# April 2023 Meeting Minutes – DNR M&C

## April 19, 2023, 10:00am-12:00 pm

## Meeting overview (5 minutes)

* Review agenda and time allotments
* *Megan reviewed the action item spreadsheet and status of tasks*
* *Update spreadsheet and de-highlight items – Megan went over the tracking sheet.*

## Telework Communication--Jed

We’ve been hearing rumors that telework is going to be repealed. Is this happening?

*There are no plans to rescind or change the current telework model, still evaluating everything with work EVO, are running pilot programs to expand telework. Barb talked about how the agency has been very transparent about all of this, have placed a good deal of responsibility on determining the appropriateness of teleworking at the supervisory level and what will work to fulfill business need*s.

## Wildfire – We’d like to wrap this up before spring fire season 2023

* MAPE’s current knowledge status--see notes below
* **An update was promised on 3/15/2023, we have not seen that update.**
* **Guidance on boots** – Still waiting on guidance from Forestry. Internal rumblings are saying DNR safety became involved and said fire boots are required safety item and Division needs to provide to employees. Employees and Area supervisors are being told to wait on boots. What is the status?
  + **FORS approved $175 reimbursement for fire boots. By 3/15/2023, Denise was going to was send an email about how to submit reimbursement.**
  + **Denise also set to follow up with FORS on additional boot reimbursement to meet OSHA requirements**.
* **Guidance for On Call** – Still waiting on the comprehensive guidance. Went through fall fire season with no change in how field staff has been operating. Not a word from Forestry fire section at 3-day supervisors meeting in December. At a December fire team leader meeting, Paul Lundgren reportedly said that no big changes were coming but would involve supervisors more in On Call. When will that be communicated? What generally can be expected? **A recent email clarified duty officer on call status, which included a 24-hour shift.**

**After the July M&C meeting, Denise sent this wording back to the M&C committee:**

*Effective immediately, DNR wildfire management will stop assigning on-call shifts that exceed 16 hours. While there may be situations that require coverage around the clock, alternatives such as call-in and call-back may be utilized to provide the necessary coverage, adhere to the labor contract, and be fiscally responsible.*

**FORS staff was going to send out a notification clarifying that there’s no expectation from the Division that staff have to answer the phone beyond a compensated shift, e.g., minimum of 8 hours on-call to maximum of 16 hours on-call. We have not seen this correspondence come out.**

*MAPE asked that in interim communication be sent clarifying what is happening with Fire Boots and that they will become a covered PPE item. Barb suggested an interim communication would be a good idea.*

*Denise will work with Paul Lundgren and Joni Akerson in safety to get communication out about fire boots—she will talk to them and let us know the date of the communication.*

*Denise will check in with Paul Lundgren regarding recent email and on-call status, MAPE will send email and our interpretation so we can clear up confusion about staff being told they are on-call for 24 hours but only being paid for 16 hours.*

Talked about boot reimbursement denial and what the guidance is. Looking for guidance going out about that. There has been a shift. Safety has made a determination that fire boots are PPE. As a result, the agency will provide the boots, and specialty equipment that is considered PPE. Have amended the appendix to the policy for PPE for footwear. Do not have a vendor in place. Will need to do an RFP for vendors that can meet the requirements. Those that need them or have purchased them should be able to get the $175 reimbursement. Will have an interim window where DNR will not have a contract in place. Do have a vendor where staff can buy boots but need to an RFP to make sure that a vendor can meet the variety of options the DNR has. Will still need a reimbursement process for special situations. If boots have already been purchased, should be able to get reimbursed. Missoula boots are the likely purchase option. People that have purchased boots since August 1st will be able to receive some type of reimbursement, at least $175. Do not know how much it would actually be at this time. Denise has tried to get some clarity on this. Working to get clarity on how reimbursement will work for those that have purchased boots. Trying to work that out between Forestry and Safety.

Barb suggested a broad communication about what is happening and being worked on. Denise will talk with Paul Lundgren and Jonnie Akerson in Safety about getting something out. Will get back to us when the interim communication will come out.

Fire boots will be reimbursed at $175 from December 21st, 2021, until they become PPE per DNR safety, and a vendor is on contract to provide them. Once they become PPE, they will be paid for.

**On Call**

Clarification is needed from recent communion about 24 on call. If not instructed to be on call, you are not obligated to answer the phone but if you do answer, you are entitled to call back or call in.

We’re hoping to get a communication from Forestry about on call, especially if the division is willing to take the risk of not having staff on call. Spring Fire planning meetings are happening, and staff are being made to feel they are expected to answer their phone even when not on call. Megan E asked for clear communication to go out about these options, what expectations are, what their choices are and how they could get paid.

Duty officer communication – Duty officer will be on call up to 24 hours.

Denise said 8 hrs. is a regular shift, then on call would be 16 hours.

Weekends: pay would be for 16 with an 8-hour gap in the early morning. Would not be an expectation to respond. But if someone chooses to respond, they would be compensated.

Megan: Weekend and holiday will be problematic. Division clearly said you are on for 24 hours including weekends but only compensated for 16. Some weekends might come in from 12-6 and have 2 hours not covered. Denise did not feel DNR was going to be putting staff on call for 24 hours and only compensating for only 16. Will look at the email for clarification.

Megan reiterated that it would be very helpful for staff to have clear communication that they are not expected to respond when not on call. Staff feel they are fully expected to response when called, even when not in on call status.

Denise will check in with Paul on On Call status.

## Naturalist Concerns (Martha, Kristi, Megan)

* Culture of Respect, larger themes with other groups of staff
* Park Naturalist job responsibilities and workload
* Chain of Command and Supervisor Training
* Solutions
* Request for follow-up meeting with CMO and PAT Leadership

Held sessions with the group and then 1:1’s with most in the class.

Naturalist that are doing well, have supervisors that respect them and understand their work. Those that did not feel good about their work situation. Not a lot of respect, not a lot of good conversation happening, being asked to do things outside of the PD.

MAPE put issues into buckets and tried not to use specific examples since the group is so small.

General lack of understanding of what Naturalists do, also a perception that they job is not very important, so they have other things added to their task list.

All acknowledged that summer is the busy time but still want some ability to flex time in the summer. The happiest staff worked at parks with 2 naturalists so they can trade off. One was told they could not go to their sibling’s wedding.

Every person that has a good situation has observed colleagues going through bad situations.

Asked several staff interviewed if there was anyone they trusted in their leadership chain, even the staff that had good situations said there was no one that could be trusted.

Group sessions last fall, individual ones held in February and March. Did not do 1:1’s with regional naturalists.

HR has had conversations with PAT upper management in the past but can talk to them again. The issue of weekends off has been a long-standing issue. How can supervisors look at scheduling that gives some balance. Denise understood that the general idea was to give naturalists one weekend a month off. Not sure if that is happening or how it has been communicated. Did say it is hard to deal with in a generalized kind of way vs. things that are more universal.

Megan clarified that issues identified applied to more than just one person. Pulled out the individual situations.

Denise asked for clarification about what MAPE wanted in clarification on that mental health days count as sick days. Would like some clarify communication about the use of a sick day in regard to maintaining your mental health. Sick leave is intended to cover these kinds of things.

Megan said this was a common situation that MAPE felt needed to be addressed. Megan said when she communicated to them that a mental health day is ok, they wanted it to be stated explicitly by management.

Barb wondered how the agency sends specialized communication to specific agency staff.

Denise would rather focus on what is causing the stress in first place, the root cause. Need to shine a light on things and bring them into the open.

Megan asked to keep MAPE informed of what is happening, after management meets with PAT management, and next steps….

## Performance Review Process--Megan

* + There’s a theme of lack of accountability and reasonable metrics for improvement and documentation for the reasoning behind why supervisors check the “needs improvement” boxes. Staff would like to see:
    1. Performance metrics for how an employee can demonstrate and achieve that improvement.
    2. Clear recourse and pathway for improvement and success
    3. Reviews should be shared with staff at least 2 weeks prior so they have time to review and gather their thoughts. This is the basis for functional and open and honest communication that fosters trust.
    4. There should be no surprises at review time. In other words, any perceived behavior issues or complaint or concern by another about the employee should be shared and discussed immediately, and the employee should have the opportunity demonstrate they can correct or are working to resolve any issue. The review is not the time to bring a concern/issue forward and rate the employee on something about which they have no knowledge or opportunity to correct.
    5. Patterns of behavior should be included on performance reviews not one-time mistakes or missteps. These patterns should have clear documentation and metrics for improvement.

Should not be a surprise. Should not be a litany of sins. Some are finding out about errors they made once a year.

Want a clear path on how to fix a problem behavior. A lot of it comes down to a breakdown in staff / supervisor communication.

HR felt there could be a feedback loop.

**Denise**: Do have a whole section for new supervisors on performance management to help employees succeed. Denise did point out one resource, have a policy called the employee performance system.

<http://files-intranet.dnr.state.mn.us/user_files/1891/performance__management_system_policy.pdf>

Staff have a right to seek clarity on expectations and not be surprised at the end, need to be on the same page for supervisors and staff. Policy talks about the review as a summary and not as an event. Good to look at work plans based on hours available not percentage of time. Don’t have 2,080, more like 1,700 / 1,800. If you allocate hours, it looks much different. Then staff can look at work plan and say what hours do you want me to move over here?

Can talk to supervisor about what does COR look like in my position?

HR will look into training a bit and the policy thing. Will also communicate it more broadly that it is there.

MAPE will commit to reviewing the policy.

## Two-way performance reviews of supervisors and staff--Jed

* Our ask is for a way to provide meaningful feedback on the performance of supervisors.
* Revenue, health, DOT, and DHS all have a feedback loop.

There is a way for this to happen but left up to the supervisor to implement.

Looking for common issues felt by direct reports to have some light shed on them.

If MAPE has the other agency examples, can provide, if not, HR can get them.

MAPE is asking DNR to examine what the other agencies are doing and if that is something DNR would consider.

## Student Loan Forgiveness Program request

* Ask if any decisions have been made?

## MMB Information Officer Hay Study

* MAPE is requesting that DNR notify all staff in the Information Officer class about the MMB study, why it is being done, who is included, who is not included and if not, why.

Not an agency by agency, not limited to IO series. Developed new classification series and are available. More than 50% of the time spent if one or more of these areas. IO’s, SPA, Planner. HR has asked divisions to provide names of staff that fit the more than 50% of the then HR will audit those , provide PD’s. Divisions

How will staff know when this is happening? Supervisor should let them know.

No staff involvement anticipated. Looking at the series. Ask supervisor if included in series examination.

## Upcoming Agenda Items: (5 minutes)

Culture of Respect further discussion

* As we have stated earlier, we have concerns with how the Culture of Respect is being followed in and after our quarterly Meet and Confer meetings and would like to discuss this in greater detail.