

Partnership Meeting  
12/03/2004

Summary of Comments and Discussion

*In the spring of 1999 and 2000, statewide conferences were held to address the growing threat of wildfire to life, property, and natural resources. These conferences commissioned by resolution the formation of a new organization to bridge the gap between fire services and the threatened communities. Following these conferences the organization now known as the Nevada Fire Safe Council was formed and began full-scale operations in January 2002. Does the Nevada Fire Safe Council as it is currently organized and operating fulfill the vision, meet the expectations expressed in the resolutions, and “hit the mark?”*

Verbatim Comments from Small Group Discussions:

- Yes, the Nevada Fire Safe Council has been true to the resolution.
- A good job has been done.
- Yes, the NFSC is doing the right thing – But always room for improvement.
- More recognition needs to be given to project partners when work is being done on the ground. Partnerships must be recognized and celebrated.
- Work has been completed on the ground.
- Success is becoming a challenge, e.g. can we service many more chapters?
- NFSC is on track and responding to communities. NFSC has been successful with chapter development.
- NFSC has been competitive for funding nationally.
- The growth of the NFSC shows support and success.
- The NFSC is focused on getting work done on the ground. The NFSC is ahead of other states.
- Statewide awareness has increased.
- The NFSC has laid a great foundation.
- Bureaucracy can tend to stifle grass roots efforts if on-the-ground results cannot be achieved.
- The NFSC may need to provide more support to cut through the bureaucracy.
- Older chapters may need additional assistance, including press releases and mentoring to become reenergized.

**Take aways:**

1. To date, the Nevada Fire Safe Council has fulfilled the expectations expressed in the conference resolutions.
2. Implementing the resolution through the development of a non-profit corporate structure that included local community chapters has been a successful strategy.
3. The growth in the organization, while presenting challenges, is a mark of recognition and success.
4. The current level of support being given to local community chapters is essential to ensure local buy-in for local action. An increased level of contact and support may be necessary to maintain local enthusiasm, reenergize established chapters, and help work through regulatory hurdles.
5. The focus on getting fuels work done on-the-ground must be maintained with due credit for accomplishment being given to all involved.

*It's been five years since the conferences were held and the Nevada Fire Safe Council was formed. In this time period has the need that originally brought the conferences together changed? Is there still a need for the work of the NFSC?*

Verbatim Comments from Small Group Discussions:

- The Nevada Fire Safe Council will have to work with chapters and communities to develop specific projects to address the risks identified in the statewide risk assessment plans. Does NFSC take the lead, or wait for communities to ask for help?
- The completion of the risk assessment will expand the role of the NFSC:
  1. New chapters
  2. Increased need for support
  3. More funding needed to address the identified risks.
- As funding for on-the-ground projects diminishes, education of citizens should become a priority.
- NFSC must become more involved with maintenance, providing education and information that focuses on the need to maintain existing fuel reduction projects.
- Need to coordinate efforts amongst all partners better.
- Need to continue pushing media exposure, 1) web site, 2) signs, 3) TV.
- Develop signs for fire safe projects & fire safe communities.
- Need to add a position to NFSC.
- Need to show success stories.
- There is still a need.
- The demand is growing and NFSC needs to find a way to accommodate that growth.
- Local communities will have to assume a bigger role in funding projects as USFS and BLM funding becomes more limiting.
- Response to chapter needs will have to be based on priorities and funding availability.

- NFSC must maintain its ability to work with individual communities and chapter leaders if/when it grows.
- NFSC is maxing out the staff. May need more staff to handle the probable increase in chapters when the statewide assessment and plan is complete.
- To keep up with the increase in chapter projects NFSC will need more project level coordinators.
  1. Direct hire of staff
  2. Contract with consultants
  3. Agency personnel stepping up
  4. Volunteers
- Continue to report back on project success and community involvement.
- Encourage communities to express thanks to political leaders and agency partners.

**Take aways:**

1. In regard to vulnerable communities and the fire threat, the need is still there, very real, and growing.
2. In regard to the work of and support provided by the NFSC, the need has not changed. Following completion of the statewide assessment and plan, the demand for Nevada Fire Safe Council involvement is expected to grow substantially.
3. The success and good work of NFSC must be promoted through all media outlets. All organizations and agencies involved in the highlighted accomplishments must be given recognition. Special thanks needs to be given to political leaders involved with passing legislation and providing federal appropriations that make all this possible.
4. Support and assistance provided through personal contact is critical to chapter viability.
5. Growth in community chapter development provides a tremendous opportunity to reduce the fire threat on a large scale. The Nevada Fire Safe Council must find a way to accommodate this growth.
6. As organizational growth occurs with expanding need, the Nevada Fire Safe Council may have to:
  - a) Add more staff and request more funding
  - b) Prioritize responses and more aggressively target communities
  - c) Rely more heavily on agency personnel
  - d) Rely more heavily on community volunteers and local sources of funding
  - e) Engage in more comprehensive coordination of project implementation

*So, where do we go from here?*

Verbatim Comments from Small Group Discussions:

- Rotate agency people through the NFSC.
- Keep the focus on getting work done on-the-ground.
- Stimulate more collaborative involvement.
- Complete a workload assessment for NFSC staff:

1. Executive Director
2. Project Manager
3. Public Relations
4. Accounting

With this completed, partners can assess funding needs.

- When statewide assessment comes out, NFSC must be ready for the glut of interest from the communities and be ready to prioritize the onslaught of requests, keeping in mind that congress looks at \$cost/acre.
- NFSC must provide education on codes and ordinances that lead to fire safe construction.
- NFSC should act as a clearinghouse for community projects.
- NFSC should collect indirect cost money to support operational needs.
- Need to highlight the success stories. The multi-agency cooperation has been a remarkable accomplishment.
- Need managed growth, not wildfire paced growth.
- Do not limit chapter growth.
- Stay community based.
- Do not become a bureaucratic organization.
- Super size the NFSC.
- Federal agencies do not believe they can do the work of the NFSC:
  1. USFS has mission that excludes work on private land
  2. BLM – same
  3. State – same
- NFSC is an independent organization that can work across jurisdictions.
- NFSC should stay in existence.
- Volunteers cannot do the work of the work of the NFSC in terms of grant administration and accountability. NFSC makes more effective use of volunteers, compared to federal agencies.
- Should we cap the number of chapters if we can't support more chapters? May need to prioritize areas and chapters.
- NFSC needs to look for a more diversified source of funding.
- NFSC needs to avoid duplication with agencies.
- NFSC needs to work closer with agencies on fuels projects.
- NFSC needs to have controlled, managed growth.
- Need to emphasize quality over quantity.
- Need to consider expansion.
- Pursue non-agency/government funding.
- Clone Pat Murphy.
- Set up a “Speakers Bureau” to utilize chapter spark plugs for presentation to service organizations in identified critical areas.

<b>Take aways:</b>
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1. The growth anticipated from the recommendations in the statewide assessment can only be accommodated if it is managed and priority is given to the most threatened communities.
2. Managed growth will require a workload assessment of NFSC staff and the completion of a business plan.
3. Implementing and completing on-the-ground projects must remain the highest priority. The organization of local chapters is a successful strategy to garner the local support needed for completion of these projects. Chapter development that provides a community based structure is also important for long term fuel management.
4. The implementation of threat reduction projects on private land requires an increased level of coordination and planning. All relevant entities must be involved in a comprehensive approach to enhancing community protection. The Nevada Fire Safe Council can play a critical role but it can't do this alone. This level of coordination is necessary to avoid duplication of effort and the assumption of authorities vested in other organizations.
5. The Nevada Fire Safe Council has filled the niche that allows public land managers and private property owners to work in partnership to increase community protection.
6. There are limits to what community volunteers can do. These limits must be respected and the time and energy contributed by volunteers must be used wisely. NFSC staff or personnel from other organizations must pick up chapter development and project implementation needs that cannot be handled by volunteers.
7. Obtaining sufficient funding for staff and operating expenses will continue to be a difficult challenge. If funding for additional staff positions should become available, care must be taken to ensure that ground level, project work accomplishment remains the focus. The goal must never be to create the mirror image of an agency or bureaucracy.
8. Continued long term dependence on federal appropriations and agency grants and agreements for financial support has serious limitations. The Nevada Fire Safe Council must seek a more diversified financial foundation that may include charging for indirect costs or a fee for service structure.
9. The Nevada Fire Safe Council should use the political clout contained within its membership to seek public financial support external to agency channels.