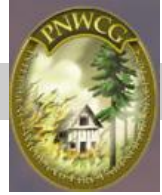


## Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group

# 2010 Accomplishments



### Who we are

The Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group (PNWCG) is an association of 11 local, state and federal agencies that either have wildland fire protection responsibilities or support agencies that do. The members include:

Forest Service	Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Indian Affairs	Fish and Wildlife Service
Oregon Dept. of Forestry	Washington Dept. of Natural Resources
National Park Service	Washington Association of Fire Chiefs
Oregon Fire Chiefs' Association	Washington State Fire Marshal's Office
Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office	

### Background

In the 1960s and 1970s, fire seasons across the Pacific Northwest stretched firefighting resources thin. To make matters worse, allocating fire engines, crews and aircraft in the most efficient manner proved to be a continual challenge, since the land management entities with fire protection responsibilities in the region largely operated independently of each another. While local unit cooperation was generally good, there was no overarching coordination mechanism at the regional level.



Photo by Leo Engleson

The same situation was occurring across the nation. To provide for overall coordination of wildland fire training, preparedness and cooperation, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) was established in 1976.

Then in 1984 the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the States of Oregon and Washington chartered the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group (PNWCG).

In the ensuing decades, wildland fire protection in the region became a truly collaborative interagency effort, encompassing fire prevention and preparedness as well as training and execution. Agency leaders yielded a measure of autonomy to foster this unprecedented level of cooperation.

### Working Teams

To accomplish the array of tasks that arise in coordinating wildfire response across an entire region, the PNWCG Steering Committee established various working teams. There are currently eight, each with a distinctive mission.

#### Fuels Management Working Team

Mission: To better identify priority locations for future grants and fuels reduction/land management projects using a collaborative, multi-level interagency approach.

#### Aviation Working Team

Mission: To provide cooperative interagency aviation expertise in support of all-incident management in Oregon and Washington. Primary focus of this team is aviation safety, including management and operations oversight.

#### Operations Working Team

Mission: To provide a coordinated interagency approach to operational activities of wildland fire management in Oregon and Washington; additionally, to identify issues and recommend proactive solutions to potential problems related to interagency fire pre-suppression and suppression programs.

### **Training Working Team**

Mission: To provide a coordinated, interagency approach to fire management training in the Pacific Northwest Geographic Area.

### **GIS Working Team**

Mission: To provide efficient and effective ways to meet fire program needs for geospatial information through an interagency forum, and to develop a process for coordination of interagency-sponsored geospatial information initiatives. The GIS Working Team endeavors to support and implement strategic and tactical applications of GIS (geographic information system) for the Pacific Northwest wildland fire community.

### **Safety and Health Working Team**

Mission: To improve firefighter health, safety and effectiveness through emphasis on excellence in workforce development, leadership and the establishment of standards based on principles within a developing safety culture. Through data collection and analysis, the team validates and prioritizes safety issues for resolution and communication to the field and management.

### **Incident Business Practices Working Team**

Mission: To provide an efficient, effective and coordinated interagency approach to the fire business management activities of wildland fire protection agencies in Oregon and Washington.

### **Communications, Prevention and Investigation Working Team**

Mission: To promote a better understanding of wildland fire through communication, prevention and investigation using a coordinated interagency effort.

## **Advisory Councils**

Four advisory councils provide advice to PNWCG:

- Incident Commander Advisory Council
- Fire Environment Advisory Council
- Fire Program Analysis Advisory Council
- Northwest Center Managers Advisory Council

## **What we accomplished**

Here are some notable achievements of the working teams and advisory councils in 2010:

### **■ Fire program data national prototype**

Developed a national prototype for the collection and storage of key fire program data (e.g., aviation hazards, fire engine water sources, hazardous fuels projects, et al.).

### **■ Improved fire grant process**

With the integration of the National Fire Plan Working Group as a subcommittee, the PNWCG Fuels Management Working Team played a key role in 2010 in the National Fire Plan (NFP) Community Assistance Grant Program. The NFP funding was allocated to wildland-urban interface grants for the protection of state and private lands in the Pacific Northwest. The Team helped foster a better integrated regional hazardous fuels strategy to maximize the benefits of the declining grant dollars.

### **■ Contract fire crew training MOU transferred to Forest Service**

After extensive review, PNWCG oversaw transfer of its contract fire crew training Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from the Oregon Department of Forestry to the Forest Service. The MOU provides a mechanism for crew contractor associations to offer National Wildfire Coordinating Group-approved training to private firefighters. Private contractors provide high-quality, trained 20-person firefighting crews to the PNWCG agencies and other agencies for wildfire suppression.



Photo by Jason Loomis

### ■ **Mapped regional fire history**

Defined data standards and continued mapping of fire history and fuels-reduction projects across the region.

### ■ **Central website for fire camps**

Developed a central web site for frequently used fire camp locations in the region that includes local contact information for incident management teams (IMT).

### ■ **Paperless IMT application process**

Continued work on development and implementation of the ICAP (Incident Command Application Program). ICAP was designed to manage the Pacific Northwest fire team application process as an online process to eliminate paper applications. ICAP is currently in use by the Oregon and Washington interagency incident management teams, as well as the two national teams stationed in the Pacific Northwest. Other regions' fire teams are also considering ICAP.

### ■ **Wildfire Awareness Week review**

Conducted an evaluation of the region's Wildfire Awareness Week (WAW) outreach and recommended continuing with current efforts; determined that WAW will be scheduled in the full week of May preceding Mother's Day.

### ■ **Incident-within-an-incident plans**

PNWCG collected incident-within-an-incident plans from each of the region's IMTs to compile data and identify opportunities for standardization. When a significant event such as the death or injury of a firefighter occurs during a wildfire suppression operation, fire managers may refer to it as an "incident within an incident."



Photo by Elizabeth Shephard

### ■ **Information technology improvement for IMTs**

Continued to enhance and standardize information technology capabilities for each IMT in the Pacific Northwest using funding provided by PNWCG member agencies.

### ■ **Fire behavior workshop held**

PNWCG hosted a workshop on fire behavior for both practitioners and managers that was well attended.

### ■ **Fire prevention workshop support**

PNWCG reestablished communication with the annual fire prevention workshop group and renewed its sponsorship of the workshop, which typically occurs each February. PNWCG will explore supporting the workshop in future through scholarship funding for state and rural fire service employees. The workshop provides a valuable outreach to fire prevention personnel, many of whom work for agencies with limited budgets for training.

Though 2010 played out as a moderate wildfire season, budget cutbacks throughout the wildland fire community posed a challenge to the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group. Close interagency cooperation and a sharp focus on essential tasks enabled the PNWCG to continue to provide quality services to its member agencies throughout the year.

Visit: [www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/pnwcg/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/pnwcg/) for more information about the PNWCG.

