

October 2010

Meeting Minutes, October 2010

National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors

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NSA Meeting, Spokane, WA, October 8-9, 2010

Introductions

John Twiss made brief opening remarks welcoming everyone and introductions were made. In addition to the NSA Board of Directors, the meeting was attended by two current base managers, Darren Belsby from the North Cascades Smokejumpers and Bill Cramer from the Alaska Smokejumpers. Also in attendance were Charlotte Larson, long-time smokejumper pilot and Forest Service Aviator, and John Marker, representing the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR).

In Attendance: John Twiss, Stan Linnertz, Roger Savage, Jim Cherry, Ron Stoleson, Chuck Sheley, Guy Hurlbutt, Bob Dayton, Darren Belsby, Bill Cramer, Charlotte Larson, John Marker, Tom Boatner.

Darren Belsby briefed us on current events at NCSB. They had their slowest fire season this year since 1993 with only 16 fires jumped. Fifty fires per season is the average. Darren is fairly new in the base manager position. When the previous base manager, John Button, retired, there was discussion in Region 6 about not filling the job and closing the NCSB base and staffing it as a satellite base out of Redmond. After internal discussion and debate, the decision was made to keep NCSB open, fill the base manager position and increase the headcount from 24 smokejumpers to 36. This is now the largest headcount at NCSB since 1976.

The airport has accepted federal funds recently, so must now meet FAA guidelines. Some of the NCSB facilities are in the obstacle-free zone, so issues are coming with removing/replacing some of the smokejumper buildings. Having to remove a few of the buildings could provide more impetus for those advocating for closing the base. NCSB has done a number of jump-in resource projects working on whitebark pine projects, work on lookouts, and tussock moths, as well as tree climbing in the east to eradicate Asian Longhorn Beetles. NCSB currently has 3 permanent full-time (PFT) employees in its workforce. There is currently little upward mobility occurring out of smokejumping due to lack of interest among the workforce, although they have done a number of details to other units.

Bill Cramer briefed us on current events in Alaska. They have had two historic seasons back-to-back. Their workload is pretty evenly split between one third initial attack, one third extended attack and one third structure protection. Bill sees their customers as driving their mission evolution and expansion. What do they need? They need problems solved and responding to that successfully is the key to the smokejumper future. Smokejumpers cannot succeed as only initial attack specialists. This past season 1090 fire jumps were made, with the first fire jump being made April 22 and the last fire jump made Sept 28. Ten to fifteen fires had burned through the previous winter and became active again in early May. Two guys got 5 fire jumps in September which is highly unusual for Alaska. There has been almost no turnover in the workforce in the past 3 years.

The Alaska Smokejumpers enjoy good management support, but declining budgets. Bill believes it is important to give taxpayers good value for the cost of smokejumper programs. Alaska had up to 7 jumpships this past season with 196 jumpers the highest number on the jumplist at one time. There were 264 total smokejumpers in AK over the course of the fire season and it was the busiest season in 20

years. Fire management plans allow lots of fire to burn on the landscape, which is generally a good thing, but there is a misconception that this reduces the workload, but it just changes the workload. Seventy jumpers is the current headcount, the target is 68. This is a decrease in the past few years. There are 6 PFTs, the lowest percentage of any jumpbase, but only 2 temporary employees. The rest are Career Seasonal, with benefits. Some upward mobility is occurring with a fair amount of detail opportunities. There are 17 paracargo specialists on the crew. They can kick palletized cargo. 715,000 pounds of cargo were kicked this past fire season. They are also doing paracargo support for natural resource work outside of fire, including kicking cargo on the North Slope and the Bering Glacier.

Membership Report-Chuck Sheley

Chuck expressed his thanks to the base managers for their attendance. It makes NSA stronger and keeps us connected to current smokejumping. NSA currently has **1720 members**. This includes 21 pilots and 137 associates. The Redding reunion required NSA membership to register and attend. This worked. Chuck recommends continuing this model. Life memberships currently total 249. Money from life memberships goes into our endowment which is currently at \$280,000.

Financial Report-John Twiss

John Twiss gave the financial report for Charlie Brown. The Good Samaritan Fund has been active, with total donations this year of \$10,660 and \$6450 given out to smokejumpers and their families. We have 14 new life members this year and continue to make modest income from our merchandising. The Redding reunion made a profit and the reunion committee will consider using some of that money to award honorary life memberships. The annual fund donation letter was a success this past Christmas season, bringing in over \$10,000. We will do the annual fund letter again this year. The BOD had a discussion of the costs of membership, and the pros and cons of current costs versus lowering them. No big decisions were made, but we will continue this discussion. There is no clear-cut consensus on this issue/debate. Is the cost of membership a barrier to younger people joining? Merchandising programs were discussed. What is the market? Should we focus on non-smokejumper merchandising like the program Stan has set up at the Johnson's Corner Truck Stop in Colorado? Again, this is an ongoing discussion with no clear consensus among the BOD, but we will keep looking for opportunities to bring in income via merchandising. Doug Houston continues to put a lot of energy into this and has come up with some new products, like Christmas and greeting cards with smokejumper themes. Our net worth on stock market investments is back up to even.

Review Progress of short and long term goals-John Twiss

Short term

1. By 2010, develop a solid working relationship with FS and BLM smokejumper leadership and active smokejumpers.

This is going well. All action items have been met. We have had smokejumper base managers from both the BLM and USFS at our past 3 meetings and plan to continue that connection. How do we maintain

this momentum? Should we ask for time at the annual Base Managers meeting for an NSA briefing/update? We discussed this and agreed we would have a representative attend and brief the Base Manager's and smokejumper leadership if we are invited.

2. By 2011, develop a comprehensive Donation Program.

We are not there yet, but we are working on it. Bob Dayton is leading the development of this program. Jim Cherry suggested that we don't just list our value in dollars, but estimate and share the value of our donated volunteer labor. For instance, using accepted figures, Jim estimates NSA's labor value to the Youth Camp on this year's 2 Boundary Waters projects at \$7500.

Action Item 1: Jim Cherry and Tom Boatner will work on coming up with dollar estimates for volunteer labor in trails program total.

3. By January, 2011, obtain a total of 267 Life Members.

Current number is 249. BOD will continue to make personal contacts to recruit 18 additional Life Members.

Action Item 2: Jim and Charlie review GSF and Christmas donation letters to see if any additional members have donated \$1000 and reached life membership.

4. By 2010, identify 5 people who can take over future leadership of NSA Trails Program.

The non-profit organization, American Trails has selected Jon McBride as Montana winner of their national Trail Worker Award. The Trails Maintenance Program Advisory Committee is working on transitioning from Jon's leadership and will meet again next month to discuss this transition, and plan for next year. The BOD will wait on recommendations/suggestions/requests from the Trails Advisory Committee. The BOD requests that the AC consider changing the name to the Jukkala/McBride Trails Program. We had a discussion about the future of the trails program-where work is done, participation by non-jumpers-no consensus about these topics.

5. By 2011 increase active smokejumper membership by 40.

There was no discussion on this goal, however a scholarship program for active jumpers is in place.

Long Term Goals

1. By 2014, double the size of the NSA's net worth/increase investment funds. What is included in our net worth? What should be included-stock, life memberships, operating capital, GSF, trails program equipment inventory? What are new avenues for raising money? What are our policies for spending money? See later discussion in these notes.

Action Item 3: By 2015, increase Life Membership by 100 to 350 Life members. (See discussion under Long Term Goal #4)

2. By 2014, fully fund the production expenses of the SMJ Magazine.

Chuck is working on a plan to accomplish this. It is a work in progress, but Chuck is moving us steadily there and has discussed this with a potential replacement.

3. By 2015, increase membership by 50%(850 new members)-

Chuck introduced John Marker of NAFSR and makes an argument for going after more associate members and looking for partnership opportunities with organizations with similar memberships/goals/values. We had a discussion about whether this is a realistic goal and most feel that adding 850 members is not a realistic goal and maybe not even a necessary or important goal. Can we be a viable organization with stable or declining membership? We feel the answer is yes. Although we will continue our efforts to increase membership, the **BOD agreed to eliminate this goal.**

By 2015, increase Life Membership by 50% (125 new life members).

Is this a worthwhile goal? Is it achievable? Again after discussion, **this goal will be eliminated here** and put under Long Term Goal #1 as an action item and reduce number to 100. We recognize that this is a high number and may be difficult to achieve, but worth taking a crack at. There are 3500 living smokejumpers roughly-1700 are members-249 life members. There are roughly 1500 unknowns in terms of contact information or addresses, but many of these, half or more, are deceased.

By 2015, hire an executive director.

What would the cost be? Do we need a full-time Executive Director? Part-time? Do we have the income to pay an Executive Director? All of these questions were discussed and debated. We discussed whether to keep this goal and **agreed to change it to:** By 2012, determine the need for staff support, either paid or volunteer. Move this to the short term list.

Action Item 4: All BOD members will determine the potential work load that they can't or don't want to do along with a time estimate. Example: Thank you letters, etc. Send to Guy Hurlbutt by January 30, 2011 and he will develop a draft job description by the spring meeting.

Update on succession planning for trails/SJ magazine/treasurer

This topic has already been covered for trails and the magazine. Doug Houston and John Twiss are working on the succession plan for treasurer. They have contacted a number of smokejumpers and/or spouses with accounting backgrounds with no success. If they cannot find one, they will make a request via the magazine.

NSA Leadership Award Proposal-Tom Boatner

Tom made the proposal to establish an NSA Leadership Award named for Al Dunton former, Alaska Base Manager and BLM Fire Director. The NSA is willing to establish this award and present it each year, if base managers are willing to support the idea and come up with a process to forward 3 nominees to the NSA. The BOD is willing to help develop criteria if the base managers want us to. Bill Cramer will

forward this proposal to the Base Managers meeting and let us know if they are willing. If they are, we will come up with the type of award and coordinate the presentation.

Memorial discussion/decision on first smj death and atheist lawsuit-Guy Hurlbutt

NSA has been asked to be a “Friend of Court” for a brief in a lawsuit regarding the placement of religious symbols on public land, such as crosses at Mann Gulch and South Canyon. The lawsuit stems from crosses along Utah highways commemorating State Trooper line-of-duty deaths. The law firm wants 4 to 8 hours of assistance with their lawyer to prepare our supporting brief. A motion was passed to assist. **. Guy will represent the BOD and call their lawyer**

NSA was asked to support establishing a memorial to the 1st smokejumper line-of-duty death, on the Umpqua National Forest in 1945. The smokejumper was Malvin Brown of the 555th Parachute Regiment, the famed Triple Nickels. **We will support this effort and Chuck will contact Mark Corbet to follow up.**

NSA Logo trademark requirements/additional financial charge-Guy Hurlbutt

The man who renewed our trademark logo paperwork has informed Guy that we need to use the little r in the circle next to the trademark anytime we use it, to protect our right to its exclusive use. If you don't use the r in a circle, you don't have a valid trademark. He also billed us an additional charge of \$220 beyond his original quote. Guy recommends we pay and explained why. **We voted to pay.** Guy will ask what the r needs to be on like clothes, stationary, etc. and we will try to start using it.

NSA Website –Chuck Sheley

There were 46,000 separate visits to our website in May to a total of 230,000 pages. We've had 370,000 visits in 2010, so far. Google web ads are bringing in \$34 a month. We have recurring issues with hackers trying to mess up the website. It was down 2 days recently because of hacker damage. We are still looking for better information on how to maximize ad income. **Stan will try through some of his contacts to get more info on ad income** and relay to Chuck. Identifying who's coming to our website in order to target advertising from companies like Cabela's, White Boots, etc could be helpful. **John will check with Larry Longley** to see if he's learned anything about this subject. Many believe our website has good potential for attracting major advertisers. We have a dedicated, low cost webmaster, but we need to consider a plan for a new webmaster when and if that becomes necessary.

NSA Briefing Paper Presentation-Tom Boatner

This is an action item from last meeting to be used to brief people about NSA programs and accomplishments. We agreed on some **revisions and corrections to be made by Tom** and then it will be redistributed for anyone's use.

Combined Federal Campaign membership recommendation

Tom described the 2 options to apply as a CFC charity-national and local. Either option is a fair amount of work with an unknown outcome. We'll do a little **more research (John and Tom)** about time and

effort to apply. John will try to identify some charities in his local area that are on the CFC and check with them on how much work it is to apply.

Charitable Giving Options for NSA-Bob Dayton

To reach short term goal #2, Bob Dayton has talked to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and Ducks Unlimited. They use Facebook sites to leverage hits to their websites and expand networking. Bob will complete a donation proposal for Facebook and share with BOD. Chuck will look into modifications of the website to make it more donor friendly by highlighting our mission statement and adding a donation button. Former RAC jumper John Packard came in. He lives in the Spokane area and has experience with some aspects of charitable giving. Bob Dayton led a discussion of ideas for bequests and planned gifts, estate planning, and charitable annuity trusts. These are all ways to solicit donations. We just need to decide if our organization wants to pursue using some of these vehicles, whether we are capable of pursuing them, and how we would do that. Bob Dayton will organize a committee to start putting together a plan of what to pursue and how to do that. They will bring a plan to our next meeting: 2 documents-NSA's Donation Investment Policy and a Donation/Charitable Giving Plan for BOD approval that would allow NSA to implement an organized donation/charitable giving program. Jim and Guy will be on the committee, as well. Also, John Packard will be part of this committee.

Action Item 5: Bob Dayton will complete a donation proposal for Facebook, Chuck will add Mission Statement and donation button to the main page of the NSA website when the policy is adopted. By March meeting.

Action Item 6: Bob Dayton will organize a committee, including Jim Cherry, Guy Hurlbutt, and John Packard to prepare 2 documents for the BOD, an NSA donation investment policy and a plan for a donation/charitable giving program. By March meeting.

Annual Fund donation process proposal-Bob Dayton

We raised over \$10,000 with our first annual fund letter last year. It is the BOD's strong feeling that we should continue this.

Action Item 7: John Twiss will put out draft annual fund letter with target of mailing by early November.

Corporate Sponsorship/Mike Overby recommendation-Jim Cherry

Mike ran a marathon as a sponsor for a charity called the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang. Mike's idea is that other smokejumpers might be participating in marathons, other runs, walks, etc. that might be avenues for charitable giving. He wrote an article for the magazine describing this process which was posted on the website.

BOD Membership/Next NSA President/Vice President-John Twiss

We had a general discussion of BOD issues, current members, and terms approaching expiration. There are 4 BOD members whose terms will expire next July. Chuck will start the process for election/re-election and update terms on website. John's term expires in January. John has polled people about their interest in being the next President. Only Doug Houston has expressed willingness to take on the job. We all feel for experience sake, the President should come off the board. Motion made and passed to appoint **Doug next President, to be effective July 1, 2011**. Nobody is interested in being Vice President. We'll search for possible candidates.

NSA National Smokejumper Reunion 2013 location/sponsor/dates-John Twiss

The BOD decided to select **Missoula as the location for the next reunion**. Reunions have alternated every 3 years between Boise-Redding-Missoula. We are looking for names of people to lead and assist in planning. Bob Dayton and Roger Savage will ask around in Missoula for interest in leading that effort and planning the next reunion. We want to consider tying reunion dates to the beginning or ending of trails projects.

2011 NSA Board of Director's meetings dates/locations-John Twiss

John suggests March for a spring meeting in Tucson because we have 60 smokejumper members and 60 smokejumper non-members in the Tucson/Phoenix area. Proposed dates are **March 11, 12, 2011**. Missoula was suggested for the fall meeting with proposed dates of **October 7, 8, 2011**. The dates were approved. We always have a social evening, dinner and drinks, in conjunction with our meetings, as a way to stay connected to members, and encourage non-members to join. The Spokane social had an attendance of approximately 50.

Meeting Critique

We finished with a general discussion of this meeting, what went well and what can be improved upon. Everybody agrees that having base managers attend our meetings is a real positive and should be continued if possible. We **should set a firm end of meeting time on the 2nd day**, so people can plan flights and travel accordingly. Great facility here in Spokane, but the lack of nearby food and drink was a negative. We had some discussion of how to **make the NSA more inclusive of smokejumper pilots**. Also, we will consider developing an orientation package for new BOD members. Agenda item for next meeting; amend by-laws to allow smokejumper pilot board member to be a voting member. We also had a discussion about inviting new board members to join from other organizations. We finished by unanimously agreeing to invite **Charlotte Larson and John Marker to join the NSA BOD**.

ACTION ITEMS, SPOKANE MEETING, OCTOBER, 2010

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REVISED/UPDATED NSA GOALS

OCTOBER, 2010

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