

## **NRCG Aviation Meeting 28 th May**

Attendees

Chuck Brenton, Eddie Morris, Allen Edmonds, Jim Newton, Kim Thomas, Shuana Smith,

### **2008 NRCG Agency updates**

#### **Chuck Brenton** -

- *MT DNRC* Same amount of aircraft as last year. Hiring three new pilots, for 7 day coverage, no down time (but for this season not enough time to train them). Have up to 24 pilots. 2 UH1's not available till end of June.
- Looking at using Canadian air tankers for interagency use across the border for IA
- Ed Morris – Currently working reviewing USFS agreements, will check on the USFS Canadian agreement.
- Allen will check with Steve Smith (AMD) on progress of BLM request for Canadian /DOI agreement to use aircraft in lower 48.
- Still working on standardized Aircraft State standards. At the last State fire managers meeting all states agreed on the proposed template regarding the state military aircraft.
- AFF for all DNRC aircraft this year.
- AMD Inspection completed for aircraft and pilots for Cooperative Certification.
- Chuck - asked that BLM submit the request for 2009 Cooperative Certification as soon as possible. He indicated that Gary Brennan of AMD was in full agreement him that conducting the inspections and pilot certifications in the fall would be beneficial to both AMD and DNRC regarding the scheduling of pilots and inspectors which would greatly reduce spring workload for inspectors and pilots while reducing costs to the agencies.

#### **Eddie Morris USFS**

- Same number and location of helicopters. Expect 6 large helicopters for 90 days. Water hauling bucket ships.
- Fleet aircraft - 2 lead planes.
- Smoke Jumper aircraft D-3 Sherpa at Missoula
- 2 air attack training platforms.

- Still have not filled the Air tanker base manager.
- Supervisory Pilot position open.
- Selection of RASM in progress, hopefully position will be filled within the next 30 days.

### **Kim Thompson NRCC**

- Forest Health Protection FY08 – 3 light wing aircraft will send out flight schedules.
- Staffing will go to 7 day week in first of July.
- Kim's assistant position (park service) is open.
- Angel Becker - new Crew Dispatcher.

### **Shauna Smith NPS**

- Canada /US aircraft project - developing agreements and contract in the exchange of aircraft across the border for Fire suppression and search and rescue. (Search and rescue will be set up as an end product contract).
- A draft Standard Operating Plan for exchange will be completed by June 30th and forwarded to AMD for final approval.
- Waiting on the DOI and State Department to review the master plan agreement which authorizes aviation cooperation between US and Canada.
- AMD is finalizing the agreement for the use of Canadian aviation resources for fire suppression that can be activated and paid for directly from the NPS.
- Fred Van Horn retired May 30. There is some interest in having a shared position with the Flathead NF. At this time Intermountain region has no money to support this but supports the concept.

### **Jim Newton, Idaho State Lands**

- Jim replaced Bob Burke for aviation management and operations.
- 7 ea 802 SEAT aircraft available through IDL. Contractors are Queen Bee and Evergreen

- 2 helicopters.
- Watching Coeur D'Alene Air Tanker base for possible problem retardant operation. Meeting 10th of June 10:00 am. @ Tanker Base.
- Need to Finalize Base Plans.

## **Allen Edmonds BLM Montana Dakotas**

### **Aircraft**

- Lewistown / AZ Helicopter started May 1<sup>st</sup> Wickenburg Az, will transition to Lewistown July 21<sup>st</sup>
- Miles City Helicopter start date May 29<sup>th</sup> will be available June 5<sup>th</sup>  
Sky Aviation type III (L 4)
- Air Attack (AC 500) is TDY in Safford, AZ new duty station is Lewistown with Bob Bahr as primary ATGS and ACOR for the contact.
- SEAT on-call contract is available on the AMD contract web site.
- On call aircraft that currently are available for the region are New Frontier Aviation and Minuteman Aviation
- Variable Term contracts are available on the AMD contract web site. Sent out VT Contract procedures via email to everyone yesterday.
- Billings Full Service Tanker Base will be officially open June 1<sup>st</sup>
- Re-writing Montana Dakotas State Aviation Plan and Orientation guide. Will be out for distribution in a week or so.

### **Agenda Talking points**

#### **1. Review Chapter 80 & 20 for standardizing protocol for interagency sharing of aircraft for regional IA and large incidents**

Kim - Did not make many changes of chapter 80 for FY 08 updates.

Allen - Would like to re-address the sharing of aircraft among interagency partners geographically in chapter 80 and 20 if needed as suggested in the last NRCG committee meeting.

Kim was wondering if we were going to take the time to review chapter 80 today.

Allen made the recommended that the group not review chapter 80 today as it would take too much time. Suggestion was that everyone takes a copy home to review and we set a date for conference call to go over comments and compile the group's recommendations for Kim to update in FY09.

The group agreed on a June 26, conference call at 10:00a.m. Allen will set up the Conference Bridge and send out the number and password

## **2. Identify Aviation positions, and Key shortages. Zone training officer's track staff training needs/requirements. NRCG Training Committee.**

Allen re-emphasized the response that the aviation committee forwarded to the NRCG committee last spring. The aviation committee members in attendance were again in full agreement with the response provided to the committee before.

- Recommendations of the committee are to task the NRCG training committee to make a determination by inventory how many people in the region have received aviation training but have not completed their task books. Additionally another inventory should be taken to determine who is qualified to function in specific positions.
- The results of the training inventories should be merged into a list of trainees and assigned mentors preferably an incident team member in the aviation assigned position. The identified trainees should then be prioritized for team assignments and should have full assurance that they will be given every opportunity to go on training assignments in order to complete their required training.
- Each Unit should have a red card committee for reviewing the unit's aviation needs and red card qualifications to assist training officers in the development and training of aviation positions at the unit up through the GACC levels.

Allen, will reflect the overall consensus of the group and respond to the NRCG committee that this objective is needs to be referred to the NRCG Training and Operations/Team committees.

Kim brought up the point that the GACC has always asked for a training list from regional units and they will continue that process and they will continue to ask units for trainee's lists. (All positions) Kim thought that by not having a Regional training specialist may be part of the problem.

## **3. 08 DNRC Program review:**

The review team was very helpful and found the DNRC aviation program to be an excellent program.

- Great Operation
- Need to Increase personnel in maintenance.
- They did not like the 205 operator's manual. Will need to re-write for FY09.

Chuck will send out the complete details of findings and recommendations from the review to everyone.

#### **4. Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) protocol for the Region.**

Allen asked Eddie to give a quick summary of current issues with ANS. Handouts were given to members. The primary concern is with helicopter bucket operations conducting aerial suppression activities with aircraft moving from one water source to another. He would like to see a regional acceptance of the Gallatin ANS Prevention strategy to control water contaminations. The Gallatin plans reflects the minimum requirements of the Montana ANS Plan and promotes a proactive solution to the problem. His recommendations were to adopt the proposed strategy as a pilot or beta trial for this year. Basic plan consists of:

##### Standard Prevention Guidelines

This list will be incorporated into unit Air Operations Plans, as will these mitigation procedures.

- Mobilization/Demobilization  
Pre-use Inspection- Upon initial arrival to the incident on the GNF and prior to use, equipment that will have contact with a water source will be washed by one of the following methods: using a pressure washer, a portable weed sprayer or dipped in a large portable tank. Any method employed will use a solution of 5% bleach to water solution (20 parts water to 1 part bleach) with a 10 minute set time and rinse with clean water. An exemption to the washing requirement can be granted if documentation is presented to verify that the visiting equipment was treated prior to arrival to the GNF. A final visual inspection for any mud or aquatic plants will complete the inspection process. If plants or mud are detected, then repeat the process until the bucket is completely clean.
  1. This process should be done a minimum of 300 ft away from any body of water.
  2. When the aircraft is demobilized from the incident, the process will be repeated to ensure that no ANS species are transported to a new incident at another location. Documentation of cleaning will be issued by the helicopter manager to the helicopter pilot stating the bucket was cleaned in accordance with the Forest's ANS plan.

- During Actual Suppression Operations

1. Known ANS sites should be avoided as a first precautionary measure. Private ponds will be considered suspect unless tested otherwise.
2. During the operational period if an ANS-infected dip site is used to provide suppressant to the fire via aerial delivery, the equipment contacting the water will be cleaned and inspected before moving to a new dip site.
3. If using ANS-contaminated waters, aerial drops will occur at a minimum of 300 feet away from any live body of water.

Resource advisors will be contacted for extended attack operations and multiple aircraft situations to ensure prevention practices are being adhered to.

#### Minimum Prevention Guidelines

This standard will be used when a dip tank, pressure washer and bleach solution is not available, tanks are not set up, or time and logistics do not allow.

- Mobilization/Demobilization

1. Pre-Use Inspection. Upon initial arrival to the incident prior to use, wash equipment with uncontaminated water to remove all mud and plant matter. As mentioned in the preferred standard, this process should be completed 300 ft from any body of water.
2. Equipment that will have contact with the water will be visually inspected for the presence of any mud or aquatic plants. If plants or mud are detected, repeat the process until the equipment is completely clean.

- During Actual Suppression Operations

All of the protocols that are listed in the Standard Prevention Guidelines apply.

Eddie asked that everyone review the guidelines and provide comments and recommendations back on the June Conference call

#### **5. Guidelines on Retardant, foam & gel application near riparian and water way areas.**

Everyone was in agreement to follow Forest Service guidelines on retardant use. Fisheries list was in question. May be more species to monitor in Northern Rockies. Will leave it for

now. Follow established guidelines for reporting retardant use and quantities to MTDC Missoula.

**6. Non Carded /non approved aircraft that show up on federal and state fires.**

Chuck had concerns on what to do when non carded pilots, non approved aircraft show up on fire. The point being, a Local helicopter/land owner not equipped or trained for fire suppression showed up on the battle mountain fire and causes confusion and safety issues.

Ed commented that if that happened on a forest service fire they would ask them to leave. If they don't leave, we leave.

Allen commented that BLM protocol was basically the same. We try and establish contact if no contact is made our aircraft leave the FTA or operating area unit it has been cleared to resume safe aerial operations.

Eddie indicated that the issue is sometimes listed in some contracts.

Chuck commented that the local rancher agreed to help out his neighbors and just shows up at fire. In this particular case the air attack did not know the local helicopter was not carded / or approved causing a lot of confusion.

Recommendation was to incorporate protocol for Non-approved aircraft intrusion of a FTA or fire operations area in all unit aviation operations plans. All members were in agreement.

**7. Standardize Aerial Observer training for the region.**

The group decided to look at what your programs are doing since things appear to be all across the board for training and standards.

Jim said the panhandle has done Aerial Observer training for a long time and their pre-requisite was set at ICT5 Qualifications.

Kim said the mnemonics for aerial observer had been changed to AERO

Groups concern was – do they need to have fire quals since all they are required to do is make size up and then leave area.

Allen commented that in the BLM is currently looking at addressing the issue at the National office. And he would check on what is going on at that level and report back in the next conference.

Eddie said that he will check on this and report in the next conference call.

#### **8. Tone guard on National Flight Following**

Kim will check on this and report in next conference call.

Allen asked if there were any other topics for discussion. None were given. He reminded everyone to review chapters 80 & 20 and have their comments ready for the conference call.

Allen asked the group for a consensus on a conference call date that would work for everyone. The group decided that June 26 was best for everyone. Allen would email everyone within the next two weeks with a conference bridge number and password and time of call.

Meeting closed at 1530 hrs.