**Interagency Dispatch Improvement Project (IDIP)**
**Executive Committee Meeting**
**to Discuss the "Dispatch Optimization Analysis Pilot Project" for R5 and R3**
**August 27, 2010**

**Attendance:** Jim Douglas, Vaughn Stokes, Corbin Newman, Jim Kenna, Kim Christiansen, Kolleen Shelley, Betsy Walatka, Willie Thompson, Bob Kuhn, Marion Matthews

**Background**

Jim summarized the actions / progress to date and stated the goal of working to get everyone on the same page on how we approach this effort. Using the BPR as a generic term, this includes several aspects; how we might do some kind of BPR; not perform a study; determine what a BPR needs to be; look at low hanging fruit and opportunities for long-term re-thinking of our dispatch processes. Vaughn has been a long-time champion of long-term solutions versus the band-aid approach to the status quo. Vaughn asks us to take a step or two back and decide if this is really the way we want to do business.

Jim also shared the imperatives that have come from the Chief of FS to do some form of BPR, and FS F&AM has FY 10 funding to cover the initial part of this effort. We need to be careful not to lose this funding and so must work with Betsy Walatka in order to obligate the funding for contractor support.

California has been working on an initiative to analyze and make recommendations to optimize dispatch operations. Jim and Corbin are also looking at dispatch issues in R3. Jim hopes that we can generally use this effort to test some ideas and get some concepts that could be exported and generalized for long-term solutions, how to re-engineer, re-think the dispatch process over the rest of the country. Initially we need to make sure that we don't take on too much as in the whole country. Instead we need to look at opportunities in California and the Southwest and combine those efforts to gain the most opportunity.

Willie is the Deputy F&A Director in R5 and was tasked this year to analyze their dispatch centers. California realizes that they can't afford all 17 of their current EOCCs. They have not engaged a contractor yet, their CO advised her to wait until she had a chance to engage with this group. They have put together a SOW for a contractor to take a look at. That is all that has been done, but nothing further to date. Jim stated that these efforts will likely be very helpful to the IDIP effort.

The IDIP is not a STUDY. There have already been plenty of studies on dispatch. The intention of this effort is to bring all of those studies together, use the data, and implement solid recommendations vs studying the system once again.

Jim separated the activities: The Optimization Analysis is one part that we are trying to do in the overall IDIP. However, there are plenty of opportunities or "low hanging fruit" that we implement right away. We need to ensure that we not get distracted too much with that kind of stuff today.

For example, the Interagency Wildland Fire Dispatch Management Efficiency Assessment contained suggestions that we could potentially consolidate/ collapse/ combine dispatch centers. As Willie stated, they have 17 in CA and can't afford to maintain all of them. When you multiply that example nationally it is likely that we probably have more than we need and can maintain in these days using more modern technology. However, we don't have rules or ideas on how we might assess those opportunities. We need to be very sensitive about policy and political concerns. People look it with the perspective of my local dispatch, a place that can touch, etc. We need to be very careful about that. As an overall approach, develop a set of criteria, tools, etc., that we can give to managers with the expectation that they would use to be more cost effective, as well as potentially changing the business processes overall. We don't necessarily need to do things the same way since we have better technology, etc. Again, this is not about doing a study. Instead this is the effort to determine which solutions already identified should be implemented and then move forward through implementation.

**Issues and Concerns**

Jim asked Betsy if the SOW could be modified after awarded. Betsy stated that there is the need to get the money obligated but yes, the SOW can be fine tuned / modified with amendments.

Jim asked Corbin and Jim K if this was to include all of R3 or just portions. Jim and Corbin will make that determination after talking to partners and bring that answer to the October meeting.

Jim K stated that what is important to know regarding the Optimization Analysis project team is not just who we assemble but what are we going to get out of this much effort and investment. If we are going to do a two year study, he's not interested. If we are going to do something that takes a hard look and implement solutions then he's in. Corbin said he agrees with Jim. Corbin stated that he felt much of the FS experience with BPR has been disastrous. It seems we hire contractors that are very theoretical who come up with flow charts and concepts without the basis in reality. What happens is this information is used to make decisions without real understanding if the options suggested will really work. If instead we do what Jim Kenna is suggesting and engage people who really understand the business to work with the contractor to come up with alternative ways to accomplish the tasks that address strengths/weaknesses then he's all in. But if this is an exercise in "high level concept" he does not have resources to contribute.

Bob Kuhn shared that the contractor we propose using has already done seven management efficiency assessments for the FS/Interagency and has worked closely with three of our Chiefs and the leadership team. There is no intention of this effort being high level. Bob stated that we customarily use people from the field with line leadership represented. This ensures that on the FS side the Chief has representation and DOI has line representation as well, usually a State Director or Assistant. The recommendations that have been implemented so far back to the Chief and OMB, etc., have represented savings of 135m dollars without impacting positions in the field. The contractor that we use is very familiar with the FS and knows we don't want high level. If we complete this Optimization Analysis, we can go back to the original feasibility study as all of the footwork is complete. There is information there to be used by the SME's on the team. This information includes where we have been, where we are. Bottom line is Bob supports getting this process in line with where the team wants it to go.

Jim stated that it seems that all are in violent agreement. Perhaps it would be helpful drop the term BPR. It may have some bad connotations. Suggestion: Call this effort a **"Dispatch Optimization Analysis Pilot Project"**

Out of this effort, Jim hopes to see options/recommended consolidation plan based on a variety of management criteria and needs. This might include methods to collapse / consolidate / relocate; change business processes. The goal is to save money but ensure that dispatch meets needs of those on the ground.

A second deliverable out the effort would be a set of evaluation criteria methodology etc. that we could then export to leadership in other parts of the country. We present as a set of tools for you to use or use with from contractors to do same analysis/implementation in your area. Locally in R3/R5 you get what you are asking and nationally we get tools to maximize the efficiencies and savings.
In summary, Dispatch BPR Deliverables need to include:

1) One or more concrete options/alternatives to optimize dispatch in R5 and R3 based on a variety of management criteria and business needs (including consolidation, relocation, and/or business practice changes). This deliverable should include design features that can be implemented as "pilots" and outline how their performance will be measured so that information can be used as "lessons learned".
2) A set of tools (including dispatch workload evaluation criteria, technology considerations, etc) along with an analytical methodology that can be exported and utilized in future dispatch optimization analyses.

Vaughn reminded everyone that we need to have standards for operations, standards architecture, standard console. WildCad is an example; we need an adopted standard. We already have a difference in WildCad between R3 and R5. We need to look at what all are using (including state partners) and figure out what the best tool meets the need and set a standard. Jim suggested that we take these outside the context of the BPR. We can ask; what are the standard pieces needed to help with efficiencies? We may also look at HR pieces, including training, etc.

Jim stated that during the meeting in Phoenix, we agreed that the BPR would come up with some sound recommendations and alternatives about optimization which could certainly include consolidation of dispatch center. Some of the other things in the MEF like standard CAD, workload analysis tool, etc., are in the purview that can be moved forward. Kim agreed with Jim and stated that some of these standards can be adopted through NWCG and that process for example instead of a focus of BPR. However it is likely that these will be pointed out and maybe amplified in BPR. These items will continue to move down the road as we are with CAD and FireOrg, etc.

Jim asked Jim K and Corbin if we were addressing their concerns. Corbin stated that if we keep to items outlined, and really focused on providing answers and methodology, then we have his buy in contingent on the resources expected out of R3 to know if he can deliver. The more we dive into the integration details, the harder to find longer-term solutions, etc. Corbin reminded that we can't advance this without State Forester support. He asked if Jim K was OK with this and Jim K agreed. He has already talked to AZ and they are on board, there is a little more to do with NM. Jim K stated that it might be useful to see what CA has done, put straw man together, allow regions to put together idea on processes, etc., on moving forward. It was suggested that Vaughn to take on the standards question, then put all pieces together and blend into action plan for the way forward underneath this agreement. Wonders if that wouldn't give us pretty good clarity and resources that are needed and whether or not we are on the same page re the process.

Jim reminded the group that we need to speak optimization versus consolidation. We must be very careful about inadvertent bad signals we send to folks about potentially losing their jobs. "Optimization" is a term more likely accepted than "consolidation". Vaughn suggests the use of the term Standardization.

Jim asked Betsy and Bob if this would work. Betsy said that the contract we awarded so far is to establish project plan, communication, get the project on track. Jim asked if prior to putting together this team, could the contractor under the current SOW work with Jim and Corbin and others in scoping refining what should be produced, so that when we come into October meeting everyone is in the same page? YES. Betsy asked if we want the contractor at the meeting. Jim K likes the idea of having the contractor to help with the cross-pollination between R3 and R5 to help bring all of the pieces together in the room in October with objective to see where pinch points are and resolving them. Then everthing is consolidated into one bucket. Jim Douglas suggested that they could tell us what kind of skill sets and how much time it would take. Corbin stated that he would be much more comfortable to know what we are walking into, what we will get out and what we need to make this happen.

Jim asked Willie if she could be "THE" point of contact for the other interagency partners in California and be prepared to speak for them. She agreed to do so. We must ensure that we don't inadvertently lose them in our effort.

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS NEEDED PRIOR TO OCT MTG IN ABQ:**

1) Betsy will contact MAI and start working with them to set up conference calls with key individuals to help address item #2 below
2) Jim K, Corbin and Willie, with the support of the contractor, will work together to define clear objectives, identify deliverables, and plan an approach for how to accomplish these with the project keeping in mind how it all ties back to issues such as CAD and staffing, etc. This includes:
    - Ensuring state foresters are supportive.
    - Having a decision on which parts of R3 will be included in the analysis
    - Determining what skill sets are needed and have a "proposed" core team and SME list compiled prior to the meeting
3) Vaughn will think about what is needed to develop technical standards for dispatch (architecture, consoles) and come to the meeting with a proposal on how to accomplish this piece.
4) Jim will work with Tom, Kim, and others about CAD, HCM, and how other pieces will be pursued
5) Tom will provide Willie, Marion, and Betsy the information about the ABQ meeting so they can attend
6) Betsy will invite MAI to the ABQ meeting
7) Willie will share her briefing paper on the effort with the entire group.
8) Jim or Tom will follow up to make sure there is progress on the actions above so we are ready for the October meeting.

With this pre-meeting information in hand, we will come to the meeting in ABQ to discuss and finalize which pieces will be handled where and how they all fit together. We will also decide which pieces lie in the purview of this effort and which ones we take on separately and coordinate with other entities.

Willie asked if anyone had engaged DHS on this. CA has border issues and sure R3 does too. Have we brought those partners in, kind of let them know what we are doing? Vaughn stated that with this exercise we have not. About three years we tried unsuccessfully… and so we are back to this point. Corbin says he has talked with DHS and ICE. They look at their ops as very secure and only really want interoperability when they want it but not a component and it makes sense. This is similar for our LEI folks. Jim stated that this effort could implode by being too complicated too quickly. If land management agencies figure out what we want to do, then perhaps there are touch points where it makes sense to interoperate, and where are things just separate and need to stay that way. Next phase may be to bring them into the discussion.

Jim Kenna said he was also thinking of that issue but feels it should be part of the field implementation and structuring the way forward. He stated that there have been changes in Tucson (which is "ground zero" to the border) that are really positive. Some of the relationships with DHS have changed. While he is not sure exactly how he stated that we need to consider how to facilitate that link. Corbin is in agreement.

Jim asked Bob and Betsy regarding the issue of the Chief directed the BPR. Is the course we are charting in the spirit of that direction? Betsy said she believes so and Bob agreed and stated that if it was presented correctly it could be shown as the first of the three the FS has promised to do.

**RECAP:** There will be discussions between R3, R5, MAI and others about how to scope this project with two broad results; 1) specific optimization options or measures that managers in those areas can take to improve dispatch; 2) a set of criteria and methodology that can be generalized and used as a template by managers in other parts of the country with interface points on issues like training, standardization of equipment, standardization of business apps like CAD. Corbin & Jim K will take lead for SW part and work with Willie from CA with assistance from contractor(s) from MAI to ensure they are on the same page. We will spend time on this topic in October and make sure that we have the right alignments and appropriate responsibilities for moving forward.

Last call … if people still have concerns with our plan forward as discussed it is time to get those concerns on the table. None were brought up and all are in consensus.

Bob Kuhn reminded everyone that Betsy is the COR on the contract. As we all know with gov't contracting, any recommendations or changes to contractor must go back through her.

Marion stated that she is absorbing this discussion but thinks this is a positive change and that it makes no sense to have two efforts. Her one question would be whether in October for LEI is there an expectation that they can brief us on the think tank in CA but what else would we like LEI to bring for October. Jim's sense of Oct that before then the group will have put together an approach / plan for deliverables, how it would be done, what sort of resources are needed in terms of agency folks on a project committee. Iron out any final wrinkles about expectations, potential disconnects or overlaps. After that we are good to go to proceed. October it's mostly just ironing out the details at this point and making sure we are harmonized. Knowing what you've already thought about / already done would be helpful. In terms of governance it will be up to the group to figure out their own governance.

ONE FINAL THING: Jim announced his departure from BLM to Dept of Interior. He will be the Sr. Policy advisor to Kim Thorsen. Email and such will change but Kim's expectation is that he will continue to do these things including things related to those IIOG addresses. Don't get confused by change in title and email address.