

NAFSR ANNUAL BOARD MEETING NOTES
February 9 and 10, 2021
via
ZOOM MEETING

Tuesday, February 9

Attendees

Jim Caswell (Chair), Larry Payne (Vice Chair), Jim Golden (Past Chair), Rich Stem (R-1), Tom Thompson (R-2), Greg Griffith (R-3), Jack Troyer (R-4), Mike Rogers (R-5 south), Steve Eubanks (R-5 North), Ranotta McNair (R-6), Malcolm Gramley (R-8), Don Howlett (R-9), Sandra Holsten (R-10), Rich Guldin (Research), Bill Timko (National), Becki Heath (National), Jane Kollmeyer (National), Hank Kashdan (National), Dale Robertson (Chief Emeritus), Dale Bosworth (Chief Emeritus), Al West (Fire Committee Chair), Phil Aune (Awards Chair), Bill Disbrow (Webmaster), and Johnny Hodges (Secretary).

Others in attendance – Ed Shepard, President, Public Lands Foundation; Vicki Christiansen, Chief of the USFS (Wednesday afternoon); and Lynn Sprague.

Larry Payne also introduced Peg Polichio, Nora Rasure, Gene Blankenbaker, and Jeanne Wade Evans. Larry invited these NAFSR members who have shown interest in joining the Board.

Operational Issues

Treasurer Report - Johnny Hodges

Johnny provided the NAFSR Financial Summary for 2015-2020.

Our ending balance on December 31, 2019 was \$36,011. During 2020, our revenue was \$14,718 and expenses were \$12,212 for a net increase of \$2,506.

At the end of 2020 we had moved a total of \$10,000 into our mutual fund long-term investment account over the past three years. The market value for this account at the end of 2020 was \$12,314. This amount is included in our ending balance shown above.

Membership Report - Johnny Hodges

Johnny provided the NAFSR Membership Summary for 2015-2020.

Our membership at the end of 2020 was 704 members. This is the first year we have exceeded 700 members since 2013.

We gained 47 new members in 2020, and lost 37 who resigned, did not renew their annual dues, or were deceased.

We have 194 “Golden” members who are over 80 years old. This is a gain of 88 Golden members since 2015. They comprise 28% of our total membership.

Of the 704 current members, we have 141 Lifetime Members which make up 20% of our membership.

Website – Bill Disbrow, Webmaster

Bill provided a report with statistics related to our website. Activity on our website continues to increase at a substantial level.

The total number of visitors to the website in 2020 was 49,236, an increase of 6,744 (16%) over 2019.

Our total page views in 2020 were 83,503, an increase of 9,131 (12%) over 2019.

Total hits in 2020 was 402,721, an increase of 40,038 (11%) over 2019.

You can view the full report at - <https://nafsr.org/docs/2020/webreport>

Congress, Transition and USDA Update - Bill Timko

Bill provided a table listing the new leaders and members for some key Congressional Committees, as well as the current FS Leadership.

Robert Bonnie will become the Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Agriculture. He will also focus on climate change.

Chris French, Acting Deputy Under Secretary Natural Resources and Environment NRE, sent an Action Review document sent to the FS asking to look at projects ready for decisions. Jim thinks this is a reaction to what is going on at the Department of Interior where there are a lot of political appointees. Reviews will be completed by the middle of February.

Public Lands Foundation Update – Ed Shepard

- PLF and NAFSR worked together on several issues this year.
- PLF held their Annual meeting using Zoom in September. They had increased participation from members since no travel was needed.
- PLF is planning to hire a paid Executive Director who would work 20 hours. per week.
- They are working on transition to the new administration.
- Morale in the BLM is poor.
- PLF has received numerous calls from acting leadership.

- There is interest in moving directors and assistant directors back to D.C.
- 87% of BLM employees that were asked to move West did not move.

Accomplishments for 2020 – Jim Caswell

Jim provided the following Accomplishment Report for 2020. We will post the report on our website.

This past year has brought many unimaginable challenges to everyone including your Association. Despite the pandemic, NAFSR has had a very busy year and every engagement, communication, and contact has been influenced by Covid-19. Despite that, there has been no lack of opportunities to work within our Program of Work priorities.

Your Association had tremendous opportunity to influence significant issues facing natural resource and national forest management. We have further strengthened our working relationships with coalitions and the Forest Service, providing us with unique opportunities to be more successful. What follows is a summary of NAFSR accomplishments and activities for CY 2020.

American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP): We joined others in supporting or commenting and lending our signature to 15 letters and participated in group calls and meetings. The legislative proposals included: Great American Outdoors Act, Replant Act, Federal Lands Transaction Facilitation Act, American Conservation Enhancement Act, and Recovering American Wildlife Act just to name a few.

Pete Griffin represented NAFSR while attending the AWCP meeting in Omaha, NE in March. Sandra Holsten represented NAFSR with the AWCP meeting in August via Zoom Meetings.

Program of Work Successes (POW): Our efforts in advocacy of the POW increased significantly and took many forms such as, written testimony, letters to committees, joint letters with Public Lands foundation (PLF), outreach to various local governments, national groups, and collaboratives. The subject of those efforts spanned the range of our POW priorities including: NEPA reform (CEQ and FS), ESA, Infrastructure, Capacity, Wildfire, Forest and Grassland, Restoration, Forest Climate Working Group, Reforestation, and multiple Budget initiatives. While not all our efforts were total successes, in every instance advances were made in our positions. Our priorities remain a work in progress.

Sustaining the Forest Service Mission: NAFSR relationship and communications with the agency and the Chief's office has never been stronger, more respectful, and healthy. Communications between the Chief, Deputy Chiefs, and Directors not only met our goal of quarterly calls, but also many impromptu conversations on matters of specific interest.

We have had the unprecedented opportunity this year to engage the Chief's office in 8 Teams/Zoom conference sessions, several that included the entire Board and the membership

at large. NAFSR is held in high regard by Forest Service leadership and our relationships are strong. We are in an ideal position as we move into a new Administration.

Fire Committee: The Fire Committee continues to maintain a close relationship with the fire leadership of the Agency. They held their annual Committee meeting remotely and have provided leadership for the several virtual fire briefings for the membership to keep retirees informed on fire policy, fire activity, and Covid-19 protocols at the national level. The Board and Committee revitalized efforts to serve as liaisons with Regional Foresters to share accurate and timely fire information at the local level. We have received positive feedback on this dual approach of communicating and keeping everyone informed.

We added two new members to the Fire Committee this year and more change is on the horizon. Al West, the long tenured Chair of the Committee has decided to step aside and take a less active role in Committee business. Mike Rogers has agreed to fill in as interim Chair while we search for a permanent replacement. We are grateful to both Al and Mike not only for their years of service with the Forest Service, but also for their commitment to NAFSR. The Committee will play a major leadership role in the wildfire issue going forward.

Outreach and the Media: This was a year in which our organization strengthened our advocacy for what we believe and the issues we care about. We have achieved a new level of credibility amongst our peers, members of Congress, and the news media. We draw this conclusion from the number and frequency of contacts and inquiries we have received. Media contacts include: Greenwire, E&E News, The Hill, The AP, NFPA, and NBC News. We received several requests for review of legislative proposals from various members of Congress. The advice and feedback we provided was always direct and appreciated by the members and their staffs.

Member Services: For several years Board members have worked to make improvements in our business operations and member services. This year efforts came full circle and thanks to the dedication of Johnny and Ellen Hodges, Darrel Kenops, and Bill Disbrow, our historical records from inception through 2014 have been archived at the NMFSH, and work continues from 2015 to the present.

There has been a complete rework of our website with a new look, more information, better organized, and easier to access. Johnny has worked tirelessly this year to successfully communicate with the membership on emerging issues, important information, job and volunteer opportunities, Board actions, and responded quickly to your inquiries or complaints. Our efforts are designed and focused to better serve our members.

This year the John R McGuire (JRM) award committee recommended and the Board approved language changes to the bylaws, and one JRM award recipient. Due to Covid-19 we have yet to hold the award presentation, but plans are in the works for this Fall. A big thank you to Phil Aune and the JRM committee for their work this year.

NAFSR is extremely honored to have Dr. Richard Guldin as a Board member and this year's recipient of the prestigious Sir William Schlich Memorial Award. He is the first Forest Service honoree in 24 years. We could not be prouder of Rich.

All in all, it has been a good year. Our credibility as a reliable source of information and sound advice has allowed us to influence issues of importance to the Board and our members. As I write this, the inauguration of the Biden Administration just wrapped up and now the work begins. We have shared with the transition team our formal position paper and believe NAFSR is well positioned and poised to make a difference in the year ahead.

Strategic Issues

Chair and Vice Chair Transition

Jim Caswell and Larry Payne have announced they are stepping down as Chair and Vice Chair. The following bullets are a summary of the discussion on the transition to new leadership. They are a combination of Jim's thoughts and comments by Board members.

- We have spent some time searching for a replacement as chair but have only identified one person as a potential chair.
- We will not decide on a new Chair at this meeting. We will delay the decision until our next meeting in May.
- We are growing in membership, but we are not getting younger. Our Golden Members number continues to increase.
- There is a big gap between our generation and younger retirees.
- Most of us are aware of what is going on in the FS, but we are not contemporary with current conditions.
- We all have other interests and the time we devote to NAFSR is limited.
- We need to up our game if NAFSR is going to stay relevant and engaged.
- Everyone needs to understand the intent to the succession plan which was updated in 2017.
- We need an orderly transition of Board members, continuity of leadership, increase diversity, proactively plan for filling vacancies, safeguard the organization against unplanned changes, and ensure viability of the organization in the future. Maybe we need an Executive Director again.
- The chair, vice-chair, secretary, and WO liaison should serve 3 to 5 years. The chair-elect should spend a year in transition before becoming chair. During that window, the incoming chair could choose the vice chair.
- The chair would become past chair for 2 years.
- Jim Caswell is in his 5th year as chair.
- We need additional candidates for chair. Who is the best person in this day and time to be effective?
- Founders of NAFSR 21 years ago were quality people.
- We have had good chairs over the years.

- We should have double our current membership.
- I worry about sustainability and momentum.
- There is a lot more at stake here than just a new chair.
- We need to chart a course between now and May.
- Older retirees are an asset and provide a memory bank. It is good to see interest from new retirees at this meeting.
- It is great to see interest from new retirees and their contacts. It is a big stretch from being a Board member to being in leadership positions.
- We should spend more time on new member recruitment.
- I support the succession plan.
- It is difficult recruiting new members. Some want to take a break from the FS after retiring.
- There is a good balance on the Board geographically.
- Some of our big issues such as wildfire, reforestation and restoration need someone from the West familiar with these issues.
- We need people with leadership experience and a passion for working at policy level.
- Why do people join NAFSR? Primarily to address policy issues. Most people join regional organizations for the social aspects.
- Put something on website to encourage membership.
- Revisit the Executive Director position. Maybe partner with Public Lands Foundation (PLF) to fill the role with both organizations.
- The transition plan is open-ended and never forces us to make a decision. Ask the question - do you want to continue serving? We all have problems letting go.
- New blood is what keeps NAFSR viable. We should beat the bushes some more in our search for a new chair.
- We tried recruiting some high caliber people for the chair position. They are in high demand everywhere.
- We had many of these same issues 10 years ago. We continue to improve over time.
- Some retirees think NAFSR is only for former high-grade employees.
- Jim and Larry promise to help the new leadership as long as necessary.
- I am not sure sharing an Executive Director with PLF would work well. It is also far outside our current financial capabilities.
- We will make a decision on a new chair by May.

Dialogue with FS Chief Christiansen

Chief Christiansen met with the Board for about an hour. Following are some of her remarks.

- 2020 was a year of wildfires and hurricanes impacting FS lands. It was the most acres burned since the fires of 1910.
- COVID was a huge issue for our workforce.
- President Biden sent a video to career workforce. Major messages – you matter as a career civil servant. We are all a team and what we do, how we do, why we do is important.

- COVID – FEMA was not a part of the game until now. Major impacts on our facilities in rural areas. 80 FS folks called up to help.
- Mask mandates on federal lands and enforcement authorities are new issues.
- We need economic relief, especially for rural areas.
- Climate Change – science, carbon, FIA, research, fire, and landscape resilience are all issues for FS. We need to treat 20 to 40% of our landscapes.
- Adapting Racial Equity – inclusion of all people. We are receiving 2 to 3 times normal recreation on FS lands,
- Further Improving Workforce and Work Environment – people are our most important resource.
- One Stop Shopping – Operation Care and Recovery – for R-2 and R-6 with heavy fire impacts. Looking for ways to streamline recovery work with limited workforce.
- Political personnel –
 - Chris French is Acting Deputy Under Secretary Natural Resources and Environment NRE.
 - Robert Bonnie will be Deputy Chief of Staff and senior adviser for climate change. He knows the FS well and will be our go-to guy.
 - Secretary Vilsack has had his hearing for Secretary of Agriculture. He hopes to be confirmed the week of 2/22.
 - No other political appointees yet.
- Upcoming Fire Season – Current forecast is for below normal precipitation and above average temperatures due to La Nina effect. Expect drought improvement in Northern California and Oregon.
- Workforce is being prioritized for vaccinations but is being handled unevenly by the States.
- Looking for opportunities to attach Replant Act to legislation. We are receiving good signals from the administration.
- Great American Outdoors Act – There are plenty of needs. Working on a 5-year plan. Contracting is the bottleneck and we are trying to add staff.

At this point the Chief took questions from NAFSR. Following are some questions and suggestions from the Board and the Chief's response.

- What can NAFSR focus on to help FS?
 - Reforestation and rehabilitation need.
 - Fireshed registry, 10-year schedule.
 - Vegetation treatments.
 - Salaries of firefighter workforce – 29 states pay their firefighters than the FS.
 - We are hurting badly in recreation and could use support.
- The Chief had just had a national meeting with District Rangers, and she was asked what she heard from them –
 - They were curious about the administration transition and priorities.
 - Recreation is under-resourced.

- Ability to increase fees.
- Forest planning.
- Being detailed to the WO was a good experience. Plan to maintain a “district ranger desk” in the WO.
- Stress the importance of NAFSR to new retirees.
- Forest Climate Working Group (FWCG) – Good collaboration; launching push over next couple of months; who should we talk to in FS for coordination? Leslie Weldon is facilitator of the group working on these issues.
- Fire approach –
 - The building blocks are there.
 - Needs to be science based.
 - ‘Treat more acres’ isn’t getting us there.
 - Going to take huge resources; will new admin be bold enough to take it on?
 - There are multiple people working on it. OMB is still a barrier, but we are optimistic.
- Do not depend on regular appropriations.
 - Utilize carbon credits with private companies.
 - Auction carbon credits to the highest bidders.
 - Would produce an independent stream of income for FS.
- FS is working on “conservation financing”. Utility companies are willing to invest money to preserve watersheds. Work around Lake Tahoe is a good example.
- The pause in off-shore leasing will have a negative effect on funds for LWCF.

Update 2021-2022 Program of Work

NAFSR “Program of Work” for CY 2021-2022 including leads for each priority.

1. OPERATIONS

- A. National Reunion 2022 – Jim Caswell, Johnny Hodges, Phil Aune, Mike Rogers
 - a. The reunion is scheduled for August 29 – September 2, 2022.
 - b. We will need to decide by this Fall how much financial support we can provide.
- B. Accomplishment Report – Jim Caswell, Larry Payne, Johnny Hodges
 - a. We have completed the Accomplishment Report for 2020. It is included in these meeting notes. We will also post the report on our website.
- C. Complete Update of Bylaws – Johnny Hodges
- D. Transition of Chair/Vice Chair Elect - Jim Caswell, Larry Payne, Board
- E. Records Management – Darrel Kenops, Johnny Hodges, Dave Stack

2. STRATEGIC

- A. Keeping Public Lands Public – Jack Troyer
- B. Wildfire Risk, Scenario Planning and Restoration – Becki Heath

There may be too many issues lumped together here. Becki will take the lead and decide if this topic needs to be split up. Others that agreed to help are Rich Stem, Peg Polichio, Jeanne Wade Evans, and Steve Eubanks. John Phipps will also be asked to help. Rich Guldin said he could be a conduit for RPA assessment on climate and carbon.

 - a. Staff Work, Position papers, Background Materials
 1. Workforce Capacity Report and Necessary Funding
 2. CEQ and FS NEPA Regulatory Reform
 3. The “Key Point” Staff Paper dated 12/8/20.
 4. Climate 21 Project: Transition Memo
 - b. Secure a seat on the National Wildfire Commission – Jim Caswell will track, and Bill Timko will ask Doug Crandall for assistance.
 - c. We need a good definition of “treatment options”.
 - d. Fireshed analysis will take a while. What can we do immediately? Maybe join other efforts outside of NAFSR.
- C. Reforestation and FCWG “The Silent Crisis” – Jim Golden, Rich Guldin, Bill Timko
 - a. Reforestation funding is the major issue. The Replant Act will be a major source of funding when it passes.
 - b. Reforestation needs.
 - c. Suitability – capable or available lands.
- D. Sustainable Recreation – Ranotta McNair is lead. Jane Kollmeyer and Nora Rasure also agreed to help.
- E. NAFSR position paper on Managed Fire - Fire Committee We currently have a position paper on this topic, but it needs to be updated.
- F. Formulate a NAFSR position paper on a Professional Wildland Fire Series - Fire Committee
- G. Budget Modernization: Who, How, and What – Hank Kashdan
- H. Emerging Issues – Jim Caswell, Larry Payne, and the Board
- I. Job Corps – Bill Timko, Tom Thompson

Wednesday, February 10

Agreement, Clarifications and Understanding for topics on Day 1.

- Phil Aune proposed a vote on the chair/vice chair positions. After some discussion, the Board decided a vote was not necessary.
- Jim and Larry are still on track to step down in May. They will continue to transition, as necessary.
- Would like a larger cadre of candidates for the chair position.
- Worries about contemporary thinking and the age of the Board.
- Need a good definition of “active management”.
- Rich Stem will prepare a letter to Robert Bonnie on joining the National Wildfire Commission.

Broaden the scope of the Fire Committee and design a path forward to fill the chair position – Larry Payne

- Al West is leaving chair position on Fire Committee. He will become an advisor/emeritus.
- Mike Rogers is the acting chair.
- Members of the current Fire Committee - Al West, Lynn Sprague, Steve Eubanks, Becky Heath, Mike Edrington, Gordon Smith, Mike Dudley, Joe Stutler, Mike Rogers
- Fire is a dominant issue for us. The objective is to staff the fire committee to meet the challenge.
- We need good communications between the committee and Board.
- Need to look at geographic and skill mix.
- Need to update charter and bylaws.
- We have the necessary skills within our members.
- Identify specific needs in next 1-2 years to meet our objectives.
- What is our position on fire career series, scenario planning, and managed fire?
- The chair should have license to comment on any fire issues. The chair needs credibility and street-smarts.
- Need a chair with strong communication skills.
- Need science represented on the Fire Committee.
- Will the Fire Committee support the FS or are we coming up with our own policy?
- This is issue driven - sometimes we support the FS and sometimes lead the FS.
- This is a serious issue for the FCWG.
- Rich Guldin needs help with documents and talking points. Mike Rogers offered to help.
- Dave Cleaves is working for American Forests and FCWG.
- Confusion on the Fire Committee vs. Action Team.
- Would we add a FS person to the team? Or a recent retiree?
- Agreed to appoint a 5-person action team and make a recommendation to the Board to define needs and expectations. The team would be a mix of committee members and non-members. Send nominations to Larry within the next week.

Open Forum

- “Active Management” is out of sync with current FS management. The FS uses the right words to “feel good” but is not in touch with reality.
- Fuels treatments, thinning, prescribed fire from John Phipps presentation and the assumption that we do this with current funding is absurd.
- Jim Caswell will visit with the Chief about active management and then follow up with a letter.
- We need a communication expert to help us.
- Fire is driving the train, but NFS must implement.

Meeting Critique

- Thanks for hosting. Good discussions.
- Thanks for the invite. We are grappling with tough issues and trying to support the agency.
- Good to reach out to potential Board members for each meeting. We should do it on a more formal basis adding 4 or 5 guests to each meeting.
- There is a need for issues to be integrated across the board.
- What is the value of the organization? Can we support the agency? What is our best return on investment?
- Zoom is way better than a conference call. More engaged.
- Effective Zoom meeting. Amplifies the value of face-to-face meetings.

Future Board Meetings –

May 6

August 5

November 4

February 8-9, 2022

Notes taken by

Johnny Hodges, Secretary

Final Draft 2/25/2021