



**FINAL NOTES
NAFSR BOD ZOOM MEETING
November 10, 2022**

Attendees

Board Members – Steve Ellis (Chair), Jamie Connell (Acting Vice Chair), Jim Caswell (Past Chair), Rich Stem (R-1), Sharon Friedman (R-2), Greg Griffith (R-3), Lynn Sprague (R-4), Becki Heath (R-6), Malcolm Gramley (R-8), Don Howlett (R-9), Rich Guldin (Research), Gene Blakenbaker (National), Hank Kashdan (National), Nora Rasure (National), Susan Skalski (National), Jack Troyer (National), Jeanne Wade Evans (National), Ed Shepard (PLF Liaison).

Committee Chairs – Jose Linares (Restoration), Nora Rasure (Recreation), Mike Dudley (Fire), Rich Guldin (Climate Change).

Staff - Bill Disbrow (Webmaster) and Johnny Hodges (Secretary).

Opening Remarks by Chair - Steve Ellis

- Thanks to Becky and Jamie for putting together the agenda and moderating today's meeting.
- A Salute to Veterans.
- A change in NEPA/CEQ leads – from Rich S. and Ranotta to Sharon effective in January. Rich S. gave a “thanks” to Sharon for taking over these duties.
- Congratulations to the 2022 Doug Leisz Award winners, Rich Stem and Tom Thompson. The awards were presented at the National FS Reunion in South Lake Tahoe. Details are on our website.

Finance and Membership Report – Johnny Hodges

Finance

Cash - \$34,290

Investments - \$12,065

Total - \$46,355

We have started collecting dues and donations for 2023. We currently have 185 Lifetime members and 200 Golden members who will not owe any annual dues. There are 50 first year members with complimentary dues. That leaves 300 members paying annual dues.

In 2022 we had 21 new Lifetime memberships for \$5,500. Annual dues collections were \$7,010. Total donations were \$6,515 with \$2,115 of that total earmarked for the national reunion.

Jim Caswell brought up the idea of collecting “pledges” from Board members to help cover our annual expenses. This is something used by the Public Lands Foundation. Johnny will follow up with PLF on the details.

Membership

We currently have 734 members. We gained 50 new members in 2022. A year ago, we had 730 members.

Our membership has stayed steady over the past few years, but we have quite a bit of turnover in our members each year.

Public Lands Foundation - Ed Shepard

- The Student Congress was very successful. Thanks for your help.
- The PLF annual meeting was held in Grand Junction. The field trip was canceled due to weather.
- Mary Jo Rugwell is meeting with the BLM and starting a joint history project with them. There is no written history of BLM.
- PLF has established a development committee. We have grown PLF activities during the last decade which include setting up an endowment fund, asking the Board member for pledges (with some success), looking at ways to cut costs, grow membership, and eliminating lifetime memberships.
- We are trying to do more advocacy for BLM employees. Their morale continues to be low.

Congressional Update - Doug Crandall via Steve

Doug was not able to attend the meeting today, but he sent his notes to Steve, which Steve reviewed with the group.

The most important messages concerning the election -

- 1) With the House flipping, Republican oversight of a Democratic administration, including all government agencies, will be harsh. Its primary purpose will be to set the stage for the 2024 election.
- 2) Our agency has been here before and the work we've done to create strong bipartisan relationships will put us in a better place than most other agencies.
- 3) We know who the new chairs will be of our key committees and have relationships with them and their staffs. For example, Bruce Westerman will be the chair of the House Natural Resources Committee. He's a Yale trained forester who generally supports the Forest Service, though he can be tough at times. The Chief recently had dinner with him. Aniela, his Chief of Staff, is an old friend---is very nice, smart, and easy to work with.

Bruce's chair of the Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee will be Russ Fulcher, an Idaho Republican in the mold of Mike Simpson, a very nice, respectful guy who works hard to do the right thing.

G.T. Thompson will be the chair of the House Agriculture Committee. Again, we have a long and generally positive working relationship with him.

Cathy McMorris Rodgers will be the Chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee. She's very nice and has been generally a supporter of the Forest Service.

All that being said, it isn't going to be easy, but all the years of work to develop key relationships will pay off.

- 4) Other than that, it's going to be a long two years of senseless partisan and in-party bickering and name calling. So don't listen to the news, sit back, relax, and enjoy your mimosa!

National FS Reunion Reports

- Becki - NAFSR was quite visible throughout the reunion.
- Nora and her recreation panel –
- Our goal was to gain visibility for both NAFSR and recreation in the FS.
 - We had three speakers including Chris French from the WO. He discussed the new FS recreation strategy.
 - Colin Robertson from the Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation discussed the opportunities for Nevada state recreation and a holistic approach for working with partners.
 - Julie Regan from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency discussed working more on shared stewardship with other agencies.
 - The Chief and his staff sat through the presentations. Numerous people asked speakers for more information and offered good comments.
- All three speaker presentations are posted on our website.

Comment from Susan – Nora did the bulk of the work.

Comment from Jim – Is the FS Recreation Strategy available? It is still a work in progress and no final document. There is a one pager from FS we could post on website.

Meeting with Chief – Steve/Jeanne Wade Evans

During a lunch break one day during the Reunion, several members of the NAFSR Board met with the Chief and his staff. Some of the highlights -

- It was impressive to see five former Chiefs sitting in circle together talking about things important to FS and NAFSR.
- The discussion started with fire. We were briefed on lessons learned from the prescribed fire pause which were about to be released. One goal is to raise prescribed fire to the level of wildfire. There could possibly be national teams created for prescribed fire.
- The final report came out the same week the Queen died, so there was reduced press exposure.
- Fire is perceived as a FS problem. NAFSR can help by discussing that it is bigger than the FS.
- Separating tactics and strategy.
- Collaboration around fire.
- The Chief and staff complimented our fire committee and our involvement in fire issues. NAFSR is playing a national role.
- Chris French said we are rethinking fundamental policies. Funding comes as boom or bust vs. sustained flows.
- Fire and everything else is connected.
- Workforce Capacity is eating our lunch. We are down about 35% in employees. We plan to add 8,000 employees.
- Restoration – We must keep it moving. It is a down payment on our future. It will change the agency to have from have-not.
- Being wise with \$10.8 billion over 10 years.
- The Chief is a barrier breaker, but the FS culture is resistant to change (such as agreements).
- We need to be future focused – how to integrate work in all sectors.
- NAFSR is valuable to the agency.
- Do something like this meeting again.
- Don't let culture become a problem for NAFSR.

Comments from the Board -

Jack – Fire and capacity are at the top of the list, but climate change and recreation come as the next priorities.

Rich S. – Chris French said he must shift the paradigm on fire restoration and capacity. The hiring process is only part of the problem with BAER and post-fire rehabilitation.

Jim – We have written good papers on FS culture and EADM. We need to get them in front of FS (they are on our website).

Hank – So many opportunities coming to FS all at once. Culture of leadership? How are they dealing with it? Capacity is the biggest limitation.

Rich G. – Chris F. spoke to D.C. retirees about bringing culture to FS through the ACES program and retirees.

Gene has been working with HR.

- There have been six national hiring events for grants and agreements, engineers, foresters, and forest technicians.
- Our goal was to fill 1,000 forester positions. We filled about 520. 80% were internal fills. Not a lot of external hires for GS-11/12 positions.
- Currently 800 – 900 positions above last year with another 400 still in process of being hired.
- Temp employees were down this year. The applicant pool dropped by 50%, from 100,000 down to 50,000.

Rich S. (post-meeting comments) – “Many of the issues we talked about in the beginning of the call and that were related to what Jeanne went over with everyone about the discussions with the Chief and Deputy Chiefs at the reunion are embedded in work that NAFSR produced over the past few years. Bill has them all posted on our website and easy to find.

As we proceed to look at priorities for the future, I would strongly recommend that Board members go back and look at this material such as what Jim brought up on the call (for example - culture). Especially those Board members that were not involved at the time or who were not with NAFSR.

As priorities surface and a program of work is developed for us, there was much material produced on some of the same issues now facing the Agency. It is not to say that these are now totally relevant, but they are a good foundation and starting place and perhaps can be dusted off, modified, drawn from, or just used in figuring out our program of work.

Topics such as hiring, culture, budget, regulations, personnel capacity, forest management, fire management policies----it is all there and was mostly done in the past 5 years. It would likely make a better product in the end for us, to use what we have said in the past, and update it, and make it even more relevant now. Most of the items/issues are a quick read, concise, and with much info. Just a suggestion.”

Student Congress – Jim Caswell and Jamie Connell

- Sam Foster, Jim, and Jeanne were on the planning committee.
- The topic was fire.

- This was the 5th Congress sponsored by the Public Lands Foundation (PLF).
- There were 100 student applicants. 25 were chosen. All expenses were paid. They were required to write a report with recommendations.
- Logistics was good.
- The group toured NIFC. The BLM was there, but the FS was absent.
- Both the FS and BLM supported the Congress with \$20,000 grants.
- There was a broad range of speakers.
- 85% of the students' feedback said the Congress more than met their expectations.
- FS was very absent in closeout.
- Some students had worked as seasonals with FS or BLM. They were in tune with culture of the organization.
- Proposed new name from the students – “fire tenders vs. firefighters” – we are managing fire.
- Becki – the Congress was very inspirational.

Updates from Leads and Other Committees

Leads

Ranotta: CEQ NEPA have nothing to report at this time.

Jack Troyer: Nothing from me on the November agenda.

Rich Stem: Two sentences on NEPA reg and planning.

“No movement at all on any new or old revision of forest service NEPA regs. Agency continues to implement EADM changes, but no new efforts as they are now focused on implementation and execution of the 10-year strategy in the infrastructure bill direction”

Kevin: My thoughts - I do not have a need for a Board decision in November. All the letters that NAFSR signs onto are posted to the NAFSR website, so for me to go over them with the Board, as I have been doing, is a bit redundant. This of course is assuming folks are getting and reading the letters. What they don't see are the letters we don't sign.

I suspect if we have a something that Steve and Jamie believes the Board needs to see, review, or discuss before the decision to sign is made, those could be identified and shared. There are none at this time.

Other Committees

Recreation – Nora

Report on agenda

Climate – Rich

Report on the agenda

Fire – Mike/Jeanne/Steve

Aspen Institute and Chief's meeting on agenda

Restoration – Jose

Nothing new to report from the restoration committee. I know Sharon already briefed the Board on the comment letter to the agencies regarding the mature and old growth issue and they should have received a copy of the final letter.

Climate Committee – Rich G.

Our committee is working on both a charter and position statement.

- Charter comments from Rich G. –
 - Was revised based on comments from last meeting.
 - The toughest issue was how to make this a national position statement, then tier down to regional levels.
 - Who are the target audiences? Unclear in initial draft. Page 3 now describes audiences.
 - Additional supplemental info with hot links – p. 4
 - Transmittal letter – Dave Cleaves statement (American Forests) with links to statements to previous Chiefs.
- Steve – We are getting closer. The Charter has too much extra stuff. The “audiences” for example. It should be basic framework only. The position paper has great improvements. Remarks from Doug are that he cannot take this to the Hill. He needs it to be simple. Maybe we need 2 papers – a simple 2-page version and one with more detail. Not sure these are ready for a decision.
- Jim – I agree with Steve. SAF papers include an executive summary that is backed up by more detail in another paper. That's where we need to be.
- Rich G. – The goal was the first page to be a 60 second read. Can physically separate first page from rest of paper.
- Jack – We need a one-pager to go to Hill.
- Rich G. – I am happy to work with Doug.
- Steve – Sharon had thoughts to share. She will respond separately to Rich.
- Don – Put the issue in the context of how it's going to affect peoples' lives. This isn't just affecting forests.
- Becki – Not ready for a decision today.
- Steve – I can finish the charter with Rich. The paper needs a small group to finish. We can bring to closure at our February meeting.
- Rich G. – Send comments to me. The concepts need to be ready sooner than February.
- Becki – Let Steve/Rich know if you want to participate.

Aspen Institute/The Nature Conservancy (TNC) – Mike Dudley/Steve

Steve –

- They are creating a Roadmap for Wildfire Solutions.
- They have held a series of meetings around the West.

- The last meeting was held in Jackson Hole in September. There were about 60-70 invited people there.
- The Hearst Family is big donor to this effort.
- Our fire committee was asked to review the draft product.

Mike D. –

- Zoom Meeting with 8 members present plus Steve and Sharon.
- We are supportive of the draft document.
- Their document included 7 themes.
- I had 4 themes –
 - Science Size and Scale – Dealing with huge areas.
 - Contractors – Contractors need to be part of the solution; the document doesn't really include them.
 - Risk Transfer – When things go wrong.
 - Governance – We have lots of documents out there. Where do you draw the line? Who determines where we go?

Other comments -

Steve – The “national fire service” idea came up. I pushed back. Very concerning to our organization. Doug said it cycles around every 5 – 6 years.

Mike – Lack of coordination on research – for example smoke management.

Jeanne – TNC reps were great. They were impressed with our fire committee. They are highly regarded.

Final Comments

- Jamie - Send ideas for next meeting which will be in person in February. We are working on the agenda.
- Steve – Chief will be with us in p.m. on Day 1 of the February meeting.
- The idea of a development committee needs more discussion.
- Student Congress – Disappointed in the lack of FS support at NIFC.
- Brian Ferebee said we are hiring in record numbers, but we are losing more than that in attrition.
- Aspen Institute – We will continue to engage. The final product is planned for February.
- Next Board meeting is scheduled in person in Denver on February 7 and 8.

Johnny Hodges, Secretary

Final Edit - November 18, 2022