

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Office of Fire and Aviation
3833 S. Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354**

March 18, 1999

In Reply Refer to:
9215 (FA-230) P

EMS Transmission 3/22/99
Information Bulletin No. OF&A 99-048

To: State Directors

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: Wildland Fire Human Resource Development Committee Meeting Notes

The first meeting of the Bureau's Wildland Fire Human Resource Development Committee was held in Sacramento, California on January 28, 1999. The full membership was present as follows:

Pat Kidder	California	916-978-4431
Bob Lee	New Mexico	505-438-7430
Larry Sutton	NIFC	208-387-5374
Rick Belger	Idaho	208-524-7601
Ed Strong	Alaska	907-356-5570
Diane Friez	Montana	406-255-2882
Debie Chivers	OF&A	208-387-5454
Mike Rieser	Colorado	970-826-5030
Kevin Hull	Nevada	775-861-6670
Lois Cunha (guest)	California	916-978-4430

Committee Charter

Action: The action was to review and finalize the charter which Larry Sutton had put together. Several small changes were suggested and accepted. The group felt the

“PURPOSE” needed to include professionalism in fire and career paths. Larry Sutton agreed to incorporate the changes; the charter will be forwarded to Les Rosenkrance for signature.

Discussion: A discussion was held on the purpose of the charter and role of the committee. The group felt as a whole that the committee needs to deal with issues which will have an impact. There was some discussion on coordinating between this group and the group Jim Knox is heading up for standard position descriptions. The point was made that the purpose of a co-chairperson was to have Larry Sutton keep personnel at the Office of Fire and Aviation involved and Pat Kidder to keep the State Fire Management Officers involved.

Bureau’s Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program

Action: The action is to develop better information in a timely manner for Bureau participation and commitment to the Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program. It was agreed California would initially develop a time line of critical actions and dates for the next two advanced academies and the next basic academy. The time line will be completed by the end of February and provided to all committee members for review.

Discussion: The committee affirmed the need for this entry level opportunity for individuals starting a career in the Bureau. Different ways of sustaining both this entry level and other apprenticeship programs (for other positions such as FMO) were discussed as a future effort.

The continuation of the current program was also discussed with a list of items being discussed.

- Supervisor of Apprentice training (look at doing every two or three years).
- List of supervisors of apprentices.
- Standardization of the work process hours and Department of Labor Agreement with apprentices.
- Interest announcement time frame (June 15 to end of August). (All applications sent to California).
- States can recruit and hire SCEPS (Student Career Education Program Students) outside of interest announcement process.
- States need to select apprentices in a timely manner. This will allow time to fill in behind people who decline the original offer.
- Information memo to each apprentice from FS and BLM at least 30 days prior to academy.
- Memo to states on the number of apprentices for upcoming Basic 12 Academy (to be held in California during spring of 2000). BLM participation will probably be limited to a minimum of 15 with a maximum of 20.
- Better effort on recruiting qualified diversity candidates needs to be outlined for upcoming academy.

- Interest announcement to all states for agency representatives, crew supervisors and instructors. Need more representation from the Bureau at basic and advanced academies in these leadership positions.

The Bureau's time line needs to be coordinated with Region 5 of the Forest Service due to joint participation in the academies.

Bureau's Participation in Technical Fire Management

Action: Larry Sutton will complete a memo to the field which will be reviewed by the committee on the changes and processes for the Bureau's participation on the upcoming course in Technical Fire Management.

Discussion: There were several areas discussed relating to Technical Fire Management (TFM). Completion of the course by participants has been a major failing in the past: overall the student failure rate has been 25% during the history of the course. It was agreed that several steps should be instituted to ensure participants complete the course (both past and future students). Larry will notify all past participants who have not completed the course. It will be their responsibility to ensure completion or tuition costs will be recovered from failing students. For the future any state who sponsors a participant will assign a mentor who will assist students during the course and final project and help ensure completion.

Larry felt that a sustainable level of participation by the Bureau in TFM will be nine participants per course. Each state will be responsible for the selection of the position(s) allocated to their state. The Office of Fire and Aviation will maintain funding for two positions out of the nine. If a state cannot fund a position, they will lobby the Office of Fire and Aviation for funding of their participant.

Recruiting will be done out of the Office of Fire and Aviation in the form of an interest announcement. Interested participants will send their SF-171 to the appropriate State Fire Management Officer. Each state will set up a selection process for their candidate.

It was also discussed and agreed that one of the major benefits of TFM was giving the participants enough credits to meet the positive educational requirements of the Natural Resource Series - GS-401.

Fire Personnel Bridging from the Technical Series 455/462 to the Professional Series 401

Action: Diane Friez and Mike Rieser before our next meeting are to put together a small work group to develop a draft WO memo on "guidelines for qualifying candidates

currently employed in a technical series, GS-455-462, for the professional series.” In addition define how a vacancy can be advertised in a technical series 455/462 and professional series, Natural Resource Series - 401.

Discussion: A major concern in the fire program and personnel is the different states’ interpretations of how a person in the fire program can qualify for a vacancy in the GS- 401 series based on experience and training, while in a technical series (e.g., GS-455/462).

Inconsistent interpretations by fire management and personnel offices in each state continues to plague the employee trying to make this conversion. It is generally felt across the Bureau fire program that each state wants to continue to use the Natural Resource Specialist series for mid-to high-level fire management positions.

The group felt that this issue has been taken on by fire and personnel many times over the last 25 years with little impact. It is felt a WO memo on method of standard interpretation would be the first step in several to developing identifiable career paths in the fire program.

The option of “centralized recruiting” (at the Office of Fire and Aviation) for GS-401 positions was discussed. Several states are currently taking advantage of this method of filling these positions. Consistent interpretation of standards is achieved using this method. Some state personnel offices feel that this approach takes away some of their duties and they are resistant to it.

Conference Call and Future Meeting

Action: Larry will be responsible to set up a conference call for the committee on March 15. Larry will get agenda items from the Office of Fire and Aviation and Pat will develop agenda items from the states. In addition there will be feedback on all action items in these notes. The next meeting is scheduled for October 18, 1999 in Portland, Oregon.

Discussion: The ground rules of the committee were discussed which include participation, conference call participation and meetings. It was agreed notes will be a top priority from each conference call and meeting. The notes will be reviewed by the committee within one week. No feedback in one week means agreement. Notes will be sent to Larry, who will put them out under an Information Bulletin from the Director, Office of Fire and Aviation.

All committee members will ensure notes are transmitted to personnel offices and fire management personnel.

Signed by:
Lee F. Englesby
Acting Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:
Pat Lewis
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.

Distribution:
Jay Thietten, Room 5627, MIB
Brian Eldredge, NARTC
BC Library
Fire Program Manager
NIFC Administrator
WO-540
Committee Members
State Fire Management Officers