (TOR).
 - Examine the functional areas needed for the national wildland fire needs assessment. Gather information for the development of assessment questions.

- 3. Key Points:**

January 25-26 Meeting:

- The meeting was opened by Mr. Jacks and Dr. Riebau, who each presented background information on both themselves and their current positions/responsibilities in their agencies in relation to wildland fire.
- Mr. Jacks provided a review of the ICMSSR Informational Briefing. This included the background needs expressed in the WGA, as well as a general need for a comprehensive needs assessment.

- The draft TOR was examined by the agencies and a new draft created for final agency review.
- Three federal agencies, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of the Interior (DOI), and the Department of Commerce (DOC) gave brief presentations to provide additional information on the problem/need for wildland fire weather in addition to providing information towards the assessment. The agencies were represented by Dr. Riebau, Mr. Rick Ochoa, DOI/BLM, and Mr. Heath Hockenberry, DOC/NOAA/NWS. In addition, Mr. George Stephens, NOAA/NESDIS also presented information on various operational and experimental satellite products available for agency use for wildfire detection and monitoring. Specific questions addressed in the briefings included:
 - a. What fire management decisions/processes require weather and climate information?
 - b. Who are your users and stakeholders of fire weather information?
 - c. Out of the proposed assessment functional areas stated in the TOR, which areas would your agency consider to be a priority?
 - d. As related to the wildland fire weather “system,” what does your agency see as best practices? What are the operational deficiencies or needs, in terms of data, products, services, or research, that need to be addressed?
 - e. Given these deficiencies and needs, what is the required operational capability we hope to achieve?
 - f. Are there other specific questions your agency would like to see addressed?

The agencies had several areas of needs and requirements to be addressed by the assessment. These included standards, requirements and verification for all products and services, an interagency approach to integration of digital products, fire weather information technology, a greater partnering and collaboration between fire agencies and partners, more education for the general public on how fires and wildfire events affect day to day life, improved observational network, improved fire danger and behavior R&D, research into the fire season severity in advance of the season, and improved smoke tools.

- *Invited Presentation:* Following the federal agency presentations, Mr. Wayne Mitchell, California Dept. of Forestry & Fire Protection and representing the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), provided a briefing on “The NASF and Wildland Fire Weather,” discussing the importance of weather information in operations, planning, and mitigation efforts. Mr. Mitchell expressed that knowledge of current and expected weather is key to anticipating future conditions for efficient resource use, public and fire fighter safety. The future needs for wildland fire weather and climate include frequent high resolution data site specific to the regional and national scale, probabilistic forecasts with indicated confidence factors, and operational research (local and nationally) for expertise improving science of fire weather and complex terrain meteorology. Other more general needs expressed by Mr. Mitchell included on-site fire weather expertise, weather station data monitoring, smoke management – air quality support, mid to long range forecasts, and training needs.

March 1-2, 2006 Meeting:

- The second meeting of the JAG/NFWNA was held in conjunction with the Fire Environment Working Team (FENWT), Chaired by Mr. Paul Schlobohm, DOI/BLM. The meetings were held in concert in order to both provide information to FENWT on the JAG, the assessment, and the information gathering process as well as get FENWT’s input as subject matter experts on many of the assessment functional areas.

- The TOR was approved.
- Mr. Jacks and Dr. Riebau presented to both groups a summary of the JAG efforts to date, including a summary of the ICMSSR information briefing.
- Mr. Schlobohm provided a brief presentation of the FENWT and discussed the importance of teamwork in the fire weather community to get the assessment accomplished. FENWT agreed to work with the JAG to provide additional expertise within the assessment functional areas.
- There are nine (9) functional areas in the assessment. Four areas have a completed draft.

All of the JAG/NWFWNA meeting agendas, meeting summaries, Terms of Reference, and other reference material can be found at: <http://www.ofcm.gov/jag-nwfwna/index.htm> .

4. Next Step: Complete the remaining functional area documents, and develop the final questions for the assessment. Agencies will assist in providing contact information for the assessment. The next meeting is scheduled for April 20-21, 2006, in Silver Spring, MD.

Mary M. Cairns/OFCM/10 March 2006/301-427-2002/Mary.Cairns@noaa.gov