

March 2017

Meeting Minutes, March 2017

National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors

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Meeting Notes
NSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – March 8, 2017
Wildland Firefighters Foundation – Boise, ID

Call to order, introduction to site, introductions, approval of the agenda –Jim Cherry

Approval of previous meeting minutes –Tom Boatner

Only correction was changing the spelling of Nickels to Nickles. This is the way the Triple Nickles spell it. With that change, notes from the previous meeting were approved.

Investment Committee report –John Packard

John handed out a summary of our current investment accounts and balances. He also brought 2 copies of the Vanguard investment policy to share for anyone interested. Our investment funds mix is right on target with our investment policy: 41% in Equities, 59% in Fixed and bonds. Our rates of return last year: Bonds: 2.28%, International stocks: 4.67%, Total stocks: 12.66%. Jim Cherry told us that last year, the President's Christmas letter brought in more than double the amount of any previous Christmas letter. This is because of his request that members go the extra mile and support our history preservation initiative. We took in roughly \$25,000 for the general fund and \$25,000 for the historical preservation effort.

Adopt 2017-18 Budget-Larry Lufkin

The executive committee looked at the previous budget and at the amounts budgeted for each category, both income and expenses, and made estimates for the next budget. Publishing of the magazine is our single largest expense. Seventy people are currently receiving electronic copies of the magazine. Each printed and mailed magazine costs 4 to 5 dollars. Larry went through the various categories of the budget and explained them. We will need roughly \$35,000 from our various accounts to fund yearly operating expenses. The Montana Community Fund Endowment hasn't worked out to well. What we donated collectively (\$16,000) isn't enough to generate much return and what we donated is gone forever. That was a good idea that didn't work out too well.

Action Item: Budget was adopted by unanimous vote.

Report on 2016 Trails Program - Fred Cooper

Last year, we had 19 week-long projects in 9 different states. We had projects in Maine and upstate New York for the first time. We had 16 squad leaders last year. Three of them were new. The squad leaders are essential to the success of the Trails Program. This year we have 24 week-long projects planned, including a new state, Wyoming. We have 4 new squad leaders this year, including past president, John Twiss. Another past president, Doug Houston, will be a cook on a project in Utah. There will be a memorial service for Jim Phillips in Mann Gulch on June 16th at 2:00 pm. A new law called the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act was passed in 2016 requiring the USFS to decrease their backlog of trail maintenance over 5 years through mechanisms like partnerships, volunteers, and use of fire crews. No funding came with the new law. Only 8 of this year's projects will be financed directly from Federal or State funds. Other projects are financed by grants, foundations, Rural Advisory Councils, donations, and USFS

User Fees. The current Trails Program Fund balance is approximately \$25,000. The Trails Team will hold a budget/financial planning meeting this spring. The Trails Program has been reported on in various newspapers and the yearly publication of the National Park Service's Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. This year's projects are currently open for registration.

Good Samaritan Fund report – Chuck Sheley

The current balance in the Good Samaritan Fund is \$33,000. Chuck also reviewed recent disbursements to aid jumpers and their families. Since September, 2016, 5 disbursements have been made to 5 different former or current jumpers. Each of these 5 was for \$2,000.

Traveling Smokejumper display – Sheley

Chuck gave a little history on how this program evolved over the last year and a half, starting with a display developed for the Springfield, OR museum with the help of Chuck, Stan Collins, and Tommy Albert. At the end of that exhibit, the NSA bought the display to use as a traveling exhibit. Chuck shared a list of the 10 locations that our exhibit has been displayed so far. The High Desert Museum in Bend, OR has probably been the most visible location. They want to keep it as a permanent display. The exhibit was also displayed at the World Forestry Center in Portland, OR. It's a pretty big display-21 panels and a manikin in jump gear. At Eastern Washington University, we had a joint exhibit with Bob Bartlett and his work on the Triple Nickles. Chuck has built a connection with John Coyle and the National Fire Heritage Center in Emmitsburg, MD. They are primarily focused on structure fire, but are interested in hosting a mini-exhibit. There are a few other possible locations in the works. There is also a national USFS reunion next year in Asheville, NC that may be a possibility.

Membership Report – Sheley

Membership numbers have held steady over the past 3 years. John McDaniel sends reminder cards to people whose memberships expire to encourage re-upping. In 2015, we had 1567 members, in 2016 the number was 1604, and in 2017, it is 1563. We currently have 334 Life Members, 380 10-year members and 395 5-years members.

Report of partnership possibilities –Bill Derr & John Berry

Bill contacted Dave Provencio of the Hot Shot Association and helped them connect with NAFSR. Bill will pursue getting our link on the NAFSR website. Bill also showed us a copy of Shawna Legarza's book, No Grass. He also had some additional copies for sale. Shawna is the current Director of Fire and Aviation for the USFS. Bill asked, "Where does the Board go from here?" We want to maintain communication with the Hot Shots and see how their organization evolves. Right now, it only includes superintendents.

Website Committee update – Lufkin

We started with one website originally built by Roger Savage, and eventually it included many elements, including a photo gallery. Hackers got in through the photo gallery. Now we have 3 distinct websites: the main NSA website, the Trails Program website, and the NSA online store. A new site is www.smokejumperphotos.com. Mike McMillan is developing and maintaining that site. Photos sent to Mike will be put on the site by him. Our webmaster (John Robinson) encourages minimizing links to outside sites because of potential problems that can occur that we have no control of. Right now, we have links to 5 other sites: the Smokejumper Status Report, the Incident Information System, Wildfire Today, Spotfire Images and The Smokey Generation. Work on the website is scheduled for periodic sprints. There have been no recent

problems with the website. Fred Cooper has been managing the Trails Program website himself, but is actively looking for someone professional to take that workload over. There are ongoing challenges with allowing access to info and data versus maintaining security.

Scholarship program update – Sheley/Cherry

In Seattle, we agreed to make grandchildren eligible. We are using Terry Egan's matrix to help score the scholarship applicants. That has been a good system. We also changed from six \$1000 scholarships to 6 \$2000 scholarships. We have \$50,000 currently in the scholarship fund. The current issue of the magazine has information on the scholarship program, as well as an article on Bob Aliber, Missoula jumper who has made generous donations to the fund. Bob is a professor emeritus of International Economics and Finance at the University of Chicago. He relied on jumper earnings and scholarships to pay his way through college. Jim Cherry will temporarily chair the scholarship committee to relieve Terry of that workload because of his current health issues.

National Museum of Forest Service History –Lisa Tate

Lisa Tate, the Executive Director of the National Museum of Forest Service History made a presentation on the Museum. She was joined by Tom Thompson, President of their Board, and Lynn Sprague, Board Member, both retired career Forest Service employees. Lisa's background is in non-profit museum management. She talked about the history and future of the museum. It was founded in 1988. It already has a significant collection of artifacts, tools, instruments, documents, photographs, and memorabilia. All items are recorded and cataloged according to industry "best practices." The collection is available online to researchers and educators. They have an education program and recently conducted a survey to gather opinions on vision, challenges, opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses. The focus for the short-term future is raise capital, increase educational programming, develop partnerships, and open the museum. Over a million dollars of infrastructure has been completed, like utilities, water, road beds. Architectural plans have also been completed. Planned for 2017 are paving roads, installing sidewalks, landscaping, road signage, a restroom, and a new entrance gate. They will also install a history trail with interpretive signage and interactive exhibits that will showcase some of the stories that will be told in the future Conservation Legacy and Education Center. This will be the main museum building. Lisa's presentation was followed by questions and answers. Tom and Lynn assisted in answering questions. There were questions on Forest Service support, changes related to a new administration, security of the special use permit for the land, and finally, what are their hopes in attending our meeting. They are here to build a partnership with an organization that has similar history and membership, and to explore ways our two organizations can support each other, share ideas, and preserve our joint legacies. At this point, that can be a pretty open topic. Down the road, we may discover ways to pool our resources and efforts. We agreed on keeping up a continuing dialogue.

Vicki Minor came in at the conclusion of the Museum presentation and spoke about Ray Rubio's injury and death last fall. She shared a letter with us from Gary Atteberry, the Redmond Smokejumper Operations Supervisor, about the extensive support the Wildland Firefighter Foundation gave to Ray and his family. The whole experience was traumatic for the family and for the Redmond Smokejumper base. They felt poorly supported by the agency and were very grateful for the WFF's support.

Leo Cromwell introduced us to Lloyd Johnson, first base manager at McCall from 1943 to 1953. Lloyd is one hundred years old. He will be 101 in June. He told us a few stories of his early days. Lloyd trained in Seeley Lake, MT and brought the first smokejumper crew to Region 4. They built their own facilities just outside of McCall at a tree nursery. They had no money. They had to beg, borrow, and steal and lots of people didn't think the program was going to work. Jumpers did all the building work. Their first airplane was a single engine Travelair. It carried 2 jumpers and a spotter, plus gear. They expanded to Idaho City. They never lost a fire they jumped. At first, there was no FS manual they had to follow because no one had ever done it before. Lloyd said it didn't take long, though, for a manual to start being developed. People in Washington, DC started telling them how to do it. Everybody wanted to ride along and see what they were doing when they got a bigger airplane, the Ford Trimotor. Lloyd said a lot of those folks ended up throwing up. Lloyd's nickname was "the Whip." On a packout Lloyd was leading, one of the jumpers shouted out, "Hey, even a government mule gets a break every now and then." After that, they all called him The Whip. Lloyd joined us for lunch. He represents a living connection to the earliest days of smokejumping.

NSA website Photo Gallery – Sheley

Chuck reviewed our discussions with Bethany regarding "The Smokey Generation" website and posting of smokejumper photos. Chuck turned it over to Mike McMillan to talk about his work with the Flickr site to post jumper photos and his concerns about the Terms of Use on "The Smokey Generation" website. Mike just thinks those need to be clarified. With the website he has developed, these issues will not be a concern, and his website will focus exclusively on posting smokejumper photos. Cost is approximately \$140 per year to host, and Mike is charging \$25 per hour for his work downloading photos and managing site. Total costs for work he has done to date is \$586. Photos can be sent by web, by email, or by dropbox. Names and explanatory info should be sent if it is available.

Historic Preservation Program – Sheley & Stan Collins

Chuck quickly reviewed work already discussed with the traveling exhibit and photo preservation. Chuck talked about slowly losing the generation of jumpers from the 50s and 60s who jumped for just a few seasons and then moved on to different endeavors in life. Our collection at the University of Montana's Mansfield Library is all stored in boxes. Chuck wants our history to be online in one place so it's more accessible to anyone who wants to look at it. We're going to start with the data base of jumpers and the entire inventory of our newsletters and magazines. The Mansfield Library seems to be limited in what they can do or are willing to do. Chuck wants to explore other ways to archive our history in a way that is accessible and searchable. With Stan's help, they are pursuing other options. NSA has also just published its first book, again with Stan's help. This is a collection of stories about the smokejumper/Air America/CIA connection. It's called Smokejumpers and the CIA. Fred talked about the many different places and the disorganized way our history is stored and asked what the next steps are to try to address this.

Action Item: Fred and Lynn Sprague will write a short article for our next magazine about the National Forest Service Museum and our exploration of potential connections. The focus of the next magazine will be on the history preservation project, what we've done, what we're trying to do.

Update on the smokejumper program – Roger Staats, Todd Jinkins, Larry Sutton

Roger started by saying it was a slow year overall, but a highlight was BLM/USFS coordination in

staffing spike bases in the Northern Rockies and the Great Basin. Smokejumper use increases when they are prepositioned locally. The USFS Ram Air transition will continue with 56 jumpers slated to be trained on ram airs this year: 28 veterans transitioning from rounds and 28 rookies. There are 2 main parachutes currently being used, the Sierra 360 and the DC-7. Both agencies regularly test new canopies and assess them for suitability for smokejumper use. The plan is to get 10 of the new SD3-60 Sherpas ready to fly and replace 10 of the current fleet. The first one is scheduled to be ready by June, 2017. Three or four more are scheduled to be operational in 2018. One of these new Sherpas was used last season as a logistics aircraft and flew 128 hours on different logistics missions. They want to evaluate rear door use as a smokejumper or paracargo exit and look for ways to lighten the aircraft up to address some of the density altitude concerns at high elevations places like West Yellowstone, MT. Injury rates are low for both systems, but the rate for ram airs is much lower.

Todd Jinkins talked about the overall slow season, but pointed out that the Boise base alone jumped 90 fires total and pounded an additional 22 while the entire USFS staffed 118 fires. Todd says that the reason is the Boise BLM use of spike bases. McCall joined them this year in staffing some spike bases. Todd briefly described the logistics of staffing and managing the spike bases. Looking at 10 year averages, the Boise base exceeds every other base easily in total fire jumps. Again, the use of spike bases is one of the primary reasons for the higher rate of use. The increased use of spike bases can significantly increase the use of smokejumpers overall. McCall and Boise are trying to coordinate the overall staffing of fires in the Great Basin, regardless of land ownership or base the jumpers come out of. Both Todd and Roger think that the level of unity and coordination of the USFS and BLM smokejumper programs is the highest they've ever seen. Fred asked if we can write an article that highlights the current level of cooperation and the way that has been achieved. Todd expects funding to decrease in the new administration.

Todd talked about how to improve our connection with current jumpers. The current headcount at Boise is 80 jumpers, average age is 37, and average years jumping is ten to eleven years. Average numbers of seasons of fire experience prior to becoming jumpers is 5 to 7. Sixteen jumpers are scheduled to retire in the next five years. It's an older, more experienced workforce than in the past, and many are making jumping a career. Consider reunions during shoulder seasons because reunions in the summer can't be attended by current jumpers. Avoid divisive issues, look for issues that have interest-temporary jobs versus career seasonal appointments. Look at stories that have universal appeal like, "How did you get into smokejumping?" Use our voice to question the risk transference of not staffing rapidly with 2 jumpers versus waiting until later after its grown to 50 acres and needs to be staffed with 100 people. Mike McMillan talked about ways to get more information out about what jumpers are accomplishing day to day. Roger Staats talked about his attempts to do a better job at internal education to increase the efficiency of smokejumper use. The Smokejumper Status Report is a good start, but it's light on details. On the other hand, Todd says information on the Status Report is used to question and criticize the way jumpers are operating. Roger talked about the balance between availability for initial attack and for deployment in leadership positions to larger fires.

Todd described some of the controls in place to make sure research and development projects are thoroughly vetted and considered. That includes a risk management assessment before they proceed. Decisions are jointly made between the 2 agencies.

Roger talked about agency and geographic boundaries diminishing. The BLM and USFS jointly staff a Ram Air Management Board.

Larry Sutton gave his thanks for all our trail work. Three Incident Management Teams were deployed today, 1 to Oklahoma, 1 to Kansas, and 1 to Florida. The fire season ahead may start

slowly because of the snow pack and could be a big range fire type year with the wet winter. The fed-wide hiring freeze has had an impact on fire hiring. A new Agriculture Secretary is still not in place. The likeliest budget outlook is static to decreasing. The FS is not renewing 6 Type I helicopters contracts. The big money budgetarily is in aviation. The Chief has rolled out a "Life First" initiative that focuses on unnecessary exposure to risk and how to avoid or reduce that. Larry is on the National MAC group and they set priorities and make decisions on how resources are distributed nationally. They use a lot of advanced predictive tools and they try to be proactive at prepositioning. When it gets busy, we don't have enough of anything, so it's always a challenge to find the balance between using jumpers for initial attack versus filling other overhead positions.

Latest on West Yellowstone and NCSB from Roger: No big decisions made, some planning done. Estimates to rebuild the NCSB base and move current buildings range from \$4.5 million to \$10 million. Before any construction, they will do a Project Proposal Assessment which includes looking at staying there and 2 options. The 2 other areas they are looking at are Yakima and Wenatchee. After that Assessment is completed, a decision will be made.

Unfinished business

- **Evergreen Museum – Sheley**

Chuck sent out a summary on our long, aggravating relationship with the Evergreen Museum. We're all ready to give up on them. Larry Lufkin will probably have to go in person to retrieve his father's historic jumpsuit. They have not been responsive to any of our calls or letters.

- **Bill Derr on the Tennessee Fires**

This was the fire in Gatlinburg, TN on November 23rd, 2016 that killed 14 people and burned down many homes and businesses. The fire was started by 2 kids. A lot of questions and unknowns about what the NPS did in response. There are investigations underway.

- **Evaluation of meeting and travel/lodging vouchers**

We had a little discussion on the history of our current meeting schedule and how it evolved. There are different thoughts on when and where and how to schedule, but the current schedule seems the lowest cost and satisfies the most people on the Board.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 18th in Tukwila, WA near SeaTac, the same location we have used for the last 3 years or so.

Evening Social

NSA provided pizza, beer, wine, and non-alcoholic drinks and invited all NSA members within the area to attend. Attendance was around 40 to 45 people.

In Attendance: Lloyd Johnson, Charlotte Larson, John Packard, Fred Cooper, Bill Derr, John Berry, Jim Cherry, Leo Cromwell, Jim Lindell, Larry Lufkin, Mike McMillan, Stan Collins, Tom Thompson, Lisa Tate, Lynn Sprague, Todd Jinkins, Roger Staats, Larry Sutton, Tom Boatner