



**Final Meeting Notes
NAFSR Board of Directors Zoom Meeting
May 6, 2025**

Attendees

Board Members - Becki Heath (Vice Chair), Johnny Hodges (Secretary), Cheryl Probert (R-1), Frank Beum (R-2), Jerry Perez (R-3), Lynn Sprague (R-4), Teresa Benson (R-5), Debbie Hollen (R-6), Earl Stewart (R-10), Doug Crandall (Congressional Liaison), Rich Guldin (Research), Ralph Crawford (Research), Gene Blakenbaker (National), Nora Rasure (National), Jeanne Wade Evans (National), Bill Timko (National), Tim DeCoster (National), Bill Avey (National), Susan Skalski (National), Mike Dudley (National), Vicki Christiansen (Chief Emeritus), Dale Bosworth (Chief Emeritus), Mike Dombeck (Chief Emeritus), Ed Shepard (PLF Liaison)

Others – Jack Troyer, Jim Caswell, Mary Beth Stewart

Staff – Bill Disbrow (Webmaster)

Unable to Attend – Steve Ellis (Chair), Marisue Hilliard (R-8), Don Howlett (R-9)

Chair and Vice Chair Update—Steve Ellis and Becki Heath

- Steve was unable to attend due to a medical emergency.
- The Capacity Report discussion will be put off until another meeting.
- The President's budget has been released. We expect pushback on 2 issues –
 - Opposing a Single Wildland Fire Organization
 - Concern about state control of FS lands.
 - We need to act quickly, and we need help.
- We continue to receive numerous media requests. Currently mining issues and fire organization are the top issues.
- Becki reviewed our last email to all members -
 - FS Reunion update
 - All member Zoom meeting
 - POW for 25/26

- Acting RF's
- Research story
- Proposed changes in Fed benefits

The Chiefs Op Ed on Public Lands—Dale Bosworth

- Why was the Op Ed written and what should be next?
- Last September all of the former Chiefs went to Moose Lake in WI and stayed for 2 days. Chief Moore also attended.
- We know Tom Schultz well.
- Dale and a small group held a meeting with him in Missoula. Keeping NF lands was a topic.
- In March all Chiefs had a Zoom with Chief Schultz. It was a good meeting.
- We offered to meet with the Chief any time he wanted.
- Mike had the idea of an op ed and wrote the first draft. We offered it to the NY Times. After some discussion, they turned it down. They said keep us in mind in the future.
- After it was published in the Denver Post, we were pleased with the outcome. FS employees were thrilled. Impressed with the coverage.
- Vicki posted the Op Ed on LinkedIn. It had 34,000 views. A much further reach than just the Denver Post.
- We need multi-media echo chambers across a diverse range of people.
- Organizations with concerns about public lands are mostly hunkered down.
- We want to work quietly.
- We need to figure out what to do next. We need to coordinate with NAFSR.
- Jim Caswell – it is uplifting to see the Chiefs come together and work on this issue. Frank and Nora said, “thank you”. There are multiple benefits from the perspective of employees and retirees, and it is really encouraging.
- Mike Dombeck – We need a major campaign and some muscle behind it. We need to generate interest across the country. It is a good opportunity to recruit new members. How do we motivate them?
- Dale – We are interested in your thoughts and comments.

“Keeping Public Lands Public” Update - Jack Troyer

- It is fantastic that the Chiefs are organized and doing what they are doing.
- How can NAFSR support the new bipartisan public lands caucus in the House?
- 3 days after that vote, we released our talking points.
- Kevin Martin is our link with AWCP (American Wildlife Conservation Partners).
- Nora Rasure is our link with the recreation industry.
- The Bill requiring Congressional approval of public lands disposal was sponsored by Representatives Ryan Zinke (MT) and Gabe Vasquez (NM).
- The Recreation industry has met with Secretary Burghum (Interior) and Chief Schultz on this issue
- At least 5 organizations have sent letters concerning public lands.
- A sign on letter with numerous organizations is not moving.

- Colorado's delegation wrote a resolution to support public lands.
- A Montana resolution to take over public lands was defeated.
- What can NAFSR do now to make a difference?
 - 1. Maybe it is time for a message from Steve and Becki to encourage members to become engaged.
 - 2. How can we build a public lands caucus?
 - 3. We cannot divorce fire from land management.
- Frank Beum - Scott Fitzwilliams (retired Forest Supervisor from White River N.F.) and I can work on this issue.
- Tim DeCoster – A message to membership is it is important to contact their Congressional delegation.
- Bill Avey – It is important to rally membership for support of public lands.
- Nora – The recreation groups are very engaged. They go to the Hill every year. Their top 3 issues –
 - Tariffs.
 - Safeguarding public lands.
 - Importance of funding federal agencies to manage public lands.
- Becki – There is a lot of agreement to rally membership. Debbie HoleIn, does this fit in the communications group? Maybe they produce templates to post on our website that members could use. Debbie will be the lead.
- Vicki – The conservative movement has really taken shape in the podcast world. Multi-echo chambers.

Employee Care Update and Discussion — Earl Stewart & Mary Beth Stewart

- Support employees by providing information.
- HR guides were very important.
- “We Got Your Back” posted on our website continues to get a lot of attention. It is not a one-time effort.
- What's Next – There are 3 different constituencies group of employees –
 - Those already separated.
 - Current employees before the RIF.
 - Employees post RIF.
- Most of the experienced HR folks have left. Processing retirements will take time.
- 4,000 employees took DRP.
- There are a lot of gaps in the workforce.
- What does NAFSR need to do next?
- There are 880 vacant positions in timber and 100 in minerals.
- Employees aren't hearing anything internally.
- Nora – There is a big need for coaching/mentoring.
- Susan Skalski – Earl and Mary Beth have done an amazing job.
- Becki – The employee care team needs to meet and make recommendations on how to move forward.

The Political Landscape –Doug Crandall

- Much of the President's success will be decided by the Supreme Court.
- President's budget
 - Making tax cuts permanent will add \$5 trillion to the \$36 trillion debt.
 - The Administration's goal of offsetting \$1.5 trillion is nearly impossible without impacting entitlements, such as Medicaid.
 - He also wants to increase spending on Defense and Homeland Security, while eliminating some taxes on tips, overtime and Social Security benefits.
- Trump's first 100 days produced the worst stock market since the beginning of Nixon's first hundred days in his second term.
- House Natural Resources Committee –
 - Reinstate mining leases on Superior NF.
 - Rescinding funds from Old Growth initiative.
 - 20-year timber sale contracts in each region.
 - Staff have said they are not pursuing the disposal of public lands, but a late-night amendment authorized the sale of some lands.
- The Agriculture Committees are currently not working on creating a new fire agency. However, the Administration may make an Executive Order.
- Fed retirement rules may see some changes.
- The Congressional Review Act expires this week
- Can they pass a "Big Beautiful Bill"?
- Tim DeCoster – Is there a more specific Executive Order on the Single Fire Agency coming?
- Mike – If there is an EO, does it make it more important? Doug – Congress would need to act on it. They could add language to the "Big Beautiful Bill".
- Becki asked the Fix Our Forests Act. Doug said that Chris French is testifying on Fix Our Forest Act today. Expect it will eventually be marked up.
- An EO around fire organization could conflict with some provisions in the Fix Our Forest Act.
- After the USDA Deputy Secretary, Stephen Vaden, gets a floor vote we should start to see some movement on approving Under Secretaries.

Current Activity in the Wildland Fire World & Effects on FS—Mike Dudley

- Early in the administration there were 11 bills introduced. Senator Sheehy (MT) is involved in most of them. Serious conflict of interest.
- Bill 441 – Fit for Purpose – talks about consolidation of fire under a new agency in DOI.
- The Grassroots Firefighters support part of proposal. They want it under Homeland Security, not DOI.
- A Draft Executive Order was written by Sheehy's staff. He doesn't like FS inspecting aircraft. What FAA certifies and what FS inspects are totally different. We would be going backwards in safety if we eliminated our inspection.
- Jim Caswell – There is a call about a letter from Sheehy in total support of firefighting being new agency in DOI. Today there is a meeting with Senator Lee to get his backing. Sen. Risch is not in support and is looking for talking points to fight back.

- Mike – Steve said in his meeting with the Chief, he had 3 questions –
 - How would we design a fire structure today?
 - How could it be improved?
 - How can we get better coordination with NIFC?
 - A paper put together by the fire committee is being used to answer.
- Sheehy really wants to blow up the system and start over again.
- Bill Avey – We have lost 1,600 red card positions so far. The system will collapse during coming fire season.
- Mike – all regions are losing overhead teams.
- Becki – Our response to the Chief's 3 questions is not NAFSR positions.
- The position paper on Bill 441 that was prepared – does that answer the question about new fire organization?
- Doug – We need a letter to go to Hill ASAP to key committees.
- Tim – What do we suggest in lieu of a single agency?
- Mike Dombeck – There are many volunteers in small communities that serve on fire departments, EMT's, etc. that are also FS employees.

Regional Representatives Report Out

WO – Tim DeCoster – Our next WO FS retirees meeting is May 16. Chris French is speaking. If you have questions for him, send them to me.

R-1 – Cheryl Probert – The employee care information has received a tremendous response, and current employees appreciate the support. What is missing – fire organization.

R-2 – Frank –

- Ditto as Cheryl.
- I visited with several FS employees at Memorial Grove Ceremony in Colorado. They say thanks and are waiting for next shoe to drop with RIF and the new FS organization.

R-3 – Jerry Perez – Ditto as Cheryl.

R-4 – Lynn Sprague – The new acting RF is about to start. The biggest concern is fire season.

R-5 – Teresa Benson –

- I connected with the acting RF, Jason Kuiken.
- In R-5 there have been placements of WO people into Forest Supervisor and District Ranger positions with no fire experience.
- Many of the key RO staff have retired/accepted the DRP.
- Communication within the region is "streamlined" with little info available.

R-6 – Debbie Hollen –

- It is challenging to connect with RLT.
- Employee care – Old Smokey's raised \$16,000 to distribute to folks in need. Needs include retrieving cars from impoundment and paying utility bills.

R-8 – No report

R-9 – No report

R-10 – No report

Research – Ralph Crawford – R&D with questions about data and how to maintain after downsizing.

Closeout - Becki

- We need to prepare letters to the Hill about a single fire agency and keeping public lands public.
- We need to answer the Chief's questions.
- We need to rally membership. Communications team will take the lead.
- Employee care team – the next steps.
- Stay engaged with retired Chiefs efforts.
- New retirees who have joined NAFSR are ready to participate.
- Our next scheduled BOD meeting is August 5. Earl and Jerry will prepare agenda and manage the meeting.

Notes by Johnny Hodges

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