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# January 18, 2022 Meeting Notes

## DNR Meet and Confer

**MAPE attendees:** Megan Benage (chair), Jed Becher, Nicholas Snavely, Kristi Coughlin, Jennie Skancke, Monica Weber, Martha Vickery, Ben West (??), and MAPE business agent Dan Engelhart

**DNR management attendees:** Assistant Commissioner Barb Naramore; Denise Legato, HR director; Adam Browning (job title??) Michelle ???, HR

## Meeting overview

Megan said that MAPE was supposed to submit a list of possible representatives to send to the Org Health team, and still must do this.

Concerning the Fisheries regional manager reclassification issue, Megan said Fisheries decided not to pursue. However, Adam said they actually have appealed and he has received documentation for the appeal. Megan will ask Fisheries if MAPE is up to date on this.

## Meeting Facilitator Status and Progress

Adam said Conflict Resolution Center (CRC) got back to him with itemized list of how they arrived at $500/hr price. If MAPE is ok with that, Adam will work on interagency agreement.

-CRC explained that assigning one facilitator for each team is a “best practice.”

-The CRC refers to it as a “co-facilitation model” with an approach of meeting with MAPE and management separately, followed by group meetings

-MAPE is committed to this and is OK with some extra cost.

-Adam to work on agreement

## Telework status

Denise said there is no appeals process implementation date created, and there is no urgency to it at this time because so many issues about telework remain in flux.

MAPE

* Some staff have said their supervisors had no say about what was in the telework (assignment or decision??) forms. The form came to them pre-made out. Denise said employees should have access to what’s written on their own forms.

Barb said not every position was reviewed individually within each division. Some divisions’ management made decisions on groups of positions where appropriate and where it was really clear what the position was, then applied the same criteria for telework to everyone with a certain position title.

MAPE - it is not clear what all of the issues are, but MAPE has fielded a lot of questions from staff about it. Not all the feedback is bad, but there is evidence that there is resistance to the telework concept by Forestry.

MAPE - There are questions about whether Forestry is creating policies that are counter to Department-wide policies on telework.

MAPE - it’s clear what leadership is saying at the highest level but it is the lower level leadership where there is confusion. Also what does “ample” notice to return to the office mean (as mentioned by Denise)? The return-to-office notice for naturalists was two weeks, and some thought that was not enough time.

MAPE – some staff have been that a whole classification will not be considered for telework. No field staff will have the option for telework. It was a forestry supervisor last week, and in person. He said he knows that the commissioner’s office has been very understanding.

MAPE - we need to have some kind of a path to tell members who are bringing up these issues how to report them and how to get guidance.

## Use of a Second Language in a Current Job

MAPE -recognition of second language speakers (MAPE Contract Article 24, Section 9) is a way to honor the skillset of employees to reach out to diverse groups. We don’t want it to be a misunderstanding that the second language would be required in the job description.

Adam said contract language suggests that a second language would need to be a minimum qualification. Dan said he was there when the item was decided upon in the contract, and that the policy on second language does not have to be as rigid as a minimum qualification.

Denise said that DNR HR will do this, but has not drafted a policy yet, and will get back to MAPE when they have some clearer next steps. MAPE asked Adam for follow up about this between M and C meetings.

### Wildfire Firefighters – Issues and Ongoing Discussions

Megan said several listening sessions on this issue of wildland firefighter compensation were very well attended, and staff talked freely about the stress on them – schedules, workload and mental health. MAPE anticipates that the last fire season will not be an anomaly.

Wildland fire working group identified numerous issues:

(from chat)

Specifically, we are seeking to address:

* Have paid leave hours (such as SIK, HOL, and VAC) count as time worked for the purposes of accruing OT to accommodate days of rest, illness, family emergencies, and other life needs.
* Ensuring on-call hours are coded for all hours not otherwise worked during a calendar day. We are expected to respond regardless of if we are in on-call status or not. We will not accept on-call shift for a flat rate. This will address the disconnect currently existing within manuals and plans and the MAPE contract.
* Recognition and full payment of R&R days when returning from a federal assignment without having to produce a letter, and eliminate the current requirement of an employee being required to use vacation time to cover/reduce OT @ 1.5.
* Due to increased risk of physical and mental illness among wildland firefighters, we feel it prudent to move red card holders/support employees to the State Fire Marshal’s Pension Plan.
* Ensuring sufficient staffing of field foresters, fire leads, and smoke chasers. Commitment to hours for seasonal/part time fire staff to ensure the DNR’s able to recruit and retain sufficient resources to manage the fire program safely.

Dan said he has been working on fire issues through his time with DNR, about eight years, so it is not a new issue.

MAPE - last year’s fires season was very long, from March through December. Crews had many hard assignments; at one fire last March, crews showed up and all the water was frozen. He said firefighters technically work an eight hours, but they are expected to be on call until their next shift. Employees feel they are being paid half of what they are owed. Also, the firefighter team overall is very poorly staffed. For many reasons, morale is low.

Jed said that in listening sessions, staff are fearful of going on the record for their top concerns for fear of some kind of retaliation.

Barb asked for a list of top and underlying issues to this which she said would be helpful in talking about solutions. MAPE agreed to generate a list to enhance understanding before any discussions begin either the Division of Forestry or with the Commissioner’s office (Megan sent this memo a couple days after the meeting, and it is attached) MAPE agreed to pursue both actions.

Barb said the request came in from MAPE to speak to Forestry Dec 30, not for CMO time. She said it would be helpful to have an updated email saying we should have X amount of time to have conversations with Forestry leadership about these issues first, followed by a conversation with CMO if necessary.

Megan said we could be in a new fire season in March, and we don’t want the firefighters to have no hope of resolution to their issues. Some of the most urgent issues should be dealt with first.

Denise said HR wants to know what immediate things that will make the biggest difference to employees should be dealt with first.

(see emailed follow-up, pages 5-6)

11/21/22 emailed follow-up from Megan

Good afternoon,

This is an update to our previously requested Workload Meet and Confer meeting related to Fire Season topics. Our team has been working with a group of concerned staff from the Divisions of Forestry, Fish and Wildlife, and Parks and Trails about changes needed within the wildland fire program. MAPE would like to honor chain of command for issues that can be resolved at the Division level. With that in mind, we have already sent a request to the Division of Forestry to meet with their management team.

Once a Forestry meeting has been scheduled, MAPE would like to schedule a meeting with Commissioner Strommen, Deputy Naramore, Division Director Boe, Deputy Division Director Thielen, Forestry Section Manager Lundgren, HR Director Legato. MAPE will bring Business agent Dan Engelhart, Meet and Confer chair Megan Benage, Jed Becher, Ben West, Megan Eiting and Shane Delaney. The second meeting will address issues that cannot be addressed at the Division level meeting.

As you are aware, this past fire season of 2021 was challenging to say the least and staff continue to feel those challenges physically, mentally, and emotionally. We are interested in working with you in good faith to resolve these issues. We acknowledge that some of these are longer-term issues that will take time to address, but we feel several of these items can be addressed prior to the 2022 fire season. I am including some of the preliminary concerns identified by staff to date (see chart, next page)

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| **Issue/Concern** | **Proposed Solution/MAPE Ask** | **Implementation Path** | **Timeline** |
| Need to accommodate days of rest, illness, family emergencies, and other life needs. | Have paid leave hours (such as SIK, HOL, and VAC) count as time worked for the purposes of accruing OT | MOU | Before Fire Season |
| Disconnect currently exists within manuals and plans (less restrictive) and the MAPE contract (more restrictive). We are expected to respond regardless if we are in on-call status or not. Contract limitation of no more than 16 hours of quarter time pay in a calendar day. | Ensuring on-call hours are coded for all hours not otherwise worked during a calendar day. We will not accept on-call shift for a flat rate. Expand to 24 hours of quarter time pay in a calendar day. | MOU | Before Fire Season |
| Safety, Liability, Staff Fatigue | Primary: R&R days are paid by fire's finance code without using vacation time or losing accrued leave. Eliminate the current requirement of an employee being required to use vacation time to cover/reduce OT @ 1.5. | MOU | Before Fire Season |
| Increased risk of physical and mental illness among firefighters | Move IQS/IQCS card holders and personnel with Rx fire and wildland fire in their PD to the State Fire Marshal’s Pension Plan. | Legislative | Longer-term |
| Recruitment/Retention/Safety--Staffing shortages for wildland fire | Commitment to sufficient staffing of firefighters so there is adequate rest and recovery. | Inter-Division MOU, Planning Manual update  Staffing plan revision with MAPE input.  Emergency hires.  Long term - increase in staffing dedicated to fire | Short and long term. |

On behalf of the MAPE Meet and Confer Committee and our Fire Working Group

***Megan M. Benage*** *(She, Her, Hers)*

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