



Final Notes

NAFSR Board of Directors Meeting

May 19, 2026

Attendees

Board Members – Bill Avey (Chair), Becki Heath (Vice Chair), Steve Ellis (Past Chair), Johnny Hodges (Secretary), Cheryl Probert (R-1), Frank Beum (R-2), Jerry Perez (R-3), Teresa Benson (R-5), Debbie Hollen (R-6), Marisue Hilliard (R-8), Earl Stewart (R-10), Doug Crandall (Congressional Liaison), Alex Friend (Research), Gene Blakenbaker (National), Nora Rasure (National), Jeanne Wade Evans (National), Tim DeCoster (National), Susan Skalski (National), Mike Dudley (National), Chuck Mark (National), Paul Ries (National).

Others – Kevin Martin (AWCP Liaison), Marna Daley (social media)

Chiefs Emeritus – Vicki Christiansen

Unable to attend – Don Howlett (R-9), Ralph Crawford (Research), Ed Shepard (PLF Liaison), Bill Disbrow (Webmaster)

Chair Update - Bill Avey

- We continue to receive lots of media attention, primarily on FS Restructuring.

Election of New Members – Becki Heath

- We have 2 nominees to join the Board of Directors, Susan Spear and Mary Erickson. Both nominees would be “at large” members for now.
- After some discussion, each nominee was elected unanimously.

FS Restructuring – Becki Heath

- There was an NPR interview yesterday with Chris French, Vicki Christiansen and Char Miller on the FS Restructuring.
- Bill and Becki – Holding monthly calls with Chris French and Jaelith Hall Rivera. We will share some information from the calls with the Board.
- The Chief's Office is actively working with SES people on their wants/needs.
- Cheryl – Are we utilizing what we know from the Chief/Chris French in how we shape our talking points?
- Debbie Hollen organized the 30 questions on the FS Restructuring from our “all-members” Zoom meeting on April 24. They were included in our May 8 letter to the Chief.
- Chris/Jaelith said answering the questions in writing would be difficult. They suggested a Zoom meeting to answer questions.

Partnership with NARFE – Debbie Hollen

- Debbie has been making connections with her local NARFE chapter.
- Sometimes they weigh in on specific issues. They have posted information on their website about the FS reorganization.
- They put up a template letter similar to ours on their website.

Talking Points (TP) Discussion

- TP on Wildland Fire move is the biggest threat to FS.
- TP on requirements in FY27 Budget – Congress decides whether they will enforce (such as studies). Unlikely this Congress will do anything. The agency should work with Congress to develop a structure that will work.
- Do we want to share TPs externally (website) or keep them internal?
- Chuck – I have used them in discussions with congressional staffers and in talks with others. There’s nothing in them that we shouldn’t post for the public.
- Jeanne – The TPs should be transparent so members can use them.
- Cheryl – Not all members may agree with our TPs. We should focus on our priorities.
- Frank – Outside people are looking at our website.
- Susan – We should be responsive to our members.
- Becki – We don’t have too many TPs. Maybe focus more on position papers.
- Jeanne – There will be discrepancies among our members on our positions.
- Alex – Agree with less is more on TPs. I would like to see more TPs on our website.

- Bill A. – Our TPs reflect our members. We may not always agree with the Chief. Maybe we can build a position paper on recreation based on our TPs.
- Becki/Jeanne – Maybe we can make TPs into frequently asked questions.

All Members Zoom meeting follow-up

- Becki - Status of letter to Chief with Qs (was sent May 8).
- Tim - Draft TPs regarding FS restructuring legal questions.
- Teresa - Draft TPs regarding Recreation.
- Becki - Board observations on Zoom meeting.
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Social Media Strategy - Marna Daley/Debbie Hollen

- Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn – we set up a profile on all three.
- Facebook – ages 45 to 65, 400 followers, used for personal connections.
- Instagram – ages 25 to 44, current or former FS employees, great for storytelling, photos, shorter posts, more graphics, attention span of 5 seconds.
- LinkedIn – ages 30 to 64, important for partnership, good for credibility, discussion, science connections, 30 to 35 followers, professional/business audience.
- Opportunities – We would like to share more member stories, highlight Board members’ stories for starters, website, membership.

Legislative Report – Doug Crandall

- 903 days to the next president election.
- 168 days to mid-term elections.
- 24 legislative days left.
- Reconciliation bills would include more \$ for ballroom.
- Bill to rescind roadless rule is planned for Thursday.
- Expecting a Continuing Resolution.
- Budget hearings – added new terms or conditions to agreements, which has messed up states on grants and agreements.
- Other bills –
 - Farm Bill passed the House with a 10 a.m. fire suppression policy.
 - Great American Outdoors Act has 60 votes in Senate.
 - Fix Our Forest Act (FOFA) passed House. Senator Mike Lee has a hold on the bill.

- Battle of redistricting. The “blue wave” is getting smaller due to redistricting.
- Midterms usually reflect on the president. He has the worse ratings ever.
- Steve Pierce from New Mexico is new BLM director.
- Louisiana moved from open to closed primary.

Fire Season Plus Farm Bill/Fire – Mike Dudley and Bill Avey

- Younger firefighters don’t care who they work for, they identify mostly with their crew.
- Focus on fire - it needs to remain with agency.
- Fire committee provided language for Farm Bill. White paper is drafted. We have a problem with 10:00 a.m. policy in section 8408. We want to support the Farm Bill in general, but don’t agree with 8408.
- So far this year we are ahead of 10 yr. average, mostly because of the South. SW now has high activity. We expect high fire activity across the West.
- We are waiting on Fire Study to be released. Mike Simpson wants fire study done before FY27 budget decisions.
- Becki – Changing role of agency administrators is happening at DOI. Decision making will be done by fire people, not line officers. It could come to FS.
- Steve – It is reported that BLM recently “cleaned house” of much agency senior career leadership: State Directors, Associate SDs, District Managers, etc. and as an incentive to leave, promised to fully pay them through September if they left now. Fire organization transition is reported to be chaotic and confusing. We understand dozens of new GS-14 positions are being created in the new DOI wildfire agency. The increased burden on taxpayers is amounting to many new millions of additional dollars. Certain fire contractors have reportedly been among the primary drivers for creating the new DOI fire agency.
- Bill A. – Be careful with comments as we move into fire season.

5-Minute Updates

- Developing the 2026-2027 Program of Work & Partnership Principles (Handout #8) was assigned to Teresa, Jerry, Chuck, and Becki. The POW was approved.
- Partnership Principles – Looking for organizations that would strengthen us and be mutually beneficial.
- We added two standing committees – Employee Care (Mary Beth Stewart - chair) and Communications (Debbie Hollen - chair).
- We need replace the chairs for Restoration and Recreation chair.

- Our two major emerging issues at this time are FS Restructuring and Transfer of the Fire Organization to DOI.

Membership & Finances – Johnny Hodges

- Our membership continues to grow each month, and we are just over 1,300 members, an increase this year of about 135. We have seen a steady increase of new members since January.
- We are in good shape financially and staying within our 2026 budget so far. We do have a substantial number of members that have not paid their dues this year. I will be reaching out to each of them in the next few weeks.

Museum Update - Frank Beum

- The National Conservation Legacy Center will hold its Grand Opening in Missoula on July 16/17.
- With the completion of the Legacy Center, the Museum Board of Directors is currently working on governance issues.

Communication Strategy – Debbie Hollen

- Communication Strategy was presented at the February BOD meeting in Denver.
- No update now on strategy, the Committee has been working on other things.
- When is something an issue paper? When do we develop talking points?

Update on Mentoring MOU - Mary Beth

- The MOU with FS proposal was sent to the Chief's Office and Chris French accepted the proposal. Tina Terrell is the lead from the WO. The MOU is broad and on a high level. The FS wants NAFSR to sign first and we will probably do so in the next week.
- The FS has had mentoring contracts in the past. ACES has something in the works on retiree/employee connection.

FY27 Budget Draft Comments – Tim DeCoster

- We have draft TPs on FY27 Budget.
- There are conflicts between budget and reorganization (eliminating research and SPT).
- There are large cuts in the President's budget.
- We need to share our TPs.
- Bill/Becki/Tim will work on TPs.

Committee Chair/Regional Reps/PLF Reports

R-1/2/3/4

- People are scared. Lots of chaos.
- RFs are traveling a lot.

R- 5/6/10

- R-10 RF retired.
- R-10 focused on timber and recreation.

R-8/9

- Tough to get employees to talk.
- There is still interest in Hurricane Helene (18 months ago).

Climate Committee – Alex Friend

- Pass

Recreation Committee – Nora Rasure

- Participating in advocacy groups.
- America the Beautiful Act.

Recognition Committee – Tim DeCoster

- Pass

Public Lands Foundation (PLF) – Debbie Hollen

- Deb is now the NAFSR representative with PLF.
- PLF's annual meeting will be in Phoenix in September.

Student Congress – Cheryl Probert

- The next Student Congress will be held in Boise or Missoula in 2027.
- The theme is motorized recreation.
 - Expanding motorized uses.
 - New technology/toys/user groups.
 - Produce something useful for the field.

Close-out- Becki and Bill

- The Zoom meeting tomorrow with Chris French is scheduled for 90 minutes. He will answer the 30 questions first with some time for Q&A's.

- Good job Teresa of facilitating today's meeting. Thanks to the agenda planning team.
- Everyone please continue your support for current employees.

Notes by Johnny Hodges

First draft 6/7/2026

Final draft 6/11/2026