

Northern Rockies Fire Science Network (NRFSN) Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2014

Participation by Organization – In FY14, the NRFSN membership grew from 382 to 437 (14% growth). This was not as great as in FY2013, where we had a big jump in awareness of the consortium illustrated by a 41% growth in total membership in 2013. This leads us to conclude that we are nearing saturation of the professional fire management community in the Northern Rockies. The greatest growth in 2014 was in Foreign Organizations and Individuals (100% growth), mostly Canadians, suggesting that we are increasingly serving Canadians. We also had notable increases in state managers (83%), students (22%), BIA and tribal (14%), and academic and agency scientists (15%). We are continuing to increase membership by USFS managers (6%), county and city representatives and managers (13%), and NGOs (11%). Our federal membership representation reflects land ownership in the Northern Rockies, with a total of 175 USFS managers, 24 NPS managers, 15 BLM managers, 8 FWS managers, and 5 BIA managers. In addition to the 5 BIA managers, our members include 16 members of tribal nations.

Participation by Activity – During FY14, the NRFSN released several new science delivery products. These included 10 brief videos documenting field trip discussions on fire effects on wildlife, fish, vegetation, and hydrology; as well as on communities; post-fire rehabilitation; and restoration projects. Although these field trip videos were completed in FY14, the number of participants reported for these videos mainly represents those people directly involved with the filming: speakers, reviewers, partners, and editors. Once we finalize and publicize the Google Tour products in FY15, we expect much greater participation. Also during FY14, we launched a searchable online resource database with 1677 documents categorized by topic and Northern Rockies ecosystem, and we published a new science review on *The Effects of Past Wildfires on Subsequent Fire Behavior and Postfire Recovery*. We expect the use of both of these resources to grow in FY15.

Highlights and Achievements for FY14 – For the NRFSN, FY14 resulted in many highlights and achievements. Most importantly, after actively soliciting member and advisory board input to our renewal proposal and adding the social and cultural aspects of managing for resilience as our priority emphasis area, the NRFSN was renewed! The renewal will allow us to continue to serve managers, scientists, and others involved in fire and fuels management throughout the Northern Rockies. Whereas the first two years of implementation were largely focused on gaining awareness and growing our membership, FY14 showed greater focus on understanding and learning events and products.

Large Wildland Fire Conference Workshops and Field Trips. Having the Large Wildland Fires Conference, jointly held by the International Association of Wildland Fire (IAWF) and the Association for Fire Ecology

(AFE), in our region (Missoula, MT) in May 2014, was a big highlight for the Northern Rockies. We hosted two workshops (Crafting Solutions for Management of Large Wildland Fires and Fuel Reduction across Tribal and Nontribal Jurisdictions; and Defining Fuel Treatment Success: Workflows, Metrics, and Evaluation), which were well attended. By design, both workshops were interactive and enjoyed high engagement by participants. In addition, we partnered with IAWF and AFE to document the outcomes of four conference fieldtrips with multi-media online tours. By the end of FY14, we filmed all four field trips and developed and posted 10 short videos (each 3-6 minutes long) for the first two of these (Fires of 2000; and Fire Effects on Vegetation and Birds). During FY2015, we will move these videos into interactive online field tours, and complete video development for the other two field trips (SW Crown CFLRP Restoration; and 40 Years of Wilderness Fire).

Wilderness Fire Video. As an outgrowth of work documenting the conference field trips, the USFS Northern Region's Wilderness and Fire Programs asked the NRFSN to develop a video documenting the evolution of wilderness fire management in the Northern Rockies and addressing contemporary management challenges. In response, the NRFSN secured \$10,000 in partner funds from the USFS R1 Wilderness and Fire Programs (\$3,000), the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute (\$2,500), the Human Factors & Risk Management RD&A (\$2,500), and the Wildland Fire Management RD&A (\$2,200), and conducted 21 interviews. Interviewees included Dick Bahr, Tim Sexton, George Weldon, Dave Bunnell, Laurie Kurth, Mark Finney, Penny Morgan, Carol Miller, Dave Campbell, Stu Hoyt, Diane Hutton, and Tony Harwood. During the filming, we interviewed Diane Hutton's Wildland Fire Management Team and the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes on the Seepay Fire, and the Flathead National Forest fire staff on the Piper Creek Prescribed Fire in the Mission Mountain Wilderness. Work on this project will continue in FY15.

Work Planning. This wilderness fire video was not part of our FY14 work plan; however, it was requested by the field and it afforded the opportunity for many meaningful field engagements by the NRFSN. Needless to say, filming and producing videos is time consuming. With so much energy early in the year dedicated to renewal, and later dedicated to multi-media documentation of the Large Wildland Fire Conference field trips and the wilderness fire video, the NRFSN was not able to produce as many newsletters, briefs, science reviews, and Network of Fire Science Champions calls as we would have liked, and a couple of field tours and workshops were pushed back to FY2015. Nevertheless, the potential for disseminating science through videos and online field tours remains promising, and we are eager to share the products as well as our knowledge gained in the process of developing them.

We are excited to announce that Corey Gucker has been acting as our Coordinator since May 2014. Corey has a strong background in fire ecology, is well connected in the fire science community, and has a solid understanding of fire management issues on the ground. Since she is based in Boise, she will be able to expand the NRFSN networking capacity in that part of the region and develop additional learning events in Idaho. In September, Corey began working full-time as the NRFSN Coordinator. This is the first time the NRFSN has had a full-time Coordinator since we became a Consortium, and we expect this to greatly increase our capacity for summarizing science, organizing events, and networking.

Online Resources. In March 2014, we launched a revised website (<http://NRfirescience.org>) that increased usability of the website and accessibility on mobile devices, offered access to more resources, and improved the efficiency of maintenance and updating. A few months later, in May 2014, we launched a searchable online resource database with 1677 documents categorized by topic and Northern Rockies ecosystem. The JFSP web assessment team was complimentary in their report: *“the first impression for your website (more than perhaps any other exchange) is excellent: clean, simple and current.”* They also were complimentary of our use of tagging resources and our searchable database. Also in FY14, we developed a new (modern) logo and launched our Twitter account. We have been delighted by the potential of Twitter to increase circulation of and participation in fire science news, products, and events. The NRFSN added 60 new Twitter followers in the last two-month period of FY14 alone, indicating a rapidly growing community.

Social and Cultural. We continued our work to address tribal fire and fuels management needs in FY14. This included the Crafting Solutions workshop held at the Large Wildland Fires Conference (mentioned above); a presentation during a Large Wildland Fires Conference Special Session on Working with American Indian Tribes on Large Wildland Fires - Effective Consultation and Coordination; and an invited presentation at the Intertribal Timber Council’s Annual Symposium’s Restoring Fire Workshop (Coeur d’Alene, June 2014). Following the conference special session presentation, Jim Durglo, head of the CSKT Department of Forestry, expressed appreciation for the work the NRFSN is doing to understand and further communication across boundaries. Also during FY14, we developed a partnership with the Southwest Crown Collaborative Forest Restoration Project (CFLRP). After consulting with the group’s members in the field, we are in the early stages of planning a jointly sponsored workshop and separate field trip in FY15 to communicate science related to fuel treatments.

Prescribed Fire Council. The NRFSN has been asked to take the lead in developing a regional Prescribed Fire Council (PFC). After meeting with the Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils, we agreed to assess

interest in the grassroots development of a PFC. We have begun with a variety of field consultations and interactions with the MT/ID Airshed Group. We will continue to assess the interest and potential scope of a PFC during FY15.

Summary. In summary, during FY14, we reduced the number of passive awareness and understanding events (newsletters, briefs, conference/symposia presentations and posters) and increased the number of learning events (field trips and workshops). We strengthened existing partnerships, developed new ones, and increased the number of personal briefings, leadership briefings, and field consultations. We also initiated some promising new multi-media ways of delivering science. With these additions, the NRFSN will continue to develop a variety of Awareness, Understanding, Learning, and Commitment events and products and actively engage with our stakeholders to identify science and science delivery needs and deliver science in support of fire and fuels management.