



**National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)
Smoke Committee (SmoC)
Monthly Activity Update – February 2012**



SmoC NEWS:

Communication and Messaging – 2012 Wildfire Season Talking Points

Interagency talking points have been developed for 2012 wildfire season in regards to smoke impacts to health and safety.

- *Heavy smoke from wildfires can threaten public health and safety.*
- *Wildfire smoke on roads or in aviation corridors can place the public and firefighters at risk. Reduced visibility from smoke is especially a concern in the Southeast where "whiteout" conditions are more likely when low wind speeds and high humidity are present. People should exercise care when driving in smoky, low-visibility conditions.*
- *Older adults, children, and people with heart or lung disease (including asthma) are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of air pollution from wildfires.*
- *If heavy smoke is present, those who are more vulnerable should take precautions and avoid prolonged or heavy activity. People should keep in mind that smoke impacts can change quickly.*
- *Prescribed fire is a valuable land management tool. Prescribed fire also produces smoke, but the smoke is typically short-lived and managed to minimize impacts. Prescribed fire and other fuels treatments help to reduce the severity of wildfires and minimize adverse impacts on public health and safety.*

These bulleted messages will be distributed to the public through various agencies' External Affairs Divisions and the NMAC.

Public Health Impacts from Wildfire Smoke - Webinar

Interest and information is growing concerning health impacts of wildland fire's smoke (i.e., Nancy French's project on CA wildfires, recent report on prescribed fire smoke, EPA findings from NC fires). A proposal is being developed within SmoC to collaborate with the Lessons Learned Center to develop an educational webinar.

Fire Fighter Smoke Exposure

The NWCG Risk Management Committee (RMC) was tasked by NWCG to investigate fire fighter and base camp smoke exposure. The Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) identified 10 items that should be addressed in regards to smoke exposure. The report and recommendations were presented and accepted by the NWCG Executive Board in late October but the tasking has yet to be closed. SmoC is interested in following up with RMC and others who worked on the Task.

Linking Visual Range with PM2.5 Concentrations and Air Quality Index – Discussion Paper

Mike Broughton raised an issue to the group that the National Weather Service (NWS) in South Carolina (and others in the SE) is investigating applying a method that links visual range with PM2.5 concentrations and thus the Air Quality Index (AQI) to assist in messaging to the public about wildfire smoke impacts. SmoC is very concerned about this because South Carolina can be a very humid area and the methodology should not be applied in environments with greater than 65% humidity. Susan O'Neill composed a document addressing SmoC's (and other subject matter experts) concerns regarding using this methodology. SmoC will distribute this "document in progress" to interested parties including the Joint Fire Sciences Program (JFSP) to foster more discussion and as a topic for future research.

HYPPLIT Trajectories upon Request in National Weather Service Spot Weather Forecasts

Work continues with the SmoC-initiated interagency Working Group to support the National Weather Service

Contact: Pete Lahm, SmoC Chair, US Forest Service // 202-205-1084 // plahm@fs.fed.us, pete.lahm@gmail.com
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(NWS) trial capability of providing HYSPLIT Trajectories with Spot Weather Forecasts. The NWS officially extended the trial period through 2012 and a one-pager has been completed that can be provided with the forecasts explaining the information that the trajectories provide. Approximately 20 people across the US have been identified as subject matter experts (SMEs) who will be go-to people to help answer user questions. Training needs are being determined and 'train the trainer' webinar is tentatively being scheduled for the last 2 weeks of April. The NWS has added an Air Quality header to their wildfire page, where the HYSPLIT Trajectory one-pager is also listed, see: <http://www.weather.gov/fire/>.

International Smoke Symposium 2013 – Successful JFSP Funding

SmoC and the International Association of Wildland Fire (IAWF) were awarded \$15K from the Joint Fire Sciences Program (JFSP) as seed money for an International Smoke Symposium. This was in response to a proposal submitted as part of the Fall 2011 JFSP request for applications. Both groups need to communicate and begin developing strategies to address the logistics of the symposium (e.g., federal travel restriction). SmoC is developing a single page document (aka: advertisement) to solicit attendance and participation. Potential partners are EPA, National Association of State Foresters (NASF), National Weather Service, NASA and National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA). Send ideas, thoughts, and expressions of interest to Pete Lahm (contact info below).

Online Wildfire, Air Quality and Decision-Making Course – Funding Awarded by NWCG

SmoC received \$60K from NWCG to develop a 4-hr online wildfire, air quality, and decision-making course. Because this topic should include broader input than the Training Subcommittee alone, other contributors are being considered (i.e., FS Smoke FARM team and WESTAR). Because of budgetary timelines, proposals and obligations need to be completed relatively quickly.

NWCG Business: February All-Chairs Meeting

Pete Lahm attended the NWCG All-Chairs Meeting in Boise this month. The meeting was well-attended with 90% of the Committee Chairs there as well as the NWCG Executive Board and members of the Program Management Unit (PMU). There was good dialog with the Board with a focus on communication challenges and inter-Committee communication. SmoC topics have overlap with the Risk Management Committee, Operations Workforce Development Committee (OWDC), Information Technology Committee, Fire Environment Committee, and the Communication Committee. Pete hopes SmoC can invite other Chairs and interested Committee members to sit in on our calls on a periodic basis, to present on what other committees are doing and discuss possible crossover topics. Pete Lahm and Mark Fitch also met with the OWDC to discuss the vision of future smoke training needs and delivery. The Executive Summary of the IQCS Report (see Training Subcommittee below) was circulated to the Board and also the OWDC. This was later followed up by the full file being emailed to all Committee Chairs and request for comments by March 23 and mention in the NWCG 1st Quarter of 2012 Report.

Emission Factor Workshop, Atlanta, Georgia

An Emission Factor Workshop in Atlanta, GA was attended by numerous members of SmoC (in person or via web). Kevin Robertson, of Tall Timbers Research Station, placed the presentations on the Tall Timbers portal. Those desiring access should contact Kevin at krobertson@ttrs.org.

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SmoC Subcommittees:

Subcommittees need to develop a Charter in order to meet NWCG requirements.

Technical Smoke Topics Subcommittee

- *Smoke Management Guide:* The Smoke Management Guide Steering Committee will have a face-to-face meeting in March in Seattle. Many chapters are nearing completion.
- *Retrospective Emission Inventory Task Team:* The next conference call for this Task Team is scheduled for 3/16 where the group will get a debrief on the modifications and improvements made to the 2008 EPA fire emission inventory (NEI) by the FS AirFire Team and Sonoma Technology Inc. (submitted 1/3/2012). Improvements included classification of all fires (previously approximately 65% of the fires were unclassified) and fixing duff/organic fuel consumption which had been resulting in emissions of many orders of magnitude too high. This work was funded by the Forest Service. Information about the EPA 2010 greenhouse gas emission inventory will also be presented. The two emission inventory approaches are very different, in terms of both methodology and results.

Training Subcommittee

- *NWCG Smoke Training Assessment:* The latest version of *Fire personnel positions with smoke management training within the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) report (the "IQCS Report")* has gone to the Training Subcommittee for comment. This report was shared with the other NWCG Committee Chairs at the February All-Chairs meeting. This IQCS Report complements the already completed report *An Assessment of NWCG Wildland Fire Training and Position Requirements for Smoke and Air Quality*. A third document on wildfire and smoke management training and awareness needs and recommendations will be brainstormed next by the Training Subcommittee as the final piece of this project. This sets the stage for a cultural change on how the fire programs address smoke training and smoke duties in wildland fire personnel positions.
- *Smokepedia:* Smokepedia terms/definitions have been finalized.

Smoke Managers Subcommittee

- Rick Gillam, EPA, updated the subcommittee on air quality standards for ozone as well as the Exceptional Events Rule. While progress is being made on the EPA's Policy on Managing Air Quality Impacts of Wildland and Prescribed Fires, lawsuits associated with EPA's other air quality projects are very much slowing down the process.
- Claudia Standish continues to organize the Smoke Management contact spreadsheet by state and is moving forward on the verification of the contact info. The feedback is positive on this effort and there is interest in making it a comprehensive contact list that is available on a broader scale. The contact list could be useful for longer duration fires and possibly utilized within the wildfire fire decision support system (WFDSS).

SmoC Accomplishments

2011 Phase I of the Smoke Management Guide Revision – Funding received

2011 Smokepedia and online course updates – Funding received

2011 Report – An Assessment of NWCG Wildland Fire Training and Position Requirements for Smoke and Air Quality

02/2012 Report – Fire personnel positions with smoke management training within the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS)

12/2011 HYSPLIT Trajectories in Spot Weather Forecasts – Extension of deadline

01/2012 Retrospective Emission Inventory Task Team – SMARTFIRE2 improvements to the 2008 EPA NEI

01/2012 International Smoke Symposium in 2013 – Funding received from JFSP

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01/2012 Online Wildfire Course – Funding received from NWCG

**SmoC Completed Briefing Papers – See myfirecommunity Neighborhood Library
(<http://myfirecommunity.net/NeighborhoodLibrary.aspx?ID=279>)**

Posted 5/11/2011 - EPA GHG EI BP

Posted 5/20/2011 - SmoC March Seattle Meeting Summary

Posted 5/26/2011 - Consideration of Smoke in Wildland Fire Decision-making and Operations BP

Posted 6/06/2011 - Smoke Monitoring Kits

Posted 8/18/2011 - Wildland Fire Smoke Messaging and Perception Webinar

Posted 8/18/2011 - NWCG Smoke Assessment

Posted 9/02/2011 - 2005 National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) Briefing Paper

Upcoming Conferences and Meetings

- WESTAR Spring Business Meeting, April 16-17, 2012, Seattle, WA
- 3rd Human Dimensions of Wildland Fire Conference, April 17-19, 2012, Seattle, WA www.iawfonline.org
- EPA International Emissions Inventory Conference, August 13 - 16, 2012, Hyatt Regency in Tampa, Florida
- 4th Fire Behavior and Fuels Conference, February 18-22, 2013, Raleigh, NC,

<http://www.iawfonline.org/2013FuelsConference/index.php>

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