

Membership and Background Information to the AASC Charter (updated October 13, 2009)

Introduction

The Aerial Application Safety Team (AAST) was formed in 2002 at the request of the USDA Forest Service Assistant Director for Aviation, Fire and Aviation Management (F&AM), the Director of Forest Health Protection (FHP) and the FHP National Aviation Safety Manager. The Safety Team recommended that a permanent Aerial Application Safety Council be formed.

Background

After the 2002 aerial application season, the USDA Forest Service concluded that the accident rate for federally funded aerial application projects had been too high in recent years. In 2002, the Assistant Director for Aviation, F&AM and the Director of Forest Health Protection requested the Forest Health Protection (FHP) National Aviation Safety Manager to create a committee to look into safety issues relating to aerial application projects and more specifically, the Gypsy Moth Cooperative Suppression and Slow-The-Spread (STS) Programs. A committee of state and federal employees was convened to identify areas of concern and draft recommendations for improving safety in aerial application projects. AAST members included aerial application specialists, state and USDA Forest Service gypsy moth suppression and eradication program managers, forest health managers and aviation safety managers.

Tim McConnell, FHP National Aviation Safety Manager, chaired the team from its formation in late 2002 through 2005. The team met in April 2003 in Frederick, Maryland to discuss safety issues, contracting specifications and communication challenges, and to develop recommendations to help improve the overall aerial application safety record. Their report "Aerial Application Safety Team Report" was submitted September 15, 2004 to the Directors requesting the formation of a permanent group.

When originally created, the AAST was to be only a short-term effort. However, after the team's meetings, the group realized that ensuring aerial operations safety was a discipline requiring continuing effort. The team decided to retain the committee and welcome additional participants, acknowledging that greater participation strengthens the message of aviation safety and management for all government-related aerial application programs and projects. Thus, the team recommended the creation of the Cooperative Forest Health Protection Aerial Application Safety Council to promote safety in all FHP and state-cooperative aerial application management programs (to be referred to in the future as Aerial Application Safety Council [AASC]). The AASC's overarching mission is to strive for zero accidents.

Current Membership and Contact Information

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