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NORTHWEST FIRE SCIENCE CONSORTIUM

*Operating
Guidelines &
Governance
FYs 2020-2021*

Northwest Fire Science Consortium is part of a national network of consortia established by the Joint Fire Science Program to accelerate the awareness, understanding, and adoption of wildland fire science information by federal, tribal, state, local, & private stakeholders in the PNW



Northwest Fire Science Consortium
A Member of the Joint Fire Science Program Fire Science Exchange Network
Operating Guidelines and Governance¹
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I. General Provisions

These operating guidelines define a structure and governance for the Northwest Fire Science Consortium program (NWFSC), initially funded by the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) in 2012.

Overall Purpose

The purposes of the Guidelines are to ensure processes are identified that guide operations of the NWFSC. The Guidelines cover operations of the Management Committee (MC), Advisory Board (AB), NWFSC staff and partner interactions.

Vision Statement

The Northwest Fire Science Consortium (NWFSC) is a multi-organization collaborative meeting the diverse needs of fire science stakeholders in Washington and Oregon.

Mission

1. To provide a delivery system for the effective dissemination and accelerated user adoption of relevant fire science information, knowledge, tools, and expertise.
2. To provide a framework within which a variety of existing institutions and outreach programs focused on fire science delivery and dissemination in the Northwest can operate more effectively.
3. To establish the NWFSC as the preeminent organization in the Northwest for assessing research needs of fire managers, delivering fire science, and fostering two-way knowledge exchange.
4. To provide a venue to increase researcher understanding of science needs of diverse stakeholders.
5. To conduct on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of NWFSC efforts and adapt our approaches and activities to consistently meet the needs of fire science users.

Values

We subscribe to the set of core values outlined by the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) Governing Board when establishing the regional fire science networks. These include:

1. Be inclusive, making sure all relevant partners have the opportunity to be involved;
2. Serve as neutral science partners;
3. Be end-user driven, both in how we are structured and how we function;
4. Operate collaboratively, fostering joint management and science communication;
5. Be innovative, pursuing new and creative ways to disseminate knowledge;

¹ Revised December 4, 2019

6. Facilitate the flow in fire science information, dialogue about new science findings, and needs of resource managers and policymakers;
7. Be accountable to all partners, end-users and JFSP rather than just individual institution interests;
8. Maintain focus on six key JFSP objectives, through which our role is to:
 - a. Disseminate information and build relationships
 - b. List and describe existing research and synthesis
 - c. Assess the quality and applicability of research
 - d. Facilitate research demonstrations on the ground
 - e. Promote adaptive management using fire science findings
 - f. Illuminate new topics, synthesis or validation needs for the research community.

Funding

Consortium funding is initially and substantially provided from the Joint Fire Science Program, through the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest (PNW) Research Station. These funds are allocated via Agreements from the PNW Research Station and provided to Oregon State University (OSU), University of Oregon (UO), Sustainable Northwest (SNW), and the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM). Additional partners will be sought for general operational funding and for specific task funding (e.g., conferences, syntheses).

Guideline Revisions

The Guidelines are dynamic and will be updated at the onset of a new consortia funding cycle to improve the effectiveness and performance of the NWFSC. Revisions are approved by consensus of the Management Committee (see Section III).

II. Program Structure

The Northwest Fire Science Consortium is directed by a Principal Investigator with the Pacific Northwest Research Station and managed by an Administrative Director. The Management Committee (MC) provides leadership, and approval for activities and priorities. The Advisory Board (AB) provides higher level strategic direction, guidance and advice from the management and science communities. Members on both the MC and AB are recruited to 2-year renewable terms or for the duration of the funding cycle. MC members are selected to represent a diversity of partner institutions, including federal, state and private organizations. AB members similarly represent the diversity of NWFSC partners, with an emphasis on end-users as well as representation from each state.

The MC is composed of at least eight individuals from federal agencies, state universities, extension, and private organizations. The MC is responsible for setting NWFSC direction and priorities and for making decisions about NWFSC activities and deliverables. It provides general oversight of NWFSC operations. The AB is composed of representatives from each state; collectively representing a range of end users. The AB develops recommendations for fire science information and technical assistance needs, science delivery opportunities, ideas for possible new research and objective evaluations of the NWFSC's activities and progress toward meeting its goals. Travel costs for MC and AB members are borne by the members' organizations whenever possible and by the NWFSC otherwise.

III. Management Committee

Committee Composition

Currently Consortium operations are based at seven lead institutions with professionals and supporting staff at each. The Principal Investigator is located at the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station. The Administrative Director, a part-time Program Coordinator and one additional MC member are located at Oregon State University in Corvallis, OR. Two MC members are located at the University of Oregon in Eugene, OR. One MC member is located at the USFS Region 6 office in Portland, OR, one MC member is located at Sustainable Northwest in Portland, OR, one MC member is with The Nature Conservancy in Portland, OR, and the final MC member is with the Center for Natural Lands Management in Olympia, WA. Collectively, these seven institutions are directly responsible for implementing the science delivery programming.

Committee Member Term & Succession

The lead institutions will be represented on the MC, although the specific individuals serving as MC members may change as the NWFSC evolves. Partner organization representatives serve two-year terms or the duration of the funding cycle, and may renew. When a partner organization term ends, their membership on the MC may be switched to another person within the organization or another partner organization may be asked to participate.

Management Committee chair

The MC is chaired by one member of the Committee and will serve a term equivalent to a funding cycle. Selection of the MC chair will be made through simple majority of the MC members either through nominations or volunteer. The MC chair develops the agenda for each meeting.

Committee Meetings & Teleconferences

The MC meets monthly via conference call, once in person each year and additional times through conference calls or web meetings as necessary. Electronic communications are used more frequently for progress updates and decisions on project deliverables. When members cannot participate in scheduled meetings or conference calls they should indicate their positions on key agenda issues to the committee chair, who can convey that position to the participants at the meeting.

Ad hoc Committees

The MC may establish ad hoc committees to conduct studies or other activities in support of NWFSC planning and operations. A charge for each committee will include the purpose, duration and composition of the committee and other appropriate information to be determined by the MC and recorded in the MC meeting notes. All such committees include at least one MC member.

Committee Decision Process

The MC aims to operate by consensus (all members agree with or can support the decision). However, it is inevitable that members will miss meetings and/or conference calls. In the event that decisions must be addressed without full membership, the following guidelines apply: reasonable effort is made to determine the member's views/position before the meeting; before decisions are finalized after the meeting or call, the missing member's input is requested in writing; for minor (non-programmatic) decisions, consensus must only be among those present.

In the event that consensus cannot be obtained on any issue, the MC may defer the issue for further discussion and negotiation. If the issue cannot be deferred, or if additional subsequent conversation does not build consensus, the MC may use simple majority to decide an issue. If a decision is not made by consensus, the process used and minority opinion will be documented in the meeting minutes.

Committee Governance Roles

Major governance roles include ensuring fiscally responsible decision making and budget execution, oversight and priority setting for the annual program of NWFSC activities, and ensuring that completion of deliverables, annual reporting and planning are completed in a timely manner. Committee members represent NWFSC in a wide variety of contexts, serving as "ambassadors" for the Consortium, soliciting feedback and ideas from ongoing interactions with the fire management community. Committee members also represent their home organization and, at times, should present the needs and views of their organization. MC members are expected to clearly disclose when they are representing a single-organization viewpoint.

IV. Advisory Board

Board Composition

The AB is comprised of individuals who represent federal, state, private, non-profit, and collaborative organizations. Potential members are identified by the MC and invited by the lead institutions. Members collectively represent a broad range of agencies and organizations.

Board Chair

The AB is led by the Principal Investigator of the NWFSC, who will serve as the AB Chair. The chair and the MC will cooperate in developing agendas for each meeting. The NWFSC Administrative Director serves as secretary to the AB, and helps organize, document and advise the AB but is not a voting member except in the event of a tie vote. The Administrative Director serves as the primary liaison between the AB and the MC. Other MC members may attend AB meetings at the invitation or by permission of the AB Chair.

Board Member Term & Succession

AB members serve two-year terms or the duration of a funding cycle. When a member's term ends, the individual and the AB Chair will jointly decide if their term will renew. If a new AB member is sought, the position may be switched to another person within the same organization or someone may be recruited from a different organization, with a focus on maintaining a diversity of organizations and agencies across the AB.

Board Meetings & Teleconferences

The AB will meet for one face to face meeting and participate in twice yearly teleconferences.

Ad hoc Committees

The AB may establish ad hoc committees to conduct studies or other activities in support of NWFSC planning and operations. A charge for each committee will include the purpose, duration and composition of the committee and other appropriate information to be determined by the AB and recorded in the AB meeting notes. All such committees include at least one AB member.

Board Decision Process

The AB operates by consensus (all members agree with or can support the decision) of all members at the meeting or conference call. However, the Chair and Administrative Director will seek input and recommendations before the meeting from any members who will miss the call. In the event that consensus cannot be obtained on any issue, the AB may defer the issue for further discussion and negotiation. If the issue cannot be deferred, or if additional subsequent conversation does not build consensus, the AB may use simple majority to decide an issue. If a decision is not made by consensus, the process used and minority opinion will be documented in the meeting minutes. The AB may modify this process at their discretion.

Board Governance Roles

Major governance roles include identifying a broad range of opportunities for science delivery and application, summarizing high priority opportunities for new research and regular evaluation of NWFSC progress and success. Board members represent the program both formally and informally in a wide variety of contexts, and serve as “ambassadors” for the Consortium, sharing information about the program and soliciting feedback and ideas from ongoing interactions with their organizations and others in the fire management community. Board members also represent their home organization and, at times, should present the needs and views of their organization. Board members are expected to clearly disclose when they are representing a single-organization viewpoint.

V. Consortium Staff

All Consortium Staff are at least partially supported by their respective institutions.

The **Administrative Director** (AD) is responsible for coordinating the efforts of NWFSC partners for the creation of a database of fire researchers and managers; development and promotion of experiential learning opportunities; preparation of research summaries, PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets and newsletter articles that can be used in a variety of science delivery mechanisms; preparation and distribution of public education factsheets; and preparation of the annual reports. The AD serves as a liaison between the end users and partners, participates in MC and AB meetings, and coordinate conference calls involving leadership from both groups. The AD serves for the duration of the funding cycle, and the process for renewing or selecting the AD is determined by the NWFSC Principal Investigator. The **Program Coordinator** (PC) is supervised by the AD and assists in the development of research briefs, facts sheets, field tours and workshops. The PC is also responsible for maintenance of the Consortium web site and activity related to social network accounts, such as Twitter and Facebook.

VI. Consortium Partners

Land management agencies (USFS, USFWS, USNPS, BLM, BIA, state natural resource agencies, tribal nations) set the broad agenda for the NWFSC. They are engaged with project staff in on-going definition of their technical assistance needs and priorities. In collaboration with technical experts, the land management partners will apply and test scientific information when implementing land management activities and use adaptive management to reach land management objectives. They will contribute to developing syntheses of scientific and agency information, developing and maintaining a network of internal and external experts, and co-hosting field workshops and other science delivery activities.

Research agencies (USFS, USGS, EPA) and universities in the Northwest have numerous experts in fire science and related fields. We will draw from this pool to synthesize existing information around priority issues, promote interaction among managers and scientists, develop field workshops, and participate in other science delivery activities. These organizations will work together to develop web-based training on key fire science issues.

Cooperative Extension Programs associated with land-grant universities have community-based educators who produce and disseminate fire science information. Because they collaborate with research scientists, end users of research products and the public, extension educators provide a bridge between researchers and science users. NWFSC will coordinate with these extension programs to ensure that science delivery activities and products are made available to private consultants, landowners and the general public.

Regional, state, and local prescribed fire councils and networks develop information and provide syntheses, research applications and outreach activities closely related to fire and fuels management interests and issues. We will collaborate with these networks to leverage opportunities for fire science delivery and education, and to enhance management applications on the ground.

Non-governmental, non-profit, and community-based collaborative organizations promote the management and planning of conservation efforts, provide integrated approaches for collaborative management, the implementation and sharing of lessons learned and tools to assist in landscape restoration efforts and community well-being. The NWFSC will collaborate with these organizations to provide opportunities for land managers, practitioners, and communities to achieve ecological and socio-economic goals.

VII. End-user Communities

The primary target audiences for NWFSC include both direct and indirect fire science users that will benefit from increased fire science information, synthesis and knowledge exchange. For the purpose of our initial work, we have divided our audiences into the following groups:

- Fire and fuel managers and practitioners within the NWFSC's operating boundaries.
- People and organizations focused on forest restoration, stewardship, and hazardous fuels reduction, especially on public lands and public/private interfaces.
- People and organizations focused on community safety and fire preparation.
- University and agency researchers who are engaged in applied fire research from a diversity of perspectives and have an interest in undertaking stakeholder-driver research.
- Agency personnel, fire districts, and contractors engaged in fire suppression, prescribed burning and smoke management.
- Local, regional, state, and federal policy-makers.

We use diverse science delivery mechanisms to reach them, including Prescribed Fire Council meetings, an interactive website, research summaries, newsletters, field tours and demonstrations, Extension workshops, and landowner association meetings.

VIII. Reporting & Documentation

Several types of Consortium reports are prepared to meet JFSP requirements, for stakeholders and for Regional briefings.

1. Annual progress reports. The NWFSC submits an annual report to JFSP no later than required by JFSP. This summarizes progress, planned activities, issues/concerns, and opportunities for new research or science delivery applications. The report is intended for general circulation and is posted on the NWFSC website. The Administrative Director leads production of these reports.
2. Regional briefings. An abbreviated one-page summary of the Annual Report to JFSP is used for publicizing NWFSC programs with groups such as the USFS Region 6 administrators and Pacific Northwest Research Station, Prescribed Fire Councils and Landowner Organizations.
3. Biannual progress reports are distributed as email updates to the AB and posted on the NWFSC website.