



Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group

February 1, 2024

To: Jason Devcich, Operations Committee Chair

From: Norm McDonald, AWFCG Chair

Subject: Hand Crew Needs Analysis Task Group

**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Bureau of Land Management

National Park Service

US Fish and Wildlife Service

State of Alaska

Department of Fish and Game

Department of
Natural Resources
Division of Forestry and
Fire Protection

Department of
Environmental Conservation

**U.S. Department
of Agriculture**

US Forest Service

Native Organizations

Association of
Village Council Presidents

Chugachmiut

Tanana Chiefs Conference

**Structural Fire Departments
& other Organizations**

Central Mat-Su Fire Department

The Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG) supports local, regional, and national fire response efforts within the Alaska Geographic Area by organizing, training, and mobilizing resources, including fire hand crews. Authorized by the AWFCG and specified in the charter, the Operations Committee provides recommendations for coordinated direction on interagency operational issues such as, but not limited to: aviation, crews, equipment, technology needs, position needs analysis, fire and aviation safety, and efficient use of resources and capital improvements analysis.

Fire hand crews are the primary force in constructing fire lines and suppressing fires. Alaska's fire hand crews should be available to quickly be mobilized to assist in wildland fire response. Fire suppression effort has become more expensive in Alaska and across the Nation while the number of available fire hand crews have decreased.

AWFCG tasks the Operations Committee to develop an interagency Hand Crew Needs Analysis Task Group. The purpose is to evaluate hand crew resources available relative to the needs. The scope of this task group is expected to evolve as the analysis proceeds. The objective is to identify existing and potential gaps to fulfill Alaska suppression needs with the current crew inventory in an effort to reduce costs associated with ordering crews from the Lower 48 States. The following topics should be addressed and refined for the March 18th meeting with AWFCG:

- Consider and integrate as appropriate the contents of AFS' market research when they converted to contract crews; contact Hudson Plass for support.
- Consider the varying definitions of Planning Levels 1-3 and whether using Conversion may be more applicable to refine how hand crew needs are assessed and fulfilled with in-state resources.
- Assess the past and potential number of Type 1, Type 2IA, and Type 2 hand crews, as well as Wildland Fire Modules and Suppression Modules, that are needed in Alaska.

- Consider that needs vary between the Department of Interior and the State of Alaska.
- Provide a cost comparison between agency crews/modules, Emergency Firefighters (EFF), Administratively Determined (AD), and contract crews throughout Alaska, L-48, and/or Canada, to include travels of resources by the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) jets and commercial round trip airfare, as well as cost of training and administering our own crews and to better develop interagency capacity building options.
- Recommend Task Group membership from the three protecting agencies, AWFCG members, Incident Business advisors, crew representatives, and AICC staff. The Operations Committee will provide a liaison to the Task Group.

The Task Group will analyze available data to provide a range of options that will inform a strategy to support crew capacity across Alaska Jurisdictional, Protection, and cooperating agencies. Questions may be directed to Jason Devcich at 907-687-8071 or jason_devcich@nps.gov.