

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Between the

**NORTHERN ROCKIES CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL WILDFIRE
SUPPRESSION ASSOCIATION**
and the

NORTHERN ROCKIES COORDINATING GROUP

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is hereby entered into by and between the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group, hereinafter referred to as NRCG, and the Northern Rockies Chapter of the National Wildfire Suppression Association, hereinafter referred to as the Cooperator.

Background: The NRCG is established to provide an interagency approach to wildland fire management and all-risk support on all land ownerships within the States of Montana, North Dakota, northern Idaho, and a small portion of South Dakota and Wyoming. Through its Training and Equipment Committees, NRCG manages a wildland and prescribed fire training certification and equipment inspection program for its member agencies. It is the policy of NRCG that all resources utilized on fire suppression incidents within the Northern Rockies, including non-members of NRCG, must meet or exceed all training, experience, and physical fitness standards identified in the current National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide (PMS 310-1). Further more, NRCG believes all equipment must meet NWCG, Department of Transportation (DOT) and NRCG Equipment standards for safety and operational use.

Private contractors not belonging to NRCG, continue to comprise a large and important portion of the workforce and equipment utilized for incidents within the NRCG area. Through various organizations and private enterprises, these non-members have also developed a wildland and prescribed fire training program that meets or exceeds the training, experience and physical fitness standards identified in PMS 310-1. The industry has not yet developed a uniform process for validating the qualifications of non-members, as well as the inspection of their equipment utilized by NRCG through its procurement services.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this MOU is to provide a general framework for cooperation and coordination between the parties concerning verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications and Equipment Inspections of Water Handling Equipment.

II. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTEREST

As stated above, all resources, including non-members utilized on wildland fire suppression incidents within the Northern Rockies, must meet or exceed all training, experience, and physical fitness standards identified in the current National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide (PMS 310-1) and that all equipment must meet NWCG, Department of Transportation (DOT) and NRCG equipment standards for safety and operational use. The Cooperator has individuals or can obtain individuals that meet NWCG, DOT and/or NRCG standards and is interested in performing the verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications and Equipment Inspections for non-member contractors covered under the US Forest Service Region 1

Water Handling Solicitation. Under the terms of this MOU, NRCG and the Cooperator propose to form a partnership whereby NRCG agrees to recognize Equipment Inspections and verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualification to non-members of NRCG by the Cooperator. This will provide the checks and balances necessary for NRCG to recognize Incident Qualification Cards and ensure personnel and equipment meets minimum standards provided under the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

In consideration of the above premises, the parties agree as follows:

III: DEFINITIONS:

Contractor: A private company or person who is not a member of NRCG and has agreed in advance to perform specified wildland fire services within the Northern Rockies Geographic Area and has been properly qualified and equipped to provide such services.

Cooperator: A private association, company or person organized for the purpose of validating Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications and Equipment Inspections of non-NRCG members.

Engine: Any ground vehicle providing specified levels of pumping, water, and hose capacity with specified level of personnel as defined in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Equipment Inspection: Process of checking, testing and certifying that Water Handling Equipment meets all requirements of the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Lead Equipment Inspector: An individual certified as a DOT inspector, per the Code of Federal Regulations 49, part 396.19 as found in the most current edition of the Federal Motor Carrier Handbook and has the training, knowledge, skills and abilities to perform Equipment Inspections as defined in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Northern Rockies Coordinating Group (NRCG): The Northern Rockies Coordination Group (NRCG) is established to provide an interagency approach to wildland fire management and all-hazard support on all land ownerships within the States of Montana, North Dakota, northern Idaho, and a small portion of South Dakota and Wyoming (*reference Appendix E*). NRCG is comprised of representatives from the Montana Firewarden's Association, Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Division, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Idaho Department of Lands, North Dakota Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, Montana Fire Chief's Association, and Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officer's Association. The purpose of NRCG is to further interagency cooperation, communications, coordination, and to provide interagency fire management direction and all-hazard support for the Northern Rockies Geographic Area.

National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG): A group formed under the direction of the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to improve the coordination and effectiveness of wildland fire activities and provide a forum to discuss, recommend appropriate action, or resolve issues and problems of substantive nature. NWCG is made up of representatives from the USDA Forest Service, US Fire Administration, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and the National Association of State Foresters.

NWCG PMS 310-1: The Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide developed under the sponsorship of NWCG and adopted by NRCG to establish minimum requirements for training, experience, physical fitness level and currency for wildland fire positions.

Pumper Cat: Any hard tracked vehicle with a front mounted blade used for exposing mineral soil and providing specified levels of pumping water, and hose capacity as defined in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Skidgine: A self-contained unit consisting of a water tank, fire pump, and hose especially designed to be carried on a logging rubber tired skidder for use in wildland fire operations as defined in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Soft Track: A self-contained unit consisting of a water tank, fire pump, and hose especially designed to be carried on a soft tracked tractor for use in wildland fire operations as defined in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Super Skidgine: A self-contained unit consisting of a water tank, fire pump, and hose especially designed to be carried on a log forwarder or similar piece of heavy equipment for use in wildland fire operations as defined in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Water Handling Equipment: Any wildland fire engine, water tender, skidgine, super skidgine, soft track or pumper cat that is a self-contained unit consisting of water tank, fire pump, hose, complement and specified personnel for use in wildland fire operations.

Water Tender: Any ground vehicle capable of transporting specified quantities of water that meet the specifications of the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Wildland Fire: Any non-structure fire that occurs in the wildland.

Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications: Established minimum requirements for training, experience, physical fitness level, and currency standards for wildland fire positions as identified in NWCG PMS 310-1 and the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.

Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications Inspector: An individual who is currently qualified as a 100 level course Lead Instructor as identified in NWCG's Field Manager's Course Guide and has a working knowledge of NWCG's PMS 310-1.

IV. NRCG SHALL:

1. Monitor the verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualification, Equipment Inspections and records of the Cooperator to determine if they are current, accurate and in compliance with NRCG, DOT and NWCG standards and procedures as identified within this MOU and the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.
2. Recognize the verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications and Equipment Inspections of Water Handling Equipment provided by the Cooperator provided they meet or exceed all standards set forth in this MOU and the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.
3. Provide an onsite NRCG representative at each Equipment Inspection.

V. THE COOPERATOR SHALL:

1. With respect to validation of Contractor Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications;
 - a. Validate Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications based on review of required training and experience records as identified in this MOU (*reference Appendix B*) and the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.
 - b. Maintain and provide access to NRCCG or its representatives their records of Contractors validated under this MOU. At a minimum, said records shall contain copies of all required driver licenses, medical certificates, current incident qualification card, course completion certificates and/or their equivalent, front and back of inside cover and all evaluation records from position task books, proof of position currency, proof of current annual safety refresher and current work capacity test, as required by NWCG PMS 310-1, the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation and this MOU (*reference Appendix B*).
 - c. Provide Contractors documentation of their Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications verification in a timely manner (*reference Appendix C for recommended sample form*).
 - d. Maintain and provide access to NRCCG representatives upon request, the qualification records for all Wildland Fire Personnel Qualification Inspectors utilized under this MOU.
 - e. Provide a minimum of one qualified Wildland Fire Personnel Qualification Inspector.
2. With respect to Contractor Equipment Inspections;
 - a. Provide to Contractors Equipment Inspections that meet or exceed NRCCG standards. All Equipment Inspections shall be documented and such documentation shall be provided by the Cooperator to all Contractors who pass the Equipment Inspection. The recommended process for Equipment Inspection is outlined in Appendix D and recommended forms are contained in the US Forest Service R1 Water Handling Solicitation. Inspections shall ensure or provide the following:
 - i. Provide a copy of the required Department of Transportation (DOT) inspection form and ensure that Water Handling Equipment meets all standards set forth in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Solicitation.
 - ii. Ensure and document that Water Handling Equipment does not surpass manufacturers Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR) or Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) while fully loaded per US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Equipment solicitation by weighing vehicle.
 - iii. Ensure that fire pump(s) meet or exceed pumping specifications for loading and offloading of water and that said equipment has all complement and fitting requirements per US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Equipment solicitation.
 - iv. Provide an opportunity for Water Handling Equipment that originally fails an Equipment Inspection a chance to be re-inspected.
 - v. Measure water tank and ensure that it meets minimum and maximum gallonage according to NWCG and NRCCG equipment typing standards as set forth in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Equipment solicitation.
 - vi. Ensure that Water Handling Equipment is compliant with vehicle identification and licensing requirements as set forth in the US Forest Service Region 1 Water Handling Equipment solicitation.

- b. Maintain and have available for NRCCG personnel, copies of all inspections of Water Handling Equipment completing the Equipment Inspection presented under this MOU.
 - c. Provide at a minimum one Lead Equipment Inspector.
 - d. Equipment inspectors performing inspections on Pumper Cats, Skidgines, Superskidgines and Soft Tracks must have a minimum of two years of heavy equipment repair and maintenance experience.
 - e. Maintain qualification records for all Equipment Inspectors of the Cooperator and provide NRCCG or its representative access to said records upon request.
3. Ensure its Lead Equipment Inspector or other inspectors refrain from inspecting any Water Handling Equipment they have a vested or financial interest in and ensure its Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications Inspector refrains from reviewing or providing verification of the Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications of any individual employed by it.

VI. IT IS MUTUALLY AGREED AND UNDERSTOOD BY ALL PARTIES THAT:

1. PRINCIPAL CONTACTS. The principal contacts for this instrument are:

Tim Murphy
Northern Rockies Contractor Liaison
US Forest Service Aerial Fire Depot
5765 West Broadway St.
Missoula, Mt. 59808
406-829-7324. (Voice)
406-329-4955. (Fax)
Email Address: timmurphy@fs.fed.us

Tom Perkins, Chapter Representative
Northern Rockies Chapter of the NWSA
7655 Farm To Market Rd
Whitefish Montana 59937
Tom Perkins (Inspections) 406-862-9151
Mike Warren (Qualifications) 406-249-9942
Karen Cousineau (Admin.) 406-892-0033
Email Address nrc-nwsa@fireline.us

2. The NWCG instructor qualification requirements for wildland fire found in the most current Field Managers Course Guide (*available on-line at: <http://www.nwcg/pms/training/fmcg.pdf>*) shall be utilized.
3. The requirements for training, experience, physical fitness level and currency for wildland fire positions found in the Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide (*NWCG PMS 310-1, available on-line at: <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/docs/PMS310-1.pdf>*) shall be utilized.

4. **ANNUAL OPERATING PLANS.** An Annual Operating Plan (AOP) shall be submitted by April 1st for approval by the Principal Contact of NRCG listed in provision VI.1 of this MOU or their successor. Such a plan shall contain at a minimum, the following information (*reference Appendix A for sample format*):

- a. Equipment Inspection dates, time schedule, location, Lead Equipment Inspector, Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications Inspector(s), and Equipment Inspector(s) for verification of all Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications and Equipment Inspections sponsored by the Cooperator. The NRCG Principal Contact to this MOU may authorize additional Equipment Inspection sites to meet specific needs when such requests are received at a minimum 7 days prior to commencement of said Equipment Inspection, or as otherwise agreed to by both parties. Requests may be submitted by email or fax and shall contain the same information as outlined above.
- b. Proposed procedures for providing Equipment Inspections and verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications.
- c. Provide a timely mechanism for verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications to address new employees and individuals that are promoted after verifications have already occurred.
- d. Equipment Inspection sites must cover the entire Northern Rockies Geographic Area. It is recommended that sites include Grangeville, Coeur D'Alene, Libby, Kalispell, Missoula, Hamilton, Dillon, Helena, Great Falls, Billings, Great Falls, Miles City, Lewistown and Williston.

5. Annually meet prior to December 1 to review this MOU.

6. **NON-FUND OBLIGATION DOCUMENT.** This instrument is neither a fiscal or obligating document. Any endeavor involving reimbursement, contribution of funds, or transfer of anything of value between the parties to this instrument will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures including those government procurement and printing. Such endeavors will be outlined in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by representatives of the parties and shall be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This instrument does not provide such authority. Specifically, this instrument does not establish authority for non-competitive award to the Cooperator of any contract or other agreement. Any contract for training or other services must fully comply with all applicable requirements for competition.

7. **MODIFICATION.** Changes within the scope of this instrument shall be made by the issuance of a bilaterally executed modification.

8. **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA).** Any information furnished to NRCG under this instrument is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552).

9. **LIABILITY.** As long as the Cooperator provides verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications and Equipment Inspections as outlined in this MOU, and to the extent NRCG may do so under the Federal Torts Claims Act, they shall not be held responsible for any injuries or deaths incurred as a result of wildland fire suppression and/or prescribed fire activities under the control of NRCG members or any other government or private entity.

10. **PARTICIPATION IN SIMILAR ACTIVITIES.** This instrument in no way restricts the NRCG or the Cooperator(s) from participating in similar activities with other public or private agencies, organizations, and individuals.

11. **TERMINATION.** Any of the parties, in writing, may terminate the instrument in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration.

12. **COMMENCEMENT/EXPIRATION DATE.** This instrument is executed as of the date of last signature and is effective through April 1, 2012 at which time it will expire unless extended.

The authority and format of this instrument has been reviewed and approved for signature.

(Agreements Specialist)

(Date)

In WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this MOU as of the date listed below.

Representing: Cooperator

(Name: Please Print)

(Signature)

(Date)

Representing: Northern Rockies Coordination Group

(NRCG Chairperson, Name: Please Print)

(Signature)

(Date)

**Northern Rockies Chapter of the NWSA
Proposed Procedures for Equipment Inspections and Verification
of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications**

Equipment Inspections:

All inspections will be under an IAP (sample attached) and use the ICS system. The inspection will use stations much like the NRCG used in the 2006 process. Vehicle Inspections will be performed in a building whenever possible. Any disputes or questionable items will be taken to the NRCG representative by the IC for clarification.

Verification of Wildland Fire Personnel Qualifications:

Personnel verification will be done in an office with internet capability, at the inspection site, and will be completed while the inspection is being done. All required documentation will be checked and completed on site. Qualifications records will be entered into IQS or the NWSA database. This is available to any government official at any time. (See attached NWSA Brochure)

Inspection and Qualification Documentation Procedure:

Standard inspection and Qualification forms found in the 2007 Proposal will be used. All inspection and qualification documentation will be verified complete, signed, and handed to Contractor during the demob process of the inspection. All originals will be forwarded to the NRCG and a copy will be retained for our records. Records of any Personnel hired or promoted after the inspection process will be sent to us and be promptly verified and entered into the NWSA database.

Certified scales will be available at or near each inspection site, and will be escorted by 2 inspection officials for verification.

On site Skidgen inspections can be scheduled on an as needed basis.

**Northern Rockies Chapter of the NWSA
Inspection Personnel Roster**

Lead Inspectors

Doug Seward**	ASE Mechanic/Equipment Inspector, ENGB
Roy Hamilton	School Bus Maintenance, Darly Pump Rep.
Ron Colvard**	Truck repair/Machine shop owner, ENGB
Rocky Erickson	Mechanic/Equipment Inspector
Ben Steele**	High School Mechanics Teacher, ENGB

Qualification Approval and Documentation

Mike Warren**	STEN, NRCG MOU Holder
John Michael Wallace**	ENGB, Aircraft Mechanic
Meranda Hauge**	FFT1
Karen Cousineau**	ENGB

Water Handling Pumping & Compliment Inspectors

Tom Perkins**	Tender Owner
Todd Anderson**	FFT2, Log Truck Operator
Billy Cousineau**	ENGB, Engineer
Terri Anderson**	ENGB, Log Truck Operator
Jennie Whitefeather**	ENGB
Cliff Whitegrass**	ENGB
Jake Mackie**	FFT2
Lee Ressler**	FFT2
John Michael Wallace**	ENGB
Kieth Brown**	FFT2
Rick Oliver**	ENGB
Jerry TenEyck**	ENGB

Skidgen Inspectors & Evaluators

Bernie Windour	Engineer/Equipment Certifier
Melvin Oftedahl**	Equipment Operator/Owner
Leonard Oftedahl**	Equipment Operator/Owner
Joe Klempel**	Skidder Operator/Owner
Rocky Erickson	Equipment Inspector/Mechanic

** These personnel are owners or work for a fire contractor. They will NOT be involved in the inspection or certification process of any personnel or equipment they own or are employed with.