

ERIC MARTIN

Initial Attack Incident Commander

Deputy Line Boss

At exactly 14:45 the Highland Tower reported a small white and growing plume at 223 degrees and 5 miles. I immediately went in service with the Barnes Forester as my rider. I arrived on the fire at approximately 14:55 and assumed the role of Incident Commander of the Germann Rd Fire. The Gordon Ranger and I arrived simultaneously. I had requested both available SEATS on the way to the fire as well as Barnes 1, Barnes 2, Gordon 1, and Gordon 2 heavy units. Gordon Ranger drove west off Germann Rd to the fire origin and I stopped to ask the logging crew if all people were accounted for. I learned that the logging crew's dozer operator was on the right flank of the fire so I went to the Doetch Rd to try and locate him and get a size-up of the fire. From Doetch Rd, I observed crown fire, 0.25 mile spotting, and estimated the size of the fire at 50 acres. I ordered an additional 3 heavy units, 2 Rangers and 1 Heavy Dozer with the size-up. I found the dozer operator I was looking for on Doetch Rd and got him back to his crew safely. Warden Burns had arrived and was talking with the logging crew, I made eye contact with him and indicated that he had the investigation and I had the suppression, he acknowledged. I then drove in towards the origin and had a discussion with Gordon Ranger about assignments as the first 4 heavy units were unloaded and getting to the origin. I assigned Gordon Ranger as operations for a short time, putting the 2 Gordon units on the left flank and the 2 Barnes units on the right

flank. I had noticed the beginnings of horizontal rolls in the smoke column about 40 feet above the tree line, especially on the right flank; I emphasized this while giving resources their assignments.

Gordon Ranger was going up the left and I would watch the right until the next Ranger or Team Leader arrived. I additionally ordered two CL-215's, 4 heavy units, 3 Rangers and 3 heavy dozers around this time. Shortly after, (15:15) the Douglas Team Leader arrived and I assigned him Right Construction Group (CG) and Gordon Ranger as Left Construction Group.

I drove back out to Germann Rd and met with Gordon Fire Chief; I assigned him as structure branch and requested that evacuations start as there were three known structures immediately threatened by the fire. I asked him to talk with Warden Burns and help coordinate evacuations and structure protection with law enforcement. There were more structures down fire and rates of spread put them approximately one hour from the fire. At approximately 15:24, I switched Air Patrol from RED to Air-Ground; Left CG from RED to BROWN and maintained Right CG on RED for radio communications.

Brule 1 and Brule 2 arrived, within 10-15 minutes of one another, at approximately 15:30 hrs. Brule 1 was assigned to the Right CG, Brule 2 to the Left CG. At approximately 15:40, Bayfield Team Leader and Dozer 1 arrived and I assigned them to Right CG, asking them to follow up behind and make sure the line was holding. Brule Area Forestry Leader (AFL) arrived around this time as well. At 15:47, I requested through Brule

Dispatch that a Spot Weather Forecast Request be submitted using the Barnes Weather Station observations and inquiring specifically about wind speed and direction as there was an indication of a dry cold front passing later in the day in the morning forecast. Brule AFL and I discussed goals and objectives, priorities, current resources, assignments, and tactics. At 16:05 I transitioned Incident Command of the Germann Rd Fire to Brule AFL Jay Gallagher. I was assigned as Line. Washburn 1 had arrived along with Lake Effect Construction Dozer; they were assigned left flank hold and improve duties behind Left CG, temporarily reporting to Right CG (Gordon Ranger) until a DIVS could be assigned.

As Line, I was assigned to brief incoming resources and assign them according to priorities and capabilities. I spent about 15-20 minutes doing recon by truck and talking with both Left and Right CG's to assess progress and priority. Somewhere around 17:00, Brule Ranger arrived and was assigned Division Delta (Germann Rd to Connors Meadow Rd) along with Winter 1, Brule 4x4, and later receiving Ladysmith 1 Type 4 Engine and USFS TFLD Rabuck with E-571 (Type 7) and E-262 (type 6). They were burning out an indirect line in conjunction/communication with Right CG. The next 1.5 hours was spent briefing the steady stream of arriving resources and assigning them as priorities dictated. This 1.5 hour period didn't get well documented with times as I was behind the time curve and barely (or not) able to keep up with communications to resources on the fireline. I assigned Divisions using roads as termini (every time fireline crosses a road). I

assigned Divisions in the following order: Delta, Alpha/Bravo, Charlie, Foxtrot, Echo, India, and Kilo. Wildland Branch assigned Golf, Juliet, and Head Divisions. It should be noted that the first three Divisions were in this busy 1.5 hour period and the rest spread through the night. In this 1.5 hour period was when Gallagher transitioned Command of the fire to the IMT, Gallagher took the role of Line and assigned me as Deputy Line. This time period during transition (as it usually is) was the most hectic and possibly one of the most dangerous times on the fireline in terms of communication break downs and information flow of specific leader's intent. That is not to say it all went bad, just that as is many times the case immediately following/during there was some "grinding of the gears" before we regained forward momentum in information flow up and down the chain. When information started to flow a bit more on its own my unit log does a better job of capturing times and events the rest of the first night of the fire. Another noteworthy item is that at some point around 22:00 ICP informed us that what we had on the fire for resources was what we were going to get and to prepare to "work until containment." With this information I informed DIVS's to secure their divisions for the night and ready their resources for reassignment down fire. I started to leapfrog divisions in order to secure newly constructed line and reinforce burn out operations. I attempted to stay ahead of the decision curve by assigning divisions stretches of the fire that the Construction Groups were still working on ie. Division Delta was assigned up to Connors Meadow Rd before Right CG had actually reached the road. My

intent was to build communication, coordination and timing into the success of constructing/holding fireline.

There were, as there always are, a few barriers to successful suppression. Most of these were taken in stride by those on working the fire both in ICP and out on the fireline. I'll attempt to highlight the larger barriers focusing on the "what" not the "who" as I know full well that everyone was doing everything in their power to make things work under the circumstances. During the transition to the IMT White Golf Command Frequency proved to be totally ineffective, this coupled with my Verizon cell phone not getting any reliable signal made all communication between myself and ICP nonexistent for about 2.5-3 hours. The problem was eliminated by switching to Blue Charlie Frequency after IA resources were released from the Brule Area for the night; however, both OPS/Wildland Branch and I had to trust one another that the job was getting done in spite of no communications. Once communications were established, we caught up very systematically and quickly. I had a growing list of logistical/supply needs that were ordered as soon as communications were restored. If the resupply had not shown up when it did we would not have been able to continue forward in our line construction mission. Critical needs such as diesel for equipment, food and water for firefighters, and drip torch fuel actually stopped forward progress on the line for 10-20 minutes until we received the supplies. These supply orders took 4.5 hours to get to the line, which is a while, but the important thing is that they got there because people worked hard to make sure the need was filled and it all worked out. One

thing that struck me as something that our preplanning could improve on as an agency is a more structured Medical Plan for this type of incident. I had a plan in my head, and tried to relay it to my DIVS's; but we could do better on this one. I feel we owe it to our firefighters to have a better plan if the unforeseen should happen and someone needs medical attention.

One tactic glared out that I feel needs addressed. "Plowing against the grain" should not be thought of as a cardinal sin. I looked in the 10 Standard Orders and "plowing against the grain" is not one of them. Now, I'm not suggesting that we should ignore the potential risks associated with this tactic; but let's treat it as a Watch Out Situation that if mitigated we can employ with success. Let's make sure we use "plowing against the grain" with LCES in place and when fire behavior and weather conditions allow for its safe use. Rest assured that the Germann Rd Fire would not have been set up for the day 2 successes we saw without "plowing against the grain" at many points during the first night. One thing that worked well is the fact that LCES on the fireline was, to my knowledge, always in place; not always in the way that we train for but firefighters adapted to problems and overcame adversity in a very professional manner that sought to fulfill our charge in protecting life, property and resources under difficult conditions.

RALPH SHEFFER

Command Center

At the start of the day on Tuesday May 14th I was assigned to fill in at Poynette for the Poynette Ranger who had a court date in Wisconsin Rapids. At approximately 4:00pm (16:00), I received a phone call from Chris Klahn, letting me know about increased activity in the northwest part of the state. He informed me that both SEATs were working and all of Cumberland resources were on fires. He also told me that it sounded like there was a fire building near Gordon. He then asked if I was in the Madison Command Center and I told him that I wasn't, but I thought that Trent was. At approximately 4:30pm (16:30), I received a phone call from Trent Marty requesting that I contact the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center (MIFC) because he had heard that the northwest part of the state had ordered a CL-215 from Minnesota but he could not get confirmation as to that and he was not getting information about the fire. I contacted Tom Fastland at MIFC and he told me that a CL-215 had been ordered, but it had been diverted to a fire in Minnesota that was crowning and threatening structures.

Minnesota sent 2 Fireboss SEATs and lead plane to the Gordon area instead. I relayed this information to Trent. At approximately 5:15pm (17:15) I received a phone call from Ron Gropp asking if I would want to join them in the Command Center. I relayed the request to Aaron Young, Dodgeville Area Forestry Leader, who released me to go to the Command Center.

I arrived at the Command Center at

approximately 6:00pm (18:00) and was briefed by Trent. Other personnel in the Command Center were Ron Gropp, Catherine Koele and John Jorgensen. I contacted the Eastern Area Coordination Center to tell them that we had a large fire going and an IMT was taking over the fire. As soon as a resource request came in for additional heavy units and Rangers (6&6 I believe), we began contacting District Forestry Leaders to fill that request. At approximately 8:00pm (20:00) I heard radio traffic regarding a fire in central Adams County north of Friendship that started from a structure fire. In looking at the map location, it was near the intersection of Buttercup Avenue and 15th coming in Big Flats township (approximately 5 miles west of where the Cottonville Fire burned in 2005). When I informed Trent, he assigned me to coordinate resource requests for the Buttercup fire while he continued to coordinate things for the Germann Road Fire. Initial size up for the Buttercup Fire was between 5 and 10 acres with a resource request of 8 heavy units and 3 rangers. We diverted 3 heavy units (Poynette 1, Montello 1 and Wautoma 1) and a Ranger (Wautoma Ranger) from travelling to the Germann Road Fire to the Buttercup Fire. I contacted Wisconsin Rapids dispatch a couple times for updates, but they had not received any updates from the fire. The Buttercup fire was contained around 21:00 at approximately 13 acres and the 3 heavy units and ranger were able to continue to the Germann Road Fire. I was released from the Command Center at approximately 9:45pm (21:45) and ordered to report back at 6:30am (06:30) on the 15th.

Things that could be improved:

- I need to become more familiar with the phone system seeing how I don't work in the building. There were a couple of times that I was unable to transfer a call to another person because of my unfamiliarity with the phones.
- Radio speakers need to be placed in better locations so they are not taking up desk space. I'll look into the possibility of wall mounts.
- Radio volume needs to be set and maintained at a level so that it can be heard. On more than one occasion the volume was turned down to the point the radio traffic couldn't be heard. With the need to hear any fire traffic, this could potentially cause the Command Center to lose situational awareness of statewide fire activity. Completing improvement #2 above may alleviate this issue.
- Situation reports need to be completed in a timely manner. 11:00 is too late in the day (especially for a 2 page report) to let the rest of the state resources know what is going on, not only for the fire still burning from the previous day, but also for initial attack needs. Getting situation reports out was an improvement from previous Command Center activations where no information was let out to the field.
- The fire ICP needs to provide the Command Center with more timely information. With an incident of this magnitude, the need for the Command Center to coordinate and disseminate information to the Administration and

Capitol is great. With little timely information coming from the ICP, this made the task difficult. Some of this issue is due to communication infrastructure available at the ICP. There was 1 phone line to the ICP (which at times was busy) and cell coverage was sketchy at best. Multiple phone lines and/or a cell phone booster at the ICP would be beneficial, not only for communication to the Command Center, but for the ICP to communicate to the field, dispatch, local governments, etc.

JOLENE ACKERMAN

Command Center/PIO

I began assisting the Germann Road Fire efforts on Wednesday May 15th at approximately 07:00. My assignments included the following:

- Creating a press release for the Governor's office.
- Creating talking points for the Governor's visit to the fire on May 16th.
- Working with staff in the Office of Communication (Trish Ossmann, Joanne Haas and Bill Cosh) to get them pictures, maps, etc. for posting to Facebook and Twitter.
- Finding staff with GIS mapping capabilities (Andy Stoltmann) to make the ICP fire map more public-friendly. The idea was to share the map to assist property owners in determining whether or not their property was in the path of the fire.

- Assisting Catherine Koele with media inquiries.
- Creating packets of Firewise and wildland urban interface information (publications and one page summary of the WUI program) for Paul De Long to take to the Governor's visit on the 16th.
- Working with Scott Huelsmann to have information updated on the GRF web page.

What Went Well

My responsibilities/assignments were reasonable and able to be fulfilled.

I was able to find the additional information and resources (e.g. GIS map, person with mapping skills, fire stats, map books) I needed to complete my assignments.

Good information sharing and assistance to one another in the Command Center.

What Could be Improved

It wasn't until Wednesday morning when I went to the office that I found out there had been a project fire the day/night before. I had not been called to come in to the Command Center on May 14th...but maybe that means my presence wasn't needed.

The running of the command center seemed very much dependent on the presence of Trent Marty. I have great concerns about the functioning of the Command Center if Trent had not been available. The Command Center staff could benefit from having identified roles prior to the "next" project fire. Training in those roles and perhaps some kind of mock

fire would also be beneficial. (Perhaps the Command Center could function as an IMT?)

It seems as though Command Center staff should have a specific person at the ICP that is their primary contact. From my observations, those linkages would have benefitted the coordination of media inquiries, the release of 'sensitive' information to the public/media (for example, the cause of the fire), and the creation of up-to-date Situation Reports.

I would have liked to have had a list of people in the ICP, their role and contact information. That would make it easier to find specific information.

There are resources in the Command Center that were not fully utilized, such as the gigantic magnetic board showing the location of resources and resource card pocket system.

HEATHER BERKLUND

Service/Supply

Logistics Section Chief

Assignment Dates/Positions:

5/14-5/15 (16:00-03:00): Service/Supply Branch

Set-up Barnes ICP; evacuate; set-up Gordon ICP

- Order meals for night crew; determine ops/line needs
- With Heidi Brunkow: fuel needs/filled drip torch fuel at Gordon RS for field; delivered food/fuel to night shift 24:00-02:00; determine needs for next day

5/15 (07:30-22:00): Logistics Section Chief

- Oversaw logistics section during entire day operations
- Trained new IMT members the ordering process and logistics role
- Attended the planning meetings
- Worked closely with ops on line needs
- Summarized fire situation to new Dodgeville IMT team
- Worked with Heidi Brunkow on prioritizing and placing all needed orders
- Worked with safety officer to ensure needs were met
- Coordinated all meal plans and deliveries
- Began organizing General Message orders into unit logs
- Coordinated relief members

5/16 (08:00-14:00): Service/Supply Branch

- Ensured new section chief was informed on progress/transition
- Ensured ICP was safe and met needs for media
- Coordinated meal deliveries to line
- Trash pick-up at drop points

Overview/Thoughts on IMT

With the new onset of District Teams, it was a good thing (well not resource loss-wise) that the fire occurred in the Lake Superior Area, for our IMT was well-trained through many past simulators and had a good system in

place. There were new members (Heidi Brunkow and Pat Zimmer) that learned the Logistics role quickly and helped make an efficient team, particularly when I was in the role as Logistics Chief.

- Any Logistics member first called to an incident in remote areas: on their way to incident, be sure to pick up snack foods/drinks, etc. Having to evacuate the IMT resulted in major time loss, thus most food resources were closed and finding food for night ops was difficult.
- Update Action Plans with more details (i.e. fuel sources: can they transport? How much can they deliver? What type of nozzles to fill trucks?)
- Gather all cell phone #s of folks working in that section and give any people making deliveries to line/drop points a radio or some way to contact ICP. We lost communication with a food delivery person when having to evacuate and there was no good way to track where food had been dropped off.
- Ops branch needs to better communicate to line when supply deliveries will be dropped at points. Wasted time seeking out line folks that needed food/supplies when making field deliveries.
- Better training to sections on use of "general message" sheets for ordering
- More training needed to keep unit log/tracking (particularly can be done during night shift)
- More phone connections right away: when phone company comes to ICP, make sure all personnel know to contact

Logistics to ensure proper installation needs are met. It is vitally important to maintain relationships with all other disciplines/divisions/volunteers that are part of IMT (i.e. wildlife/BIA/County folks, etc.): they are a critical role in making sure ICP operations run efficiently.

JOANNA DELEGAN

*Logistics
Line Crew*

On May 14th, 2003 at 14:50 the Barnes Ranger and I responded to a smoke that the Highland tower spotted. We pulled onto Germann Road shortly after the Gordon Ranger. The Gordon Ranger drove to the origin and the Barnes Ranger and I drove north to Doetch Road to assess the fire. The smoke and flames were growing and spotting across the Doetch and Germann Roads. I assumed the responsibility of note taking as the Barnes Ranger assigned tasks to the resources on scene.

My responsibilities shifted to the resource unit at the Incident Command Post once Jay Gallagher arrived on scene at the Germann Road Fire. I arrived at the ICP and immediately started setting up the Resource Unit. We had practiced setting up the IMT at the Barnes Ranger Station earlier in 2013, so setup went smoothly. Resources from around the area were checking in and awaiting an assignment, and a staging area was set up in the Barnes Ranger Station parking lot until the Operations Unit was ready with assignments. I helped to organize the

resource locator cards for the Structure Branch until resources from the Structure Branch of the IMT arrived. Once the winds shifted and the fire started moving east, the ICP was moved to the Gordon Fire Hall.

Once again, the setup went surprisingly well despite the chaos of having to move everything partway through the fire. I worked in the Resource Unit throughout most of the fire, and assisted with mop-up operations on May 16-17th.

I trained under Rod Glamman as the Delta Division Supervisor during mop-up. I was given the opportunity to get more radio operations experience, water pumping skills, and had the chance to work directly on the fireline. Once everything had calmed down, I demobilized from the Germann Road Fire on Friday night (5/17/13).

BOB HARTSHORN

Wildfire Branch Director

Tuesday, May 14th

The day started out with a forecast for a significant fire day so multiple arrangements were made locally during the first hour or so of the day. I then spent a couple of hours working on the itinerary for the upcoming field audits for the FML program that will take place on June 11, 12, and 13th. The morning was basically overcast and didn't look and feel like a significant fire day until about lunch time. By lunch time it was clear that any fire ignition today would be a challenge to deal with. At that point I decided to spend the afternoon out and

about in the vehicle so I could hear the radio and focus on the events of the fire day.

Generally, on significant fire days I will drift into the central part of the Burnett County and go as far as Webb Lake, but knowing the predicted FWI for the day was higher on the extreme west side of the area, I made a decision to stay in the Grantsburg FRU.

I spent some time in the blowdown area northwest of Grantsburg, evaluating fuel conditions, taking a few photographs, etc. After this I decided to take a look at a proposed prescribed burn area southwest of Grantsburg on the Fish Lake Wildlife Area. After that, I proceeded even further south into Sterling Township in northwest Polk County.

While returning back north from Sterling Township, Grantsburg WDNR was paged to a wildland fire just east of Grantsburg. The local fire department was requested by the Grantsburg Ranger since it was just south of Hwy 70 and therefore in the co-op. As time went on, it was clear they had plenty of help and I never did respond to that incident but rather chose to remain uncommitted and available for initial attack.

Sometime shortly after this I learned through hearing bits and pieces on the radio that Northern Spooner had a fire that had some challenges so I decided to start moving further east.

I was between Grantsburg and Siren when the Siren tower sported a smoke to their south and it was not long until I could see it from Hwy 70 as well. Cumberland dispatch sent the Webster Ranger to that general area as well but I cannot recall what other resources were en route. A few

minutes before I was on scene the Dodgeville Patrol let Cumberland Dispatch know they were in the area and could help if needed. Dispatch took them up on their offer but in the meantime I located the wildland fire and gave Dispatch a location and size up. I recall ordering a second heavy unit since one must have already been en route, then Dispatch asked if I wanted the heavy dozer that was just being released from the Grantsburg fire. Since we had some blowdown in the fire area, I took her up on the offer.

A short time later, Dodgeville Patrol was on scene, as well as Forester Mike Wallis and then shortly after that, Ranger John Furr. Since I could hear the SEAT or SEATs going back and forth to a fire in North Spooner I inquired what the availability of a SEAT would be for this fire but also pointed out that I didn't know what other priorities there might be. I said the fire was burning in hardwood with no structures threatened but if one was available I would take it.

A decision was made that one SEAT could be made available and one drop was made. I did not request a load and return and soon released the SEAT. At this point two Webster tractor plows were starting on the right flank as well as the heavy dozer so I turned the fire over to John Furr and left the area at approximately 16:45.

I proceeded to the Siren-Webster-Danbury area to provide initial attack for the Webster Fire Response Unit since I knew that Webster crew would be tied up for some time on the fire in Daniels township. Gradually over the course of the next several minutes I became aware of a challenging fire in the Brule area that I had very little

information on up to this point.

I proceeded north to Danbury and arrived there somewhere around 17:15 or so and then spoke with Area Forestry Leader Greg Mitchell on the phone. He gave me a short briefing of what he knew about the fire in Douglas County and said there were multiple tractors on it and the approximate size of the fire was around 300 acres from the information they had in Dispatch. He then spoke with Larry Glodoski to see if I should go to Douglas County or not. He called me back shortly after that and indicated that I should go north and that the ICP was located at the Barnes Ranger Station. Since Webster 3 (Gossmann and Rakitnichan) were on standby in Danbury I told them what I knew and proceeded north to Douglas County somewhere around 17:15 to 17:30 but am not sure of the exact time.

While en route I still had no sense of the size of the fire, still thinking it was in the hundreds of acres only. Somewhere along the line I became aware that not only were the SEATs working the fire but perhaps even two 'Fire Boss' aircraft from Minnesota. I wondered why the CL215s were not on scene but later learned that they had been requested but were unavailable due to needs in MN.

Also sometime while en route I was hearing weather reports on Cumberland Dispatch net that was confirming the west to northwest wind shift was already occurring at the state line and at reporting stations in MN.

It probably wasn't until I reached Minong and headed north on 53 did I see the smoke column and had two observations. The first was, that it

was now obvious that the fire was significant and well over 300 acres and secondly there were already signs (in the higher levels of the smoke plume) that a wind shift had started to occur.

I monitored the Brule Area net while en route and arrived at the ICP somewhere around 18:15-18:30 but do not know the exact time. When I came into the ICP the IMT was just starting what I think was their first formal planning meeting and I was handed a map that showed the fire was estimated to be 3500 acres at this point. Since Don Luebbe had been running OPS alone up to this point we had a short conversation and implemented what made the most sense to us. I would start to take the responsibility of the Wildfire Branch Director which would allow Don to work more independently as Ops. This allowed for him to work more closely with the Structural and LE folks which he had precious little time to do up to that point. I recall at this point he was making a concerted effort to get the Structural Branch Director to come in from the field and co-locate at the ICP.

Arriving at the ICP roughly 3-4 hours after the ignition meant that I had to catch up in a hurry on the status of where people were working on the fire. Don Luebbe was able to brief me on who was where and who was filling which roles. I made it my focus to understand this first so I spent some time (a few minutes) mapping out who was where in a format that worked for me. The resource unit was displaying the cards and all of that information was available and the sit-unit provided me the maps in the format I wanted and needed.

From this point forward I lost my sense of time

due to the pace of events. I do recall looking at the initial map provided showing 3500 acres and then hearing radio reports that the fire was now jumping County Rd. A, which I thought was beyond what was on the map. This made it quite evident that the fire run was far outpacing our line construction on either flank which was quite concerning.

I learned early on that Jay Gallagher was operating as Line and that Barnes Ranger was operating as Deputy Line. I was not clear who was responsible for what so I spoke with both of them interchangeably throughout the evening on various issues. The wildfire branch mobile was operating on White Golf and I tried using the mobile as is, but Deputy Line in particular had a hard time hearing me. This further complicated an already stressful situation. With the help of radio tech Mark Woody who temporarily set up my portable on the external ICP antenna, but this did not solve the problem. I then asked Mike Wallis who was waiting for an assignment to just pull my vehicle up next to the building and I would operate out of that until the Ops radio was fixed in the ICP. It was only a short time later that Mark Woody told me he thought we were operational again at the Ops table so I moved back inside. All the while I was in contact with Deputy Line a number of times exchanging information.

Sometime during this time frame there was a discussion on how many additional resources to order and I don't think I was very helpful in this discussion since I was still in the "catch up" mode. I believe Larry and Don agreed and placed another resource order.

At one point I think much earlier, I learned that

there was a request for the 415s out of Ontario but they would not be available until sometime the next morning. As the Wildfire Branch Director I never did get a good handle on exactly who was coordinating the air resources that we did have and as darkness fell our air resources were becoming less available anyway. I am anxious to learn a lot more about this aspect of the fire.

Again I have lost all sense of time by this point but we learned through Jay Gallagher (Line) that the fire was jumping State Hwy 27 and the winds were turning now out of the northwest.

This change of wind direction put immediate pressure on the Law Enforcement folks to evacuate the homes along Hwy 27, lakes in the area and there was even a decision to evacuate the ICP and move it to Gordon. While Ops and I did not talk about this I gathered up as many of my notes and maps as I could and moved to my vehicle in the parking lot of the Barnes Ranger Station. I continued to operate as Wildfire Branch Director from my vehicle in Barnes for the next few hours. I knew I couldn't do the job driving down the highway (in the dark) so I decided to stay at Barnes. I also reasoned this would give Ops time to get set up in Gordon and operating before I made the trip to this new location. I also reasoned that if I needed to leave the area due to the approaching fire I could exit to the south on Hwy 27.

Another major change we made after the Barnes ICP was evacuated was to discontinue the use of White Golf and switch to the area net Blue Charlie for the rest of the night and this greatly improved our communication ability. Cell phone coverage was marginal at

best as well.

The 90 degree wind shift presented numerous challenges to our tactical operation and the first being the unsecured line now east of Hwy 27 with multiple structures in the area and to the east and southeast. Line and I discussed our options and with a Rhinelander and Tomahawk tractor in the Barnes parking lot we decided to have them anchor into Hwy 27 and plow southeast naming this the J division. We felt it was critical to implement this tactic and it was safe to do so.

Jay Gallagher (as Line) decided to go with the tractors and get them started and we eventually were able to assign Winter Ranger, Mike O'Mara as the Division supervisor.

The next critical need we had once we implemented the tactic of plowing east of Hwy 27 with miles of unsecured line west of Hwy 27 was to tie into the west side of Hwy 27 and plow to the southwest (DIV G). While this would traditionally be thought of as plowing against the grain it truly wasn't as the wind had now shifted 90 degrees making essentially everything that had been the left flank the heel of the fire. We felt that it was essential to do this for the safety of the personnel on the J Division.

I stayed at the Barnes Ranger Station for a period of time longer and it was good that I did for all the reasons already mentioned, but also to be a point of contact for fire departments, law enforcement, electric companies, etc. that showed up there not knowing the ICP had been moved to Gordon. Assignments were made as needed with coordination with the folks at the "new ICP".

Over a period of time after Gordon was up and running the Wildfire Branch coordinated things with Ops being 20 miles apart as opposed to being at the ICP together so far a period of time we had Wildfire Branch, Ops, Line and Deputy Line all coordinating tactical operations from different locations. This was obviously not ideal but we had to play with the cards we were dealt.

I really don't know what time I left the Barnes Ranger Station and headed to Gordon but I am just guessing I got to Gordon around 23:00 but I am not sure. I met back with Ops and we continued to operate together for a period of time until we started to plan for the next day. It was decided that Don would go get a few hours of sleep and that he would come back at 07:00 on Wednesday morning.

Again I don't know the times but some of this could be pieced together by listening to the talk in the Brule Dispatch Center since we were operating on the Area net during the night. At some point the tractors and Mike O'Mara did what they could on the J Division so the new priority was to work west of Hwy 27 plowing back to the southwest with the ultimate goal of tying the 'right flank' together. This was an extremely challenging assignment coordinated by Line and I don't have a good sense of how much was accomplished due to extremely tough going and other factors during the night. This effort would have been on K-division. The divisions were redesigned for the day shift essentially eliminating K and H divisions. Knowing that this portion of the fire had to be priority, this is where we felt we needed to concentrate the efforts of the CL415's early on Wednesday morning and the Blackhawks when they arrived.

Throughout the night, line construction was difficult and challenging due to a number of factors that will be brought out in other narratives but one of our debilitating factors was the lack of adequate fuel delivery for tractors. Logistics had arranged for a fuel truck and he had been operating on the fire but then *left the area* and returned to Hayward without telling anyone at the ICP.

Tractors on the right flank both in the line construction group and D/F Divisions were slowed up waiting for fuel. In addition, the equipment on E Division waited for hours without fuel.

Logistics made alternate arrangements after the first fuel truck left but it was several hours before they arrived to help out. Fortunately the Structural Branch folks had ordered a fuel truck directly and once they filled FD vehicles they were able to fill tractors and dozers next.

This was a contributing factor in the slow speed of line construction. It was not the only reason but was one of them and we need to strive to make sure that this isn't an issue in the future.

I am sure the folks in Logistics understand this far better than me but there were lots of complaints, particularly from the Structural Branch, that they were not getting any of the food deliveries. I think it was after midnight before many folks got food and we likely need to figure out how we can speed this up in the future.

At about 02:00 or 03:00 in the morning, we were making final plans for the day shift and I volunteered to contact a number of people from the CBL Dispatch group to get them to the ICP

by 07:00. After that I worked with the IC and Plans to fine tune the day shift plans with assignments.

Throughout the night I stayed in communication with Line and Deputy Line on the progress. It wasn't until after 6am until we had line tied together on the original left flank. We were not able to complete this task on the right flank by the time the day shift started and knew we had unsecured lines on the right flank or what had been K Division.

The plan was for Jim Barnier to fly with the WDNR pilot around 06:00-06:30 and scout out the fire and then be the contact between air and the ground staff during the day on Wednesday. It was my understanding that he would coordinate the air resources (415's and Blackhawks) and take this burden off of Line on Day Two. Don Luebbe checked back in on the air at about 05:30-06:00 and wanted to take a tour of the fire area before he started his shift at 07:00.

The first day shift folks started to arrive at 06:30 and came in steadily until about 07:30 and after. They were each briefed on their assignment and Don Luebbe and I transitioned from the night shift to the day shift and I headed back to Grantsburg at roughly 08:30.

I left work on 10:30 Wednesday 5/15/13 from the GRT RS to return home.

JOHN KIEL

Air Ops – SEAT Manager

I sat here for week or so thinking about the events of May 14th so that I may write this without any prejudice and that will still be difficult.

As the afternoon unfolded at about 14:30(?), I heard a smoke report on the office radio, I believe, from Highland tower and then a cross from another tower probably Gordon and then another cross from an unknown tower. Reports were that it was growing. Barnes 4x4 was dispatched; I think he was proceeding to the smoke with a heavy unit. In any event the forester ranger ordered two more heavy units when he saw the smoke and then only one SEAT. A while later the 215's were also requested along with more heavy units, I cannot remember the exact dock time sequence of the radio traffic after this. One point here is that the CCFDRS had a value of only HIGH for this group but the Cumberland area was at Very High for a dispatch group only six miles to the south.

The SEAT was already being loaded after I received a call from Cumberland Dispatch. Dutch Snyder was warming up the aircraft and finishing loading when I handed him the bearing and distance coordinates on the dispatch form. Tanker 812 was readied on my request based on fire conditions and my personal knowledge of the fuels in the east Gordon area, and the radio order for a SEAT. T812 launched at 15:12 outbound for the fire. Tanker 814 moved into the pit as soon as it opened and was loaded with gel. But no order came and the tanker shut down.

In the meantime N Spooner had a fire that had Air Attack on the scene and I believe two heavy units at least ordered. Upon conferring with Cumberland Dispatch, T814 was kept loaded and fired up in the pits anticipating an order for a tanker. Given the current fire conditions we anticipated an immediate launch, after a time I called dispatch and let her know that we were burning fuel waiting. She tried her best to get an order. Tanker 814 was finally launched at 15:42, 30 min after being loaded, to the Rainbow fire returning at 16:05. T812 returned for a load to drop on the Germann Road fire. The pilot told me no personnel were available to load aircraft at OLG. I called Brule dispatch and I was told that I should realize that they were only on High and a few days out from being snow covered. I was told either by Brule or Cumberland that Luebbe was responsible for the base. I called Karin at Cumberland and told her to get a hold of Don Luebbe by cell or someone else and open the damn base. I had a SEAT working here and could not drive up to OLG which would have been over an hour. T812 was reloaded and was requested to divert to another fire (Colander), but because of the urgency up north he was then told to continue back to Germann. Tanker 814 launched at 16:16, went to Colander, returning at 16:34 and launching at 16:42 for Germann. Water only was loaded on the tankers at OLG and both reported that it was not effective. I had assumed that at least foam was on site. My fault for not personally checking the base out.

Both tankers then used the base at Solon, returning to RZN for fuel at 17:02 and 18:07. All Jet A fuel had been used off the truck and

from the FBO by the end of shift. The tankers had enough on board to fly for several hours the next day. Fuel was delivered by 07:00 on May 15th.

May 15th – CL415s were brought in from Canada to work with Wisconsin NG choppers even though there were two SEATs sitting at Siren, already paid for. The two SEATs could have flown and been used for fire suppression on the control lines and any ongoing active fire on May 15th. Based on the photos there was still active fire going on interior islands of fuel. The SEATs still would have been available for any new ignitions. A few hours in the morning still would have allowed flight time without exceeding flight time limitations for the day.

I've waited 14 years to be able to launch two SEATs on IA here in Wisconsin and show what their capabilities are. I guess that went up in smoke and no pun is intended. 1500 or 1600 hundred gallons of gel from two aircraft will pack a heck of a punch on IA. I have always recommended at our preseason meetings to use multiple SEATs. I always say to use SEATs early and often! That still has not happened.

The main issue is to get the SEATs ordered in the first place. They can be launched and returned if not needed. Without naming anybody in particular, some people have an aversion to using these SEAT resources we have on hand and that is just simply wrong. The policy must be changed and take the option out of the hands of the IA people. It is ludicrous to have that suppressant on hand and the capabilities to deliver it and not use it. I suppose if a chopper was here the story may be different, but if you don't order early it will not make any difference, especially on days such as May 14th.

The bottom line is policy must be changed on use of the SEATs. Somebody has to make a decision sooner and not later to keep the SEATs effective for suppression.

It appears to me that the weather observation system that is used here doesn't give a clue about the burning conditions for that particular day. As I wrote above, there were two different weather observations for areas separated by some six miles and an operational group. When we went through our daily briefing with the OPS plan for Cumberland and the weather, the pilots and I talked about the frontal approach and the predicted strong wind shift that was approaching.

PHIL MILLER

Air Ops

On Monday (5/13/2013), I posted a schedule for the week's fire activity. My schedule included me being assigned to Brule for Tuesday the 14th. I had scheduled myself to be in one of the aircraft we had in Siren (N4723N). On Monday we also swapped out an aircraft with Rhinelander (N735UY for N1050V) as part of a plan to get our aircraft cycled through Madison for 100hr. inspections.

After flying a detection route on Monday with N735UY, I noticed that both main tires were low and while airing them up noticed that the right main tire did not have a valve cap on the tire stem. Just prior to shutdown, while sitting on the ramp the right main aircraft tire went flat. We aired up the tire and put the aircraft in the hangar. I suspected a bad tube and

determined that I had enough equipment to change out the tube myself prior to the next fire day. I decided to let DOA know about the problem in the morning. I made a call to Eau Claire and let our pilots know that I may need them to fly me a tube in the morning and I cancelled an osprey flight that had been scheduled for Tuesday morning.

I arrived at the hangar by 06:30 Tuesday morning and found the tire still fully inflated. Since that tire had no cap on its valve stem, I reasoned that a small piece of dirt must have held the tire valve open after I had aired up the tire and that was the reason it went flat. I called Eau Claire and told them I did not need a tube. I was unable to contact the osprey person, so using the other aircraft at our station (N4723N) which had the telemetry antennas installed, I flew a wolf telemetry flight. At approximately 10:30 I landed back at Siren.

When Joe arrived at the hangar he did a preflight on the Rhinelander aircraft and found a problem with a flap skin. I notified DOA and was told not to use the aircraft for resource flying. We planned to swap the aircraft for one they were finishing up that morning in Madison but it would not be getting to Siren before 4:00 in the afternoon. I called and informed the Brule and Cumberland AFLs that we were short an aircraft. After talking with the AFLs it was my understanding that we would use the one aircraft in Siren for both routes. The aircraft would remain in Siren and we would do a shared detection route. Additionally the AFLs would contact Park Falls and see if their aircraft would be available to help back us up if needed.

At approximately 12:00 I was sent to check a smoke for Cumberland and after that they had me fly the combined detection route. I landed back at Siren around 13:30 and ran to town for a sandwich that I brought back to the hangar to eat.

Around 14:00 we started picking up radio traffic from the Brule area. Tower shots and the Barnes ranger's radio traffic were heard. We heard him call for patrol so Joe headed for the aircraft and I went to the office expecting to get a call from Brule dispatch. While waiting for the call Joe taxied out and took off. At about the same time the ranger requested a SEAT. The SEAT manager received a call shortly thereafter. I then realized that Brule was not going to call us for Air Attack. They had called our Eau Claire pilot who unbeknown to me was in Hayward.

Since I did not know who the Eau Claire pilot was I thought it best to keep Joe heading toward the fire. I called Brule dispatch and let them know that Joe was en route and probably not aware of the other pilot. I brought up Spider tracks and saw that the aircraft out of Hayward was closer to the fire and because of the tail number I assumed the pilot was Leo Bunderson, who has had some experience working with a SEAT.

Several minutes later Cumberland called with a request for an aircraft on a growing smoke in the Cumberland area. I called Brule dispatch and asked them to have Joe call Cumberland. Joe was then directed to the fire in Cumberland.

At this point circumstances left me grounded in Siren. The replacement aircraft from Madison upon entering the Cumberland area

was utilized on a fire which also utilized a SEAT drop. Joe was released from the fire he was on. He landed in Siren and refueled. I then took that aircraft and headed to the Germann Road fire.

When I got to the fire it was about 6 miles long. The SEATs and Fire Boss aircraft were being used for structural protection on the flanks of the fire well back from the head. The MN Air Attack was directing the Fire Boss and SEAT drops and Leo was filling the Air Attack role. The operation was safe and all necessary communications were being made. Leo asked me to talk to the ICP. I worked with them until Leo needed to go for fuel at which time I took over the Air Attack position and remained as Air Attack until the suppression aircraft had reached their grounding times and it was getting too dark for me to be of assistance to the ground personnel.

I landed at Solon Springs airport and let dispatch know I was available to go to the ICP if anyone needed me for photos or information. After approximately 20 minutes of waiting, I departed Solon Springs and returned to Siren.

LEO BUNDERSON

WDNR Air Attack

On Tuesday May 14th, the morning fire ops plans came out indicating detection routes for both BRF and PKF. Bev took the BRF route to train the new LTE and I took the PKF route which indicated sitting at Tony by 11:00 with a detection flight at 13:00.

John Kelto, the PKF dispatcher indicated he

wanted me to check on a fire from the previous day, which I did as I started the detection route. By the time I got around to the north end, he called and requested I sit down at Hayward. This was at ~14:00. At ~14:40 PKF dispatch called me and asked me to respond to a fire NW of Hayward because Siren was down to one aircraft, which was already working a fire.

I arrived over the fire at ~15:00. I estimated the fire to be about 1 acre in size. The Barnes Ranger got to the fire at about the same time I did. We talked on RED and I told him that the fire was moving very fast in the small pines. I completed my size up with discussing the road breaks, lakes, swamps, and structure. He asked how long I thought it would take for the fire to reach the road break and if it would be 1-2 hours. I told him I thought it would be about 15-20 minutes at the longest so get all the help you can. The first dozer arrived shortly after that.

When SEAT 812 arrived on scene, Barnes ranger told me to work the SEAT as I saw fit...I gave him the instructions to drop on the right flank, load and return. After about 3-4 drops the other SEAT arrived and I had both SEATs working the right flank for a few drops. When MN ATCO Fire Boss arrived I had them work the left flank to save structures. After working on some structures, I put them back on the right flank with the 2 SEATs. At this time I suggested to the IC that we could use some bigger aircraft. I was told to standby and when he got back to me after ~5-10 minutes he told me "they didn't figure it was bad enough to get them".

I noticed a significant wind shift and split the drops between right and left flanks. At this point

the dozers were unable to penetrate the pines to get to the left flank. At this time ICP contacted me to give me the points on the fire. Phil Miller arrived overhead at this time so I asked him to take care of the ICP request which he did. Phil and I worked great together coordinating duties.

At ~19:15, I needed fuel so I headed back to Hayward, handing off all duties to Phil. After fueling, when I arrived back over the fire, Phil told me the wind had shifted ~90 degrees. We shared duties until the SEATs and ATCO timed out. Phil left around 21:00 to go back to Solon Springs to tell them what we had seen and to ask if they needed more help. I told Phil I would hang around for another 30 minutes to make sure everything was okay before I headed back to Eau Claire. I arrived back at home base at ~22:00.

DENNIS DANZL

MN DNR Air Attack

- 15:34 WDNR request AA and 1 CL215, these two aircraft were diverted soon after launch.
- 16:12 Request received at Anoka Tanker Air Base for AA and Fireboss. Second Fireboss also requested from Brainerd.
- 16:27 AA2 off Anoka
- 16:35 T851 off Brainerd ETE 37 minutes
- 16:40 T891 off Anoka ETE 33 minutes
- 17:04 AA2 on scene assuming role of Air Tanker Coordinator (ATCO)

T891 and T851 (Fireboss) worked mainly left flank, with a couple drops on the left shoulder and on right flank. This was a combination of structure protection and support of dozer line. Both Fireboss aircraft scooped out of Upper Eau Claire Lake. Foam was used on both aircraft at 0.3 concentration. Both fueled in Superior at approximately 19:30. Request for new fire came from MIFC at 20:15. After analyzing time and distance it was decided to return to base. AA2 2 down at BRD at 21:00.

T812 and T814 (Air Tractor 802s), like the two Fireboss worked mostly the left flank, with a couple drops on the right and a drop or two closer to the head on the left shoulder. This was a combination of structure protection and support of dozer line. Gel was hauled from Siren on the initial loads. Water was hauled from Solon Springs. The shorter turns did not compensate for the ineffectiveness of the water.

AA3 landed Brainerd at 21:00.

BRAD KILDOW

Deputy Line

Line Supervisor

- 10:00 Arrive at Gordon Ranger Station. No one around, directed by Brule Dispatch to report to Gordon Fire Department on CTH Y.
- 10:15 Arrive Gordon Fire Department ICP and check in.
- 10:25 Tactical Assignment #1: Assigned to major flare-up on interior, unburned fuels on CTH A, west of STH 27. Fire

departments are responding for structural protection now. I was handed an Incident Action Plan (IAP) by someone in plain clothes. I asked for a map, and was referred to the 8 1/2 x 11 inch, black & white map contained within the IAP. I asked for a larger (11" X 17"), more detailed map that I could see sitting on the copy machine, but was told the small, black & white map would be "more than adequate" for my assignment.

11:00 Ran into Jay Riewestahl and met face-to-face for briefing at CTH A and STH 27. Jan informed that the flare-up on County Highway A was being taken care of and not to worry about it. New Tactical Assignment #2: Line Supervisor, (Jay Riewestahl) informed me that he had a new assignment for me. My new assignment was "Deputy Line" and I would be in charge of Divisions A, B, C, and E for now. My first assignment was to make contact with each Division Supervisor and confirm what equipment they had and what their needs will be for today, tonight and tomorrow. The IAP handed to me at the ICP did NOT contain an Organization_Assignment List Form 203. Jay fished through his paper work on the passenger seat of his truck and found an extra one for me. I also asked Jay if he had an extra, 11x17 inch, detailed map for me to work off of. He did not have one, but was willing to part with his. I declined as he had a lot of notes on his map. Jay also directed that all communications above me were to

go through Jay. One of Jay's biggest concerns was the need for an equipment order and operations plan for the evening shift and the next day's shift. Before printing with Jay, I asked that a large map and detailed aerial photo be sent out from ICP for me to us during my assignment.

As I left Jay and headed west, then south down the left flank of the fire, I had to come to terms with this assignment of "Deputy Line Supervisor" as I had never heard of it before and just what am I to do with this assignment.

11:25 I tied in with C Division Supervisor, Woppler and E Division Supervisor, Fischer at the intersection of Red Pine Road and Sutfin Road. It was here that I was able to confirm resources assigned to these two divisions and Ranger Fischer was able to explain the lay of the fire to me using the tiny map in the IAP on the hood of my truck. It was at this point that I realized what Jay really needed. With 9 divisions under his command, he had exceeded span of control guidelines and was probably losing control of his organization. Using the model of "Active Group" and "Overhaul Group" from the Structural Branch, I was able to wrap my head around the concept of "Deputy Line." The main request from both C and E Divisions (Woppler & Fischer) were the need for lunches and hand crews. All they had assigned to them was one heavy unit each.

12:30 Attempted to find Pete Glover (MI

DNR) on A Division near the intersection of Germann and Doetch Roads. Found Rose Hillebrand instead serving as A Division Supervisor. She had been on the fire since initial attack. Pete Glover had not shown up to take over from Rose and she could not raise him on the radio. Rose passed along several tidbits of valuable information to me. Some included:

- "White Golf repeater is a mess."
- Communications is horrible except from the hill tops.
- Cell phones are unreliable. You can't reliably communicate on a cell phone.
- Communications within her division on BROWN is good.
- Communications with B Division is OK, but he is on RED. "His radio is messed up. Something is wrong with his radio."

Rose felt that the crew on the heavy unit could be left to staff Division A as the line was "rather cold" at this point. Division A was staffed with Webster 2. She was seeking to be released from the fire soon.

13:15 Tied in with Bravo Division Supervisor, Mike Harnois (US Forest Service out of Park Falls). Wautoma Unit #2 was assigned to him and was working the improving line and mopping up along the line. Mike was supervising a long section of line and needed an ATV for himself to get up and down his line more efficiently.

He also asked for one or two, Type 7 engines with a staff of at least two people on both units to speed up mop-up work along the line. A hand crew would be a good second choice for additional resources. I gave Mike a ride back to his mini-van parked near the origin on Doetch Road.

13:33 Released Rose Hillebrand by radio directly from the fire to return to Washburn

Refer to my Unit Log (Form 214) for the details for the rest of my assignment.

From this point on, I made numerous attempts to contact Line (Jay) by radio and telephone. Sometimes, we could connect, most times I could not. There were times that G Division Supervisor (Matt Slater) made several attempts to contact Line, but could not raise him. There were also times that Line would attempt to contact J Division Supervisor (Terry Trapp), but Terry would not answer. In cases such as this, I would establish the contact where I could and give G and J Division Supervisors another contact point.

By mid-afternoon, Line became very busy with flare-ups, new running fire and tricky line construction north of Beauregard Lake Road and east of Rock Lake. When this occurred I directed G Division Supervisor (Slater) to report to me instead of Jay. I also went in search of J Division Supervisor (Terry Trapp) but could not find or raise him on the radio. A flare-up next to some residences was reported in the vicinity of Sand Lake (Division J), so I responded to the area myself. During this response, Terry Trapp came back on the radio. Following this response, Terry and I were able

to meet face-to-face. I informed Terry about Jay being tied up on the south side of the fire and offered that he can call me if he couldn't get through to Jay.

Around 16:30, I was able to meet up with Line (Jay) on Beauregard Lake Road. We brought each other up to speed and discussed making plans and putting together an order for night ops and for Thursday operations.

Communication & Safety Issues

- The failure of White Golf seemed to be the main glitch of the day. I arrived on the fire around 11:00 and communications outside the fire seemed to be a major problem. Both of my daytime assignments were not impacted by this problem. Once White Golf was up and running, OPS at ICP did talk to me on several occasions.
- Communications on Red and Brown were good throughout my shift. I did have trouble talking to O Division from near the origin of the fire (or the other way around depending on who I was talking to) when located on Doetch Road. These locations are 7 miles apart.
- No major safety issues to note.

Issues of Concern, Food for Thought, Recommendations for Improvement.

- Being directed to report to the Gordon Ranger Station. I was not the only resource from outside the area to be directed to the wrong location. It was easily handled, but did cause a delay in reporting at the correct location.

- Upon arrival at the Gordon ICP, I was "greeted" by one of my former students from UW-Stevens Point (Joanna Delagan) dressed in full, fire turnout gear. She escorted me to the check-in table where two other women were working the check-in station. Joanna was assigned to a position on the IMT as "check-in." The divisions on the fire desperately needed firefighters on the ground and I sure could have used a rider with local knowledge to help manage my duties as Line or Deputy Line. This large fire could have been an excellent training opportunity for Joanna and many other "new firefighters." This seemed like quite a miss-match of her qualifications as well as a wonderful training opportunity missed. Just a thought.
- I was assigned to a position I had never heard of before called "Deputy Line." I more-or-less worked independently of the Line Supervisor and we made this position work and it worked well having developed it on the fly. If this is a position being used by the northern region of the state, we need to look at formalizing it and getting the concept out to the rest of the state. This position seemed to be new or foreign to the Division Supervisors as well, but when I explained the delegation of duties (span of control) to them, everyone caught on quickly to the concept. It also gave the Division Supervisors a second point of contact at the field level should the Line Supervisor be tied up or in a bad location to communicate.
- The largest need from the divisions assigned to me was the need for hand crews with hand tools to team up with the dozers

and engines working the lines. There was a distinct lack of hand crews on the fire. In my opinion, each division could have used a 5-person squad with hand tools and chainsaws. Most divisions could also have used a Type 7 engine or larger ATV with water-hauling capabilities to make mop-up go much faster. This is in addition to the trucks driven by the Division Supervisors. I was informed that orders for hand crews had been placed, but "they just won't give us any." Although tractor/plows are our most valuable and versatile asset, they are not always the most efficient asset. We should be both geared and staffed to apply both mechanized equipment AND hand crews to a fire so that both resources can work to their best efficiency. Just a thought here, but shouldn't each dispatch group have access to and invest in a 10 to 20 person hand crew?

- Where is the Brule Area, 20-person hand crew?
- Where is the Cumberland Area, 20-person hand crew?
- Where is the Park Falls Area, 20-person hand crew?
- Where is the Woodruff Area, 20-person hand crew?

If each of these areas could have staffed up even half their crews and sent them to this fire, we would have been able to deploy 40 firefighters with hand tools, chainsaws and pack cans across this fire and made much quicker work early in the fire.

If we are not going to invest in hand crews at the area or even district level, let's not

lead our field managers into thinking such resources exist.

- Lost food. My divisions assigned to me did not get food for lunch. I was informed at 14:00 that our lunches had just been dropped off at a drop point located at CTH A and Commisky Road. I arrived at CTH A and Commisky Road before 14:10 to find a large crew of electric company workers and numerous trucks staged there and NO LUNCHES. Not even an empty box. The Electric Company workers had been evacuated to this location from the Rock Lake area due to fire flare-ups. I found it interesting that most of the electric company workers were standing around their trucks eating sandwiches. HMMM!

I was then directed to the Polar Gas Company located at the intersection of STH 27 and CTH A that more lunches would be located there and I should go there to get lunches for my divisions. Upon arrival at the Polar Gas Company, I found about 25+ idle fire department trucks parked and about 50 structural firefighters milling around the area.

The "food cache" consisted of a large pile of cases containing pudding getting hot in the direct sunshine and a huge garbage bag full of bite-sized TWIX candy bars melting in the sunshine.

Lesson learned: Guard the lunches and deliver directly to the division supervisors. Do not leave them at some unmanned drop point or they will get stolen.

The Red Cross and Salvation Army have lunch wagons that are well suited for this

type of operation.

- I passed the Polar Gas Company staging area several times throughout the day and there were always 20 to 30 structural fire engines parked there along with their crews. There were a lot of smokes and fires near structures all over the fire, but especially around the Rock Lake and around the Ellison and Sand Lake areas. Just a thought, but couldn't these units (or even half of these units) have been deployed to take care of these hotspots? The training and experience would have been great, especially for newer firefighters on these fire departments. Could some of the brush engines been deployed within the wildfire divisions to assist WDNR and tractor/plows with mop-up?
- A private dozer from Select Industries out of Stone Lake had been working the line the night before (Tuesday night) constructing drivable breaks. The owner of the company called on one of his hired men to come take over operation of the dozer the next day (Wednesday). The hired man checked in through the ICP, then drove out to meet the dozer and receive an assignment for the day. Meanwhile, the owner left the dozer with the hired man at County Trunk A and Ross Road and returned to the ICP to check out. The hired man and the dozer were never given an assignment and sat there all day with both the truck engine and dozer engine running.
- Given the burning conditions and fuel types, the lines seemed awful narrow to me. Most lines appeared to be constructed with 2 tractor/plow lines only with the third

tractor/plow dozing in a drivable break.

These lines were awful narrow for a dual-wheeled, Type 6 engine.

May 15th to 16th (Night Ops)

- 19:30 I arrived back at the ICP from serving as Deputy Line with the knowledge that I would be heading back out to serve as Line Supervisor for the night shift. When I walked into the building at the Gordon Fire Department, I checked in with Todd Kenefick and Don Luebbe. They informed me what resources they had put together for the night shift and reviewed it with me. They also said that one of them would be staffing the OPS table all night. Jay Riewestahl and I presented our updated maps to the situation unit so they could update their maps. I asked to have the map updated and a new one printed before I head back out on the line for night operations. I informed them that I would be heading back out about 21:00.
- 20:00 Jay and I attended the evening operations briefing, gave our reports and I noted all the problem areas to watch out for during the night.
- 20:20 I ate dinner of cold scalloped potatoes & ham & pretzels.
- 20:30 Stopped at the Situation Unit to see if they had updated the maps for me for night operations. They had not. I informed them that I was going to get fuel and would return about 21:00 to see if the maps would be finished.

20:45 I returned to the ICP after getting fuel and the map updates were not done. I asked for and received a few of the day ops maps to work with and distribute to my Division Supervisors on night operations along with ICS Form 214's. Todd Kenefick stopped me as I was leaving the building and informed me that they (Todd and Don) were being ordered to leave the fire and get some rest. They further informed me that no one in Operations would be manning the operations table, but that someone would be in the ICP should I need to contact someone. White Golf repeater seemed to be working properly at this point. White Golf would be my main means of emergency communications outside the fire.

21:00 Arrived on fire and began a counter-clockwise circuit around the fire for a face-to-face meeting with all resources assigned for briefings and distribute maps.

00:30 I was stopped by a local resident on Sand Road to report a dozen or more, flaming hot spots throughout the fire area. After leaving, I checked all the fires she reported to me and found her information to be surprisingly accurate. All of these hot spots were well inside the interior of the fire.

01:30 Stopped to talk to the staff of a brush engine from the Bass Lake Fire Department on Beauregard Lake Road North. While chatting with this crew, I picked up a conversation on Fire Ground Blue between two Hayward

Fire Department units complaining that they were out on the fire all alone and that WDNR had "abandoned them" and left the fire for the night. After a few minutes, and partly to put some humor into the situation, I interrupted the conversation on Fire Ground Blue and asked if I could be of assistance. I introduced myself as the WDNR Line Supervisor and that I have a team of 3 Division Supervisors and two heavy units plus myself staffing the fire for the night. I offered to meet with the Hayward units and we could share some information. They declined my offer.

0230 I checked all the residence around the Rock Lake area and found numerous hot spots and burning snags. None immediately threatened structures that were still standing.

0600 De-mobilized the night staff to return to the ICP at Gordon.

0625 Stopped at the Cabin Creek Store to see if they had fuel and breakfast snacks. The store was closed. I was stopped by two residents in the parking lot who wanted to talk about the fire. Overall, a good conversation and PR contact.

07:00 I attended the morning briefing at the ICP in Gordon.

08:00 Release and checked out to the Best Western Motel in Solon Springs.

Communication & Safety Issues

Communications throughout the night was good across the fire and White Golf performed well during my communications

with the ICP.

Local residents were out late into the night "checking out" the fire. In addition to the lone woman stopping me at 00:30, I met other people out as late as 02:00 driving around the fire area and in some pretty remote locations. Personal safety and reliable communications were always in the back of my mind.

Issues of Concern, Food for Thought, Recommendations for Improvement.

- Nearly all members of the night shift staff made contact with local residents out surveying the fire. Having a WDNR presence on the fire all night was a wise idea and I think we had the correct combination of Type 6/7 engines and two heavy units. Local residents seemed appreciative that we were out on duty through the night.
- The staff at ICP initiated contact with me on White Golf around 02:00 to offer assistance or bring us something if we needed it. Although our needs were met, it was comforting knowing there was some staff on duty covering us in the field.
- The conversation I had with the Hayward Fire Department units around 01:30 concerned me. During my briefing at the ICP on Wednesday evening before starting my duties as Line Supervisor, I was informed that Structural Branch would have some Fire Department units staffing the fire for the night. I was further instructed that if I needed some structural resources, that I

could contact "someone" on Fire Ground Blue. I was comfortable knowing this, but in hindsight, I should have asked for a contact name and cell phone number of someone representing Structural Branch. Also, in hindsight, I should have tied in with someone from the Structural Branch at the field level early in the evening to meet-and-greet and share contact information.

- My chance meeting with the Bass Lake Fire Department about 01:30 and listening to the conversation between the two Hayward Fire Department trucks leads me to believe that the structural side of the organization was not being kept in the loop of information and staffing. Should something have "broken loose" during the night that would have needed the attention of both WDNR and Structural Branch, this lack of information about the other side of the organization could have led to a fair amount of chaos during initial attack. On future assignments of this nature, I will make a point to make my/our presence known to the structural folks on the fire. A short meeting with them early on will pay big dividends should the need to work together during the night arise. This meeting would have also brought me (a Ranger from another part of the state) up to speed as to what structural resources I had available to me and who my contacts/counterparts would be
- Watch-out Situation #2: *In country not seen in daylight.*
- I think having me serve as Line Supervisor for the night shift after serving all day as Deputy Line was a wise move. I managed

to circumvent most of the fire 4 times during the day shift allowing me to become very familiar with the area, road layout and hazards before dark. I was very comfortable with supervising night operations with this knowledge pretty much stored in my head. If I had been given this same assignment at dusk and never having seen this fire during daylight, I would have been very nervous all night. If something had taken off during the night, I don't think I would have been able to handle it anywhere near as well not having seen the area during the day. Driving through large areas of G and northern J Division in total darkness that I had not seen the previous day was a concern to me. When I first learned that I was going to serve as Line Supervisor for night ops, I should have at least driven those areas and gotten a feel for the lay of the land and fuels in those areas.

- At the Thursday morning briefing following my night shift, I noted that B Division (Tony Marinello) was assigned two wet ground units. Tony even cornered me and inquired what his assignment looked like and how he could best use the wet-ground resources assigned to him. B Division was in an upland area where a tractor/plow and/or ATV's would have been better suited. At the same time, C Division and F Division were assigned heavy units (I think). Both C and F Divisions had significant wet/lowland areas to deal with. Again, this seemed like a mismatch of resources to the needs on the ground.

Why was the Whiting heavy unit sent home after just one shift on the fire? Given that B Division was a high ground area, Whiting 1 could have been assigned here (B Division) and keep the wet ground units available for use in areas better suited for this type of equipment.

May 16th to 17th

- 17:00 Check out of motel in Solon Springs and dinner at a local restaurant.
- 17:50 Check-in at ICP. Obtain several copies of the latest maps from Situation Unit. The maps had still not been updated from the previous night.
- 18:30 Attended the evening briefing. I noted that significant problems had occurred during the day on C and J Divisions. I was informed that the staff for the night would be just Bob White in the Winter Heavy Unit and myself. Don Luebbe gave me a quick rundown of the daytime operations and that one of my assignments for the night would be to visit as many residences as possible to check for burning hot spots, snags and the like within 100 to 200 feet of every structure. Don also recommended that I meet up with Jay Riewestahl concerning problem areas that would need my attention.

I was also informed by Don Luebbe that the ICP was being shut down for the night and no one would be there to answer the radio. I asked Don that my portable radio be programmed with the local sheriffs dispatch

frequency(ies) or be given (loaned) a radio with these frequencies. At this point, Larry Glodoski walked up and stated that if I needed anything, that I should call him by cell phone and not worry about the radio. I stated to Larry that I was not comfortable with this arrangement given the poor cell phone coverage of the area. Larry countered that this was to be my primary means of communication for the night.

18:55 Just before leaving for the field for the night, Don Luebbe loaned me his portable radio and set the radio to the Bayfield County Sheriffs dispatch frequencies. He advised me to use the radio only as a scanner, but I could make reliable contact with Bayfield dispatch with his radio.

19:10 I met with Jay Riewestahl along CTH Y and he briefed me on the day operations and problem areas. His greatest concern was torching in a swampy area on C Division and that this was to be my greatest area of concern for the night. He directed that I should drive immediately to C Division and meet with Chris Klahn.

20:00 Chris Klahn and I connected at the intersection of Red Pine Road and Townline Road. Chris drove me south to the end of Red Pine Road and showed me around the spruce swamps that had given his crew trouble all day. Chris recommended that I watch this area through the night and make sure I look at it again after dawn before the

end of my shift. Although there were several smokes rising in the area, things seemed to be settling down nicely for the evening. The temperature was dropping fast and a damp chill was settling in.

20:45 Bob White in Winter 1 drove to the Polar Gas Company on STF 27 to park his rig for the evening while I checked out the residences and become more familiar with the roads around the Rock Lake Area.

22:20 I picked up Bob at the gas company and we proceeded to drive counter clockwise around the fire and began checking out every structure we came to for smokes, hotspots, snags or anything that might need our attention. We continued in this manner until 05:30 the next morning.

06:00 I dropped Bob back off at his heavy unit at the gas company and demobilized him back to the ICP.

07:00 Attended the morning brief at the ICP in Gordon and gave my report to the day operations staff.

Communications & Safety Issues

- I am not sure where to find these guidelines or if there are rules concerning communications for emergency responders working remote areas. However, back in the mid-to late 1980's, I recall guidelines being issued nationwide about the need for reliable communications with a dispatcher whenever we are out on assignment. In today's world, when WDNR dispatch or the

ICP shuts down for the night, we usually fall back on the local county sheriff for dispatch services.

In this case, I came from outside the area and do not have the local dispatch frequencies programmed into my radios. An easy fix if a WDNR or DOT radio technician is on staff at the ICP to perform this task. I also have experience with communications in this area as my hunting cabin (I don't own it, but I hunt here each year) on Ellison Lake has poor and unreliable cell phone coverage. Couple this with the unsolicited warning I received from Rose Hillebrand to me that cell phone coverage in the area is poor and not to rely on it for communications. With the ICP shut down for the night, I would not have radio communications with a dispatcher. This was a major safety concern for me given that I was "the person in charge of the fire" for the night.

- When Larry Glodoski denied my request for a radio to communicate with the local dispatch center, I was very uncomfortable with this. Also, the only other person "out there" with me was Bob White and he and I were going to be together in the same vehicle for most of the night. By having me request emergency support or backup through Larry by cell phone just added a human link. I have nothing against Larry, but an additional human link in any communications chain usually proves to be the weak link and a good place for communications to break down.

The situation was mitigated a short time later by Don Luebbe loaning me his

portable radio for the night.

Issues of Concern, Food for Thought, Recommendations for Improvement.

- Given the weather forecast for the night (colder temperatures, higher relative humidity and a good chance of rain overnight) I think we were staffed about right for the night. I did stop at the Decoy Bar on STH 27 just before 22:00 to distribute flyers for the town meeting scheduled for the following Saturday and to use the restroom before picking up Bob White for the night. The owner of the establishment and several patrons were surprised, but thankful that WDNR was maintaining an active presence on the fire for the night. In my opinion, this turned out to be a great PR contact.
- We monitored the weather radar through the night on Bob's cell phone and noted that radar was indicating widespread rain across the NW quarter of Wisconsin. However, no rain fell on the fire. Although it was "damp" for the evening, it was also breezy.
- Bob White and I proceeded to check out every residence on the fire through the night and we succeeded. Nothing major popped up other than finding some new burning snags in areas where safety was a concern. I relayed this information to the next day shift at the morning briefing.
- Just a thought, but when staff is out at night patrolling the fire, they need to be in units clearly marked as fire control units. We drove into several structures at the ends of

long driveways and the residents turned on their yard lights or looked out windows to see who was on their properties. In all cases, I would have been more concerned for my safety should I have been in an unmarked forester's truck. Residents need to be able to identify firefighters working at night.

MARK BRAASCH

Left Group Leader

My involvement started on the fire with the initial smoke calls. I was heading south on 53 north of the Poodle. Barry Stanek was my rider. We heard the smoke shots. When we had a break in the trees I looked to the east and could see the column. It was already a medium to large. We heard a page for the fire and it was described as Germann Rd. Dispatch had the initial cross at NW corner of Simms Lake. Simms Lake would be my fire, but Germann is Barnes'. We assumed it was a Barnes fire.

At some point I radioed dispatch and suggested the Gordon units should respond because they are closer. This must have sounded like an order, because they were dispatched. I don't think I ever declared that I was responding, but I was. During the response, we could see the fire was large and growing. We knew the general area that it was burning in and the general direction. I assumed a low structural load. I did not think there was anything in front of it that would stop the fire. The area is generally pine with no significant type changes. At one time I was going to call Barnes Ranger (Eric) and

suggest the SEAT's, but he ordered them as I picked up the mic.

I arrived on scene shortly before Eric. I was just a mile or so in front of him. The feller buncher was parked next to the road and there were two folks from the logging crew standing there. They were very concerned. They asked for some water to put the cutting head out. I told them I would not do it, but they needed to leave the equipment where it was. The ground was relatively torn up to mineral soil and I thought it would be safe. I also wanted the equipment to be preserved as much as possible. I drove up the skid way trying to get close to the origin of the fire. I could get as close to about 75 yards.

The fire was torching in the jack pine and starting to build to do crowning runs.

Eric drove up to me and we discussed a bit of tactics and resources. I knew we had the Barnes and Gordon equipment coming, but no more than that. I told him we needed more equipment. He may have already ordered more. I told him to order the CL-215's and he said he had already thought of that and would. I think he left to scout the fire. He told me I was Ops.

The two Gordon units had arrived and I was putting them on the left flank. The Barnes units were going to be put on the right flank. Eric thought he was going to put Matt in charge of right flank. I put Barry in charge of left while I was dealing with the right flank. Colin came in first and I told him to tie in and work right. I did not go face to face. Marty was shortly behind and I talked face to face with him to start working right flank. Shortly after Rod Foucs came in. He was assigned to a group. I took the left group because it was made up of mainly Gordon units. I gave up Nick Gaynor to right

flank, because they had no or few riders for patrol. At this point I had Barry Stanek and Travis Essen to patrol. I requested a heavy dozer for line building.

We began plowing left. We were on RED and the radio was getting busy. Jones requested another radio frequency. I did not put in the request yet because I wanted to hear and be in contact with initial arriving units.

I got Brule 1 with Adam Stegmann before hitting Doetch Rd. Around this time we were assigned the radio frequency BROWN. Getting the left flank on BROWN made communications better for the entire fire.

Plowing and line building was relatively easy in open ground and mixed oak pine areas. Thicker pine and larger pine were very difficult to deal with. We ran into unthinned 25 year old red pine plantation. With some help from the plane we went around some of the stand to speed line construction and reduce the safety concern.

Washburn 1 with Mark Guenther was assigned to left flank. I started him building drivable break from origin to Doetch Rd. I had left Barry back there to make sure the line held. I was concerned that there was no one behind us and I was stretching out my forces.

We got Danny Haskins with his private Case 650 dozer around 17:00. Line thought this would be a large dozer, but it was similar to a JD450. I explained this to Line and told him I needed a large dozer. He told me I would get the next large dozer. Because Danny did not have a radio, he also sent me Washburn 1's rider Bob Roddie. He is Dozer Boss trained and retired from Forest Service.

The dozers punched through the red pine at a relatively slow pace. We had to pull out a couple times when the fire built and threatened to torch the line.

Around 18:00, we were entering 2-stick red pine again. GOR 2 reported a hydraulic breakdown and pulled out of the pine to check out the issue. At 18:07 he reported that the issue was a main hydraulic line and he was out of commission. I reported this to line. I requested a heavy dozer. At the same time we got a weather report and a reminder of a wind switch. We also started getting SEAT drops.

Somewhere about this time divisions were being set up behind me. I had a discussion with Line and Washburn 1 was given to Rose as DIV A/B. I told Barry to bump up to me. I think I asked him to bring the truck up.

We then hit a pond and wetland. We went around the pond and found a skinny spot to cross the wetland. We borrowed dirt and filled the wetland to cross. After a short ridge we hit a green swamp and I requested Air Attack to help us across. He said he was not able to see us in the smoke and could not help. With some recon on foot I found an old trail that crossed the wet spot.

At about 19:00, I split the resources for the first time. The green swamp was the first time I left uncontrolled line. I built fireline into the swamp from the south and tied into the swamp from the north. The swamp did not appear to be burning across. This is the first time we did any plowing against the grain.

At about 19:43, we began plowing with the grain again. My truck was brought to us by a two rut road. We then had access to mobile

radio, my GPS, and drinking water. I had been asking for drinking water, a heavy dozer and a map. (I never got a heavy dozer. I got water at 00:30 and a map at 03:00.)

I took the truck and went back to the origin to find any supplies. I was not able to find line or any logistical support. I took a case of water from a Brule Engine and returned to my resources.

I had a hard time getting a hold of Line. At 20:50 I finally got Eric on the radio. I asked for fuel food, and a map. Around this time Eric began telling me my group and our flank was a low priority. He made this clear several times throughout the night. I assumed this meant we were not getting any more equipment.

About 21:30 we were at German Rd. We waited for the fuel truck to arrive. We continued line north of Germann into the swamp. We had no idea of the size or condition of the swamp. We went as far as we felt comfortable and pulled back to the road. We took a short break and ate and drank things I had on my 4X4. The fuel truck arrived and we filled the dozers. I escorted the fuel truck to the right flank to fuel the right group, but they had continued on. I left the fuel truck there.

I had a short face to face with Line. I had a concern over the next chunk of line. I had several creeks and swamps in the way and an unknown access into a little over a mile of country. All of this would be against the grain. I suggested that if I couldn't find any obvious roads or trails I may have to burn the left flank out to Bayfield Rd. Line said to burn it off if I had to.

I found a private driveway that led down into the fire from the north. We later discovered it was call Red Pine Trail. Some landowners had been working on holding this trail to protect their structures and had been very successful. I walked the dozers to Town Line Rd. The folks on foot walked up to Town line. We extended the fireline from red pine trail to the south. We plowed and used some water to protect a structure at the end of the trail. This was about 22:40. This was the only house we came across on our flank. This cabin was saved by our actions. This house would have burned in less than ½ hour. Two units were sent north to continue line construction. Patrol personnel met dozers on Town Line and continued north. Terry continued to the south and tied the line into the swamp. This left some length of line unsecured in the swamp.

At some time, I did hear that DIV C was being set up and ended at Germann or the swamp just north of Germann. I had suggested the swamp as a terminus.

At around midnight, units were crossing Duck Pond Rd and plowing NE toward Sutfin Rd.

At about 00:30 units were on Sutfin Rd. We took a break to wait for food, and water. I took some time and scouted ahead. Food and water were delivered to our location. There was a trail to the north off of Comminsky that was tentatively holding the fire. I gave Adam and Danny almost no break and lead them to the north off of Comminsky Rd were they cleaned up the trail and started working against the grain toward Mud Creek. Terry and Barry were sent north from Sutfin to head for Mud creek. Patrol folks were driven to the north to patrol Adam and Danny's line. I noticed some fatigue and

pain in some of the folks patrolling line. I gave these folks smaller chunks of line to watch or had them rest in the vehicle. The fatigue and cool night made people really cold when they stopped. I distributed all of the jackets and extra clothes I had in the 4X4.

At about 01:20 I went to Comminsky Rd and Hwy A and burned out the SE corner of the intersection.

At about 02:45 all units converged at Mud Creek. We brought Terry across the creek and made a minimal line connecting both sides.

There felt like there was a bottom to this swamp. It turned out that this bottom was ice. Some of the creek bottom was frozen. We walked all units and patrol personnel to the woods road and had our first significant break. Line (Eric) met us at the location. He showed me the map. I asked and he gave me this map. It had significant errors on the location of the line we had put in.

03:00-03:30 Break. Units were shut off and no one was allowed to do anything.

At about 03:45 the entire group tied into the left flank and Hwy A. Line building was relatively slow. Burnout operations were very good. Grass and trees would light up and carry into the fire as soon as we lit the ground. Line construction and burnout was non eventful. There was no change in the fuel type for a half mile.

At about 05:30 we ran into DIV G as they built line from Hwy 27 toward us. This connection happened about 300 yards south of Lost Lake Rd.

I staged our units on Lost Lake Rd and called for further instructions. It seemed like they were not sure what to do with us. I finally got the

approval to get our transports from the origin and load up. We asked for fuel but never got any. I took Danny with my truck to get his larger PU truck to shuttle personnel. We then brought everyone back to the origin. We were made aware of breakfast coming our way. After hooking up trailers we held at the origin for food. We were told that we were released from the fire. The transports were sent north to pick up their dozers. Bob was returned to Washburn 1. I assisted Jones with loading his broken dozer and getting the HU back on the road.

I went to the ICP to check out. I checked myself and my units out. I asked if they wanted any of my information or if I should be debriefed, and they said no.

Issues and Recommendations

Most important: The most important issues was the lack of resources/equipment and supplies.

Heavy dozer use needs to be discussed and made a high priority. We have always trained to use heavy dozers in the line construction in the pine. This was also a big issue during the blowdown. I requested a heavy dozer all afternoon and could not get one. Our tactics rely on having big iron on the line construction groups to bust in line.

Without it, we cannot move quickly. We need to make this a priority or stop training this as our normal tactic. I would estimate I could have gone 50-100% faster with a heavy dozer in my mix.

Drinking water and food were in short supply and never delivered to us or dropped anywhere for us to get until 00:30. We understand we should be able to carry a good supply with us,

but that is 9 hours. That is a lot of water to carry in a field pack. When we got a 4X4 we were able to scavenge some food I had on board, but it was limited. It also gave us some wheels to drive around and scavenge off of other engines. This unfortunately could be robbing it from someone else who needs it. Logistics needs to fix this.

An unfortunate sidelight of the logistical issue is that Structural Branch has no confidence in the team providing supplies. This ranges from water and food to diesel fuel. They have told me many times that next time they will get their own. I am trying to convince them that doing so is a bad idea and we have to rely on the team. We do not want double ordering. This is not an easy fight to win. This will destroy some of the team concept unless the DNR can show that there has been a real change in logistics.

There are two big issues with the fire map. One is logistical and the other is situation unit. A fire map was never sent out to units on the fire. I ran into several people on the fire that had maps. None would let me have theirs. In training, we talk about maps getting out into the field to assist those fighting the fire. I got a map from Line at 03:00. This is 12 hours into the fire. The other issue is the accuracy and content. Since I didn't get a map it is harder to talk about content. Those folks working for Wildfire Branch need an aerial photo back ground to show type changes.

The map I got just had roads. The map was also inaccurate by having line placement in the wrong place. It was not very helpful. This is somewhat expected for the first maps. I gave Line my location every time I hit a road. This information should have been relayed. I had

information saved in my GPS and it was never asked for and could not be downloaded when I offered it. We should consider using scouts or FOBS again to gain intelligence to have accurate maps. The worse issue is that this inaccurate map was used for a week. DIV sups were expected to use this map. Acreages were taken from this map and given to the media, public, and the governor. I think this is unacceptable. Situation downloaded handheld GPS data. Personnel gave situation updates. None of this information was used to update the map.

Communications

Communications was quite good within my group and to adjoining resources. I had a private dozer that did not have a radio. We had to use signals to get his attention. He always had to be with one of the dozers that had a radio. We used to have a cache of radios for these issues, this should be brought back. Private dozers also need a headset if they are given a radio.

I think the radio worked, but I had a real problem getting a hold of Line. I assume they were talking to other people or out of touch. There were several hours that I tried to call line and got no response. If I felt my radio wasn't working, I would call right group, and they always answered. Line can be a difficult position. I have always said it takes two people. These people must be trained and together they share this load.

If radio contact was an issue because of distance, trunking may solve this in the future.

Splitting the two sides of the fire into BROWN and RED I think worked really well. I worked

on BROWN and did not feel the frequency was overwhelmed at all. I also monitored RED, so I could stay in touch with Right group.

Safety

I think safety was taken care of. As a line construction group we are to build holdable line as quickly as possible. We had to go relatively slowly because of the kind of equipment we had, the amount of equipment we had and lack of folks behind us. In turn this kept us safer.

The fatigue factor may have been the greatest concern. Lack of water and food contributed to the fatigue factor. The fact that I kept pushing my folks to keep going increased fatigue. Not knowing what was going on with the rest of the fire pushed me to push my troops to do more. We built line for 15 hours. This takes a fair amount of stamina, especially for those patrolling the line. Physical fitness should be promoted and rewarded by the division.

I was concerned many times about my protocol if I had an injury. I was not getting Line most times that I called him. I needed to make sure I had a communication link with OPS. I did not do this.

Line

I don't think Line worked well as it was set up. The organizational setup that was used is not like anything we have trained before or have done before. A Line and Deputy Line was set up. This was never explained to me as a Construction Group. I didn't know if I was supposed to call for the specific person or just Line. I assumed I should just call for Line and had assumed they were together. We have ran

Line as two people in a truck on previous fires and that is how we train. It appears they were doing way more than they could handle. I could have been turned over to Wildland Branch if they did not want to support my operations.

We had Eric acting basically alone as Deputy Line (whatever this is). Since Line is actually Deputy OPS, does this mean Deputy Line is Deputy Deputy OPS? I think he performed as well as can be expected. I don't think he has had any amount of training in this position (Line) since he has started with the state. There is too much stimulus for one person. I think this is why I had such a hard time reaching him. He needed another wildland fire person with him to function properly as Line. Make sure we train the Line position more often.

I only remember talking to Line (Jay) only 3 times during the entire fire. There was very little information given to me during the fire. I was never given fire objectives or priorities. I was never given any kind of update on the fire as to location of the head or flanks or fire activity. I was never told of issues with White G or going to Blue C. I am still unsure if Jay was in contact with Eric. Was I not supposed to be talking to or looking for Jay? Was Jay assigned to divisions? I think we need more training for those people who are going to take the position of Line. Line also needs good help to make sure all of these responsibilities get done.

The Line position was not set up and given to the planned people. When these positions have been discussed at our ranger meetings and prefire meetings the plan was to put the most experienced people in this position. The plan was always to put Mark as Line or the next most experienced person. Don would be OPS if

available. The OPS position has been made more permanent with the new district teams. Eric is new to our system and Jay has not trained for this position in over 10 years if ever. We should stick to the plan and put experienced folks in these critical positions. We should make every effort to team new folks with experienced folks to get new folks experience. We need to make sure we are training new folks in these positions.

Resources

We were very short on resources. A typical Line construction group should have 3-4 tractor plows and 1 heavy dozer. I had 4 tractor plows to start and ended with 3. I don't think we were up to "par". I was very conservative around swamps and other tough situations, because I knew I couldn't afford to lose a unit. It seemed like it took a long time to fill divisions behind me. I didn't know if this was lack of resources or the low priority of left.

Good/Great Things

A large fire with no injuries is incredible.

Line production was slow, but all line held after it was constructed and patrolled. This was a key component to not losing the entire right side with a wind switch.

Experience on the line. Most of the line construction and I assume division work was done without assistance from Line. There is still a number of rangers and foresters that have worked our larger fires of the last 15 years. We have done this before and fell into these roles easily. Those folks with little experience before the fire have become much more experienced in

a day and night of firefighting. Hopefully this will carry us a long way into the future. In the absence of fire we need to have training. Do not let up on training.

The public has been incredibly supportive of our efforts. From the description of the fires in the 1970s this is a huge change. I don't know why there is such a change of attitude or mindset, but there is. Lately, our local public has not been happy as we have stepped back from fire a bit. This showed them we are still around. We need to continue to be visible.

There are many things that went well and the negatives should not detract from the great effort and the things that were done very well.

Recommendations

The District Team needs a lot more real training and simulations. People need to be serious about keeping their sections up to date. Sections need to know Wisconsin fire and figure out how to handle the speed and demands that are a function of our fires.

We need to continue and increase our training for our firefighters. We have not done large fire training for a while. In the past this was done at a much greater frequency.

We need to be reminded of the fire potential in our fire prone areas. This was not a particularly bad day and it wasn't even close to a dry period. We need to reexamine using just the Canadian system alone for staffing and fire risk assessments in the spring.

Standard Orders

#2 I knew what my section of the fire was doing. We stayed direct at all times. We did not know what the rest of the fire was doing.

#7 I did not maintain prompt communication with my supervisor. I attempted it many times, but it was normally not prompt. I communicated with adjoining forces very little.

Watch Out Situations

#2 Fire not seen in daylight. We mitigated with slow movements. I patrolled ahead to get as much information as possible.

#8 We believed we had a safe anchor point. We left a couple of pieces of uncontrolled line in the swamp areas. We saw the fire behavior in these areas and believed this tactic to be safe.

#9 We built fireline against the grain several times. Line was scouted previous to doing these operations. Fire behavior allowed these tactics.

#18 We did take naps next to the fireline. We were not relieved our assignment. I did not believe my forces were incapable of continuing. When we stopped for a rest there were some members awake and aware. We took a break in a spot I believed to be safe.

CHRIS KLAHN

Division Supervisor

May 14th - I had prepositioned in the Cumberland Area based on fire weather and was in Grantsburg. Lots of initial attack activity in the area, Spooner, Grantsburg, Siren and cooperative areas all had afternoon fires. At some point in the afternoon, I overheard radio traffic about a fire near Gordon being 50 acres. Later, I heard the Gordon fire size as being 200 acres. I contacted Madison about a potential problem fire in Gordon. Area Forestry Leader (AFL) Greg Mitchell called me to inform me that Grantsburg Team Leader Bob Hartshorn was being requested for a role in the Operations Section and responding to the Gordon fire as part the activation of the NW District Incident Management Team (IMT). Greg informed me that he was holding me back to meet operational needs should a large fire occur in the Cumberland Area. I concurred. He also informed me that I would be released as the Area's fires were controlled and suppression resources returned to stations.

At 20:00 hours, AFL Greg Mitchell called me and stated that I was filling one ranger position of an order for 6 additional rangers for the Germann Road Fire. I was to report to the Incident Command Post (ICP) at the Barnes Ranger Station. He also noted that an additional 18 heavy units were ordered, the fire was 1000 acres and the wind was shifting causing issues on the right flank of the fire.

While en route, I overheard traffic that the ICP was being moved to the Gordon Fire Station and that the fire was 3500 acres in size.

At 21:00 hours, I arrived at the ICP at the

Gordon Fire Station and checked in. Only about 25% of the IMT was present. Check In, Operations Section Chief (OPS) Don Luebbe, Structural Branch and some Plans folks were present. I glanced at the resource cards on the board to get a sense of staffing and glanced at a map to get oriented. Within 10 minutes, I was assigned H Division Supervisor (DIVS) by OPS Don Luebbe, given a short briefing and 2 maps. OPS also informed me that Wildfire Branch Director (WFBD) Bob Hartshorn was still at the Barnes Ranger Station and I should check in with him upon arrival.

I proceeded toward the fire and Barnes on CTY HWY Y. I stopped and was met by Incident Commander Larry Glodoski on Y. He confirmed my assignment as H DIVS and gave me an additional objective, "don't let the Barnes Ranger Station burn down". I concurred.

I arrived at the Barnes Ranger Station and met with WFBD Hartshorn in his truck. I looked at a couple of better maps to orient myself and gather the extent of the fire. Bob gave me a short briefing and informed me that one Heavy Unit was ordered for me. I left to scout H Division. My initial impression was the fire had fragmented among the many lakes and structures. The wind was NW pushing lines of surface fire with flame lengths of 3-5 feet with occasional torching but no organized crown fire anywhere. Structures were burning in many locations but Fire Department (FD) resources were everywhere and all engaged in structural protection.

I did find several structures along Ellison Lake Road with fire threatening them. I suppressed fire impinging on a garage and home just south

of the Ellison Lake boat landing and three homes on the west side of the road. A task force of FD resources met me (Town of Hayward Engine, etc.) and I briefed them on what I had done and the follow up efforts that were needed to secure those structures. I continued to scout H Division among the lakes and road system. I was fortunate to have a Statewide Map Book that I could read (the font is large) and a vehicle GPS that showed tracks so I could be confident I had completely scouted the various pieces of fire on H Division to base my plan of attack.

At 22:00, a "J" Division was established with a DIVS Mike O'Mara and 2 tractor plows (Rhineland #1 and Tomahawk #1) to build fireline east of State Hwy 27 to Sand Lake. A "G" Division was established with a DIVS Bee Mouw and 2 tractor plows (Spoooner 1?, Spoooner 2?) and a private heavy dozer, to build fireline from State Hwy 27 west on the left flank of the fire. I had a short discussion with G DIVS about plowing that division. The concern was plowing against the grain on a flank but in reality it was backing fire due to wind switch and I expressed my confidence that it was a safe operation with the current winds and nightfall conditions.

WFBD Hartshorn contacted me by radio that 2 US Forest Service engines were available to my division. I requested to meet them at the Barnes Ranger Station. Strike Team Leader (STEN) Jennifer Rabuck and Engines 571 and 262 were briefed and assigned to scout the fire edge from the NE side of Ellison Lake and Circle Road. The fire was in the woods west of Lake George Road and I had not walked the area. The engines were also assigned to protect structures as necessary along that fire

edge.

At 22:45, Heavy Unit, Tomahawk #2 was assigned to me by WFBD Hartshorn. Keith Ploeckelman was the operator and Jeff Larson was the Rider. I met them at the roadblock on CTH Y and State Hwy 27 and led them to the fire edge east of State Hwy 27. I gave them a briefing and the tractor plow anchored into the Highway 27 shoulder and began plowing east directly on the fire edge with a single furrow. Wildfire suppression had begun on H Division. STEN Rabuck reported to me the structures were secure on Ellison Lake but the fire was burning in the woods and she requested a tractor plow. I informed her that Tomahawk #2 was plowing and would proceed to her location after anchoring into Ellison Lake Road. I asked STEN Rabuck to suppress the fire as necessary and to flag a line so the fireline could begin as soon as Tomahawk #2 arrived at her location.

J Division completed fireline to Sand Lake. I met with LINE Gallagher to assist in starting line construction on I Division west of State HWY 27 with J Division resources. I showed LINE Gallagher the edge of the fire as I had observed it off of State HWY 27. I also informed LINE Gallagher that there was fire further south of the I Division north of Catherine Lake and those FD resources were protecting structures along the Lake. I also briefed him on the status of H Division.

May 15th – Tomahawk #2 completed the single furrow fireline to Ellison Lake Road and I transported Jeff Larson to the Type 4 engine to move it to Ellison Lake Road. Tomahawk #2 was loaded and led to Lake George Road to

begin fireline construction on the fire from the NE side of Ellison Lake to Circle Drive. STEN Rabuck met and led Tomahawk #2 to the flagged line. The single furrow fireline was anchored into a yard of a house on Ellison Lake and construction continued north and west to Circle Drive. STEN Rabuck expressed concern that the USFS engines were needed to staff initial attack on the Forest for the dayshift. The single furrow fireline was completed to Circle Drive by Tomahawk #2 and I released STEN Rabuck and the 2 Type 6 Engines at 04:00.

Fireline was continued south of Circle Drive by Tomahawk #2. I scouted some active fire between Hopkins Lake and Murray Lake on a long peninsula with a driveway to several structures. FD resources had laid hose from engines to suppress the fire from lake to lake. I noticed additional active fire on the south side of Hopkins Lake. I scouted and flagged line from Circle Road to Hopkins Lake on an active fire edge.

Tomahawk #2 completed fireline to Loon Lake Road at 04:30 and walked the tractor down to my flagged line, anchored into Circle Road and began direct attack on the edge of the flanking fire with 1-2 foot flame lengths. Tomahawk #2 anchored the fireline into Hopkins Lake and was instructed to double up the furrow back to Circle Road.

Tomahawk #2 completed the fireline and walked the tractor up the peninsula to the fire edge. A single furrow fireline was completed from Hopkins Lake to Murray Lake. Again the Type 4 Engine and trailer was recovered and moved to the driveway between the lakes. I ran to the FD staging Area by the Polar LP

Tank and got a breakfast of hamburgers and fries for Tomahawk #2. The time was approximately 06:30. Fireline construction was completed on H Division.

I was notified by WFBD Hartshorn that the Active Group Supervisor with the Structural Branch had dozer work for Tomahawk #2. I contacted Active Group Supervisor on Fire Ground Blue. He had several missions: secure Sand Lake Road to Sand Lake; knock burning snags down near Ellison Lake, unburned island near Ellison Lake and follow up a dead end furrow near Sand Lake. I left Tomahawk #2 to investigate the missions. The snags were not an immediate issue, the unburned island was secured by driveways and inside the constructed firelines, and I could not find the mentioned furrows. I led Tomahawk #2 to Sand Lake and a bladeline from the beach to Sand Lake Road was completed following a driveway that had held the fire. The time was approximately 07:30.

I was told dayshift resources would relieve us between 08:00 and 09:00. Bowler #1 arrived at 08:30 and I briefed them. Bowler #1 was assigned to improve as necessary the fireline between Circle Road and Hopkins Lake. I met with Day LINE Jay Riewestahl and informed him of the status of H Division; all lines in and holding. He informed me that the Division is renamed J Division and to await my replacement for a briefing.

Line Riewestahl locates a structure north of CTY HWY A that needs protection with a plow furrow. I led Tomahawk #2 to the driveway to unload and completed this mission. I scouted and flagged a line from the driveway to an unnamed lake back out to CTY

HWY A. There was active fire with torching along CTY HWY A. The fireline is complete and Tomahawk #2 is released at 12:30. J DIVS Terry Trapp arrives and I am released at 13:00 and check out of the ICP at 13:30.

SCOTT FISHER

Division Supervisor

Position & assignment on the fire: Echo Division Sup., 2 days

Estimated time of arrival: 05/15 08:30

Area of responsibility: Echo Division Sup., 2 days

Communication, Safety Issues

Splitting the fire to RED and BROWN worked well. White Golf worked well to communicate to ICP and occasionally to Line when we was too far out for BROWN.

Safety was increased by having experienced people in key positions. Jay Riewestahl did a very good job as Line. And adding a Deputy Line also helped. I did not see or experience any safety issues.

What was planned?

Initial assignment was assess the condition of the line, improve line to drivable break and hold line. Montello 1 assigned to work on the line south of CTH A, Heavy Dozer worked north of CTH A.

What actually occurred?

Went just as planned. Did use Blackhawks for a few bucket drops. Later, 2 firefighters were assigned to me and used to assist with mop up. We improved and held the line and started with mop op.

What went well?

- Great equipment operators on my division: John Vote and Jim Ratitichan.
- Bringing along an experienced LTE rider was very helpful to help me orient to the fire, program radios and make better use of my 4x4.
- Line and Deputy Line did a good job.
- Good coordination with adjacent Division Sups. Slatter and Trapp.
- Our folks from all over the state can come together and work pretty seamlessly together. A tribute to uniform training.
- Good coordination with air craft both scouting and drops.
- Having the fuel truck mobile and fueled Montello 1 near the line (if he would have had to load it would have taken much longer).
- Having warm food for lunch. I had not eaten in 10 hours and it was great to get a hot dog rather than a sandwich.
- Helpful and friendly folks at ICP.
- Plans could take data off my GPS to improve the map for the next day.
- Eating at ICP plus having snack food available to take to the line.

- Second day had good morning briefing at ICP

What Can be Improved?

- The transition from the initial attack to the second day seems to be a difficult period. Took a while to get the important information, like who was on my Division. It would have been helpful if IC could have provided a briefing prior to sending folks out to the line. For example, telling folks that Zone 12 on the BK radios had the needed channels would have been helpful. I did get a good map and clear assignment, but it took several hours for me to verify the resources on my division. I wasn't aware that Andy Shaney (previous Div. Sup.) was still on the line, his briefing was helpful.
- Consider requesting that ordered units utilize or bring along LTE fire fighters/riders/trainees. Lots of Type 4 engines parked and not used, even the 4 wheel drive units. These could have been useful in mop up and other assignments. When we started using the tractor plows for mop up, they would have been more effective with an LTE working with the hose or hand tool. There was a shortage of bodies to help mop up. Bowler Ranger and Bowler 1 each brought an LTE that was trained during the 10 week rider program, they were certified engine operators for both type 4 & 7. Consider bringing back a slimmer version of the 10 week program. Consider making more of an effort to bring 2 people in the units coming to the fire.

- Having experience people on the fire was very important, but this is also a great opportunity to team up a less experienced person. We could have had some of our newer people either shadow, act as a trainee, or put them in the driver seat with the experienced person over seeing them. We could have done better at this.
- Fill orders more promptly. It was after 20:30 before I got the request.
- Could use a better plan for back filling. Consider pre-planning for getting units to the fire and back filling. I was surprised to hear that units coming off the fire after being in work status for 24 hours were being asked to be fire ready for initial attack in 4 hours. For example the MAVAS system uses box calls to pre-plan on where resources will come from for both the incident and to back fill for the local resources.

Lots more went well than needs improvement! Overall my experience on the fire was very positive. It was amazing no one got hurt and some of the structures that were able to be saved.

MIKE WALLIS
Division Supervisor

I arrived at the ICP in Barnes at approximately 18:45. At approximately 19:25 I was assigned as a Division Supervisor for Division F and was told the south break of the division would be where the fire crossed Connors Meadow

Road and the north division break would be Sand Road. At roughly 19:45 I arrived on the fire scene on Connors Meadow Road and made contact with the Brule Ranger (Div. D) on the road. She had resources working in Division D.

I also encountered a USFS engine that was patrolling Connor Meadows Road watching for spot fires on the east side of the road.

It was at this time that the wind had shifted to the northwest and was pushing a great deal of smoke across Connors Meadow Road. I attempted to contact Deputy Line but was not able to make contact. While patrolling the road I saw the USFS engine successfully extinguish a spot fire on the east side of Connors Meadow Road on the edge of a red pine plantation. I knew the Right Group was working northeast of our location in Division F, so I contacted them on the radio. I informed them that we were getting strong winds from the west and that we just put out a spot fire on the east side of the road. They acknowledged and asked that we keep an eye on that area and to let them know if the fire crosses Connors Meadow Road south of their fire break. I then asked if they were working with any aircraft. They responded that they were not. I explained that the winds had shifted and were blowing pretty hard across the road and suggested that it might not be a bad idea to get an aircraft over them. At that time I received a transmission (from Line?) stating that the aircraft was busy on other parts of the fire or were timing out.

The fire break on Division F was not yet drivable, so I continued to patrol the road until which time I began scouting the Division F fire break on foot. The break was holding and I

continued up the break toward Sand Road until I caught up to the torchmen that were working with the right group near Sand Road.

I was assigned the Washburn I and Barnes I tractor plows. They continued to hold and improve the line and make the break drivable.

Soon after they began, Washburn I was bumped up to Division I, north of Sand Road. Barnes I completed work on Division F at approximately 01:00 and we were able to get food and fuel on Sand Road.

I was given the assignment to patrol and mop-up Division F and was assigned the Type 4 engine along with the Minong heavy dozer rider. We spent the next two and a half hours mopping up within 25 feet of the line on division F.

It seemed that all holding resources were bumping up the line along with the construction group. I contacted Deputy Line when division F was secure to see if there was another assignment for me. He didn't have one, and asked us to continue to patrol division F from Connors Meadow Road to Sand Road (approx. 0.7 miles). I patrolled Division F the remainder of my time on the fire.

RODNEY FOUKS

Division Supervisor

I was meeting with Gallagher at the Brule Ranger Station when the first smoke reports were called in by the fire towers at 14:45. Gallagher told me to get started towards the fire. As I was responding to the fire I notified Brule

Dispatch and talked to Gallagher twice on my cell phone. I also talked to Luebbe to ensure that the satellite SEAT base in Solon Springs was up and running. I arrived at the fire at 15:20 and checked in with IAIC Martin. He assigned me as the Right Group Supervisor and briefed me on my assignment. I was assigned Bar 1 and Bar 2 tractor plows. We were using RED for radio communication. One Gordon RS rider was arriving on scene with his personal vehicle and was assigned to the Right Group for burnout and patrol. I talked to Left Group Supervisor-Braasch to see if he had any other riders that he could reassign to me. He was able to assign one of his riders to work with the Right Group. Bar 1 & 2 TPs were already working the right flank of the fire and I had just talked to them when Bru 1 TP arrived and was assigned to the Right Group. I briefed the resources and we continued line construction efforts.

The fire was difficult to control and we had to contain a slop-over before we could proceed towards Doetch Lane. We crossed Doetch Lane at 15:50. Blaylock radioed me that Dozer 1 (JD 750) and he were assigned to the Right Group and were constructing driveable line behind us. They walked up the line and tied in with the Right Group at 16:10. Shortly after they arrived we had a blow up in mature jack pine on the line and had to back out for a short period of time. We were able to pick up the slop-over and continue. We alternated the order of the equipment based on the timber type that we were in and how line construction was going. The operators were making these decisions as we went. In most cases we were bladed a fireline rather than furrowing. The two riders and I were burning out and patrolling as we built fireline.

At 17:10 we arrived at a small pond and wetland area and had to use indirect fireline for a while to get around the pond/wetland. We bladed a woods trail and were able to tie back into the fire on the north edge of the pond. I had Blaylock burn out from the blade line while Bru 1 assisted him. Bar 1, Bar 2 and Dozer 1 and I proceeded up the fire for a short distance until we ran into another wetland. We determined that we were about a ¼ mile away from Connors Meadow Road by consulting a GPS unit. There was a creek that angled NE to Connors Meadow Road. The fire was north-west of our location and we decided that we would need to use indirect methods because of the creek. Radio communications were difficult with Deputy Line Martin and Air Attack. I called Line Gallagher and told him of our plan. I also told him that we were not going to burn out any indirect line until I had reached the road. He agreed to meet me at Connors Meadow Road. I told him that we might need resources to burn out and hold the indirect line that we were constructing. As I was scouting our path I noticed that the fire had crossed our line behind us and we went back down the line. We anchored our fireline again and started line construction again to the north. Brule Ranger called me and notified me that she was assigned as Delta Division Supervisor and would be following up behind me. I was informed of the forecasted wind switch by Gallagher and relayed the information to the members of the right group.

The Right Group arrived at Connors Meadow Road at approximately 18:14. The fire had already crossed the road about ¼ mile north of us. I talked to Line-Gallagher in person and we decided to burn out the road. He ordered

additional holding resources while I further scouted out the situation. We burned off the west side of Connors Meadow Road with the assistance of holding resources from the Forest Service. We had several small spot fires that were rapidly suppressed. I was in radio communication with Delta Division and talked to her about the plan to burn out the indirect line that was west of the Connors Meadow Road. At this point a Fireboss SEAT was working the fire to the east of the Connors Meadow Road.

At 19:00 I felt that the burnout along Connors Meadow Road had progressed enough for the Right Group to continue to the east. We anchored into the road and started line construction to the north-east. I assigned Blaylock and Bar 1 TP to stay on Connors Meadow Road and work with Delta to complete all of the burnout of the direct line and to make sure we didn't have any breakouts behind us. Line construction went well until we hit a slash area just south of Sand Road. A SEAT drop was completed just west of us near a structure on Sand Road.

At 20:00 we were in the slash area and the wind began to switch to the west and then to the north-west. We encountered heavy smoke and heat on the line. We lost the control line several times in this area due to the high heat and wind. At one point Dozer 1 and Bru 1 were able to blade a line out to Sand Road while Bar 2 took care of several snags that were burning right next to the line. The fire crossed the line behind Dozer 1 and Bru 1 and they were unable to rejoin Bar 2 for a while until the fire intensity decreased and they were able to walk through the black. Bar 2 continued to work the flank of the fire by himself until he was joined by the other equipment. This is the location on the map

where the fire runs parallel to Sand Road for about a ¼ mile. At 21:10 we were finally able to get out to Sand Road and meet up with Deputy Line Martin. The progress in the logging slash was extremely slow as we experienced very active fire behavior due to the wind switch.

At 21:30, after reloading our drinking supply and talking to Deputy Line Martin, we moved to the north of Sand Road. The fire behavior was less due to a fuel type change. We were now in a young aspen stand that transitioned into a more low ground aspen and black ash area. Line construction proceeded slowly due to darkness, wet soils and blown down mature aspen trees. I was in front scouting for line location for a good portion of this section of the fireline. We eventually followed a drivable trail to a pond area surrounded by wetlands. I could see fire to the north of us so we tried to circle around the wet area but could not find a way around the area. At this point we were also getting fairly low on fuel. I contacted Deputy Line Martin and informed him that we were walking the dozers out to Sand Road and needed to regroup and get fuel for the dozers. At around 23:30 we met up with Deputy Line Martin on Sand Road and were able to get fuel for the dozers and food for us.

At around 00:30 we proceeded with line construction work north of Beauregard Lake Road after walking the dozers for close to a mile on town roads. This area was aspen with minimal fire activity. The production rate was slow due to wet ground and numerous 8-10 inch diameter aspen stems. I was in front of the dozers and scouting for the line location for most of this part of the fireline. In some areas the fire edge was hard to find and follow.

At around 04:00 we reached the south end of Rocky Lake Road. We met up with Deputy Line-Martin and discussed and scouted out the prospects of proceeding to the east of Rocky Lake Road. The fire had burned up and slightly into a large wetland that we decided would be best dealt with during the daytime operations.

At around 06:30 I was transported back to my truck and released and demobed through the Gordon ICP.

Communication, Safety Issues

The biggest issue I faced was the difficult communications with Line and Air Attack. For the first 2-3 hours I tried numerous times to contact Line on RED and wasn't able to. I also tried to contact Air Attack on Air-Ground numerous times and either wasn't able to or they told me that it was too smoky for them to see what was happening. They said they would try to get a better look but I wouldn't hear back from them. It is possible that I was on communicating on RED when they attempted to reach me. I had excellent communication with all members on the right flank. This allowed me to mitigate not being able to talk to Line and Air Attack. I felt comfortable that the line was holding behind me and that we could safely continue line construction work. I had good radio communication with Line or Deputy Line after the initial first 3 hours. Not long after we started line construction the Left Group switched to BROWN and we stayed on RED. I think this was an excellent idea due to the amount of radio traffic within the line construction groups. It was important that I was able to immediately get ahold of the dozers if there was a blow up along the line or a slop-

over. This happened several times where I needed to have the dozers back up immediately.

What Went Well

- I received a good briefing by the IC when I arrived at the scene.
- Communications with the divisions behind us and within the construction group was excellent.
- Assigning the divisions and line construction group from one side of the fire to a common frequency worked well.
- The team work within the Right Group was excellent. The dozers would change who was leading based on the fuel type and did so with little disruption or discussion. A couple of times we were near other engines and the forestry technicians were quick to reload their drinking water supply and kept supplying it to those on foot.
- The forestry technicians showed excellent operational skills and had a great mindset in getting their job done. I was thoroughly impressed by their work.
- The assignment of resources to help burn out and hold Connors Meadow Road was quick and timely.
- I was notified of the wind switch directly by Line.
- Colin had his GPS unit mounted in his Bar 2 TP which helped, especially since my GPS was in my truck.
- Several of the people had smartphones that were useful in looking at aerial photos.

What Can be Improved?

- Initial radio communication with Line and Air Attack. We had little to no intelligence of what the fire was doing for the first 3 hours.
- The JD 750 didn't seem to be large enough to do some of the work that was needed. It didn't seem to have the same capabilities as the D6 dozers that I have been around.
- The process of getting people back to their trucks at the end of their assignments was slow and needs to be improved. We lost a lot of time would have been better used for people to rest before their initial attack assignment the next day.
- I did not have my GPS unit with me and often wished I did. Having my GPS unit with me and not in my truck and also having the appropriate data levels would have been very helpful.

NICHOL MARTIN

Division Supervisor

Initially I was sent to Barnes Station to backfill as initial attack around 15:30. I got word that we were to respond to the Germann Road Fire around 16:20, and we left the Barnes Station just as Larry Glodowski arrived at Barnes. We spoke briefly in the parking lot and he reminded us to drink and carry plenty of water with us. I arrived on scene near the origin sometime around 16:40 and found Eric Martin (IAIC/Line/Deputy Line) who gave me my assignment and briefing.

Position & Assignment on the Fire

Nichol Martin- Brule Forester Ranger

Division Delta (Germann Rd to Conners Meadow) & Division Kilo (Beauregard to Hwy 27)

We did not have a map of the fire, but the general fire area was described and I sketched it into my Douglas County Emergency Response Book and turned on my GPS (Garmin Map 76) which had the road layers and topo map for background layers to help me navigate.

Area of Responsibility

Both Divisions I was on followed behind the Right Line Construction Group.

Communication & Safety Issues

For the duration of the fire I was assigned to the right flank, which when I arrived on scene the fire was split with radio frequencies; left flank with BROWN and the right flank was on RED. I like the idea of this split because then the line construction groups and the divisions are in good communication each other. The radio was very busy during portions of the fire, but I was able to communicate with Line/Deputy Line and the right group supervisor when I needed to exchange important information. Once the fire got long enough sometimes RED was hard to get through on a portable radio, it was necessary to get to a mobile radio for enough power to be able to talk.

Communication with the air attack was harder, and only once I was asked to go directly with

them on gathering information on where the fire was on a critical piece of indirect line burnout in Division Delta. I was told it was difficult for them to see much as they were high up in elevation, he was going to try and gather some information but I did not ever hear back from them; I may have missed them calling back on Air-Gound during a transmission on RED. Understanding that Air Attack had a lot of things to coordinate and being unclear on if we had 1 or 2 WDNR aircraft overhead, I feel a fire of this circumstance definitely needs to have 2 planes; one to coordinate and another to gather intel for both ICP and the line.

Tactics & Actions Taken

On Division Delta my resources were my Type 6 4x4 with Eric Serrine - Brule Forester as my rider for the day, and Winter 1 operated by Bob White and his LTE rider Darren. The trailer for the Winter Heavy Unit was dropped near the origin and the Type 4 Engine brought up to where the fire break crossed Doetch Ln. The fire break the right group had constructed was holding, and WIN 1 was assigned to improve line so we could bring the 4x4 up behind to patrol for any slop-overs. I contacted Rod Fouks- Right Group Sup on RED and told him I was assigned to D behind him. Eric Serrine and I drove up to Conners Meadow Rd to recon the line; once arriving at the fire edge and finding no fire break we realized and confirmed with the Right Group that they had not gotten there yet. We went back to Doetch Ln. and picked up Darren and we all rode in the 4x4 up the line that Winter 1 had already improved. Once we reached Winter 1 in the 4x4, I turned the 4x4 over to Eric with Darren

and informed them to keep progressing up the line and knocking down any hot spots close to the line. I proceeded ahead of Winter 1 on foot with my line gear and a Pulaski to patrol the line for any spot fires. I flagged several snags that were burning near the line for Winter 1 to drop, pushed or chopped down several smaller snags, and buried some hot stumps on the fire break edge to hold the line with the predicted wind shift later in the day. I arrived at the place where the Right Group had gone indirect, notified Fouks that I was there and stood by at that location preparing to burn-out. I waited here while I listened to radio traffic of the burnout along Conners Meadow Road, and from my GPS could tell that we had about X mile of line to secure with a burn-out. Fouks moved on with the Right Group, leaving Blaylock, Barnes 1, and the USFS engines to stay and assist in the burnout. I also bumped Winter 1 up the line to assist. Blaylock, Winter 1 and several USFS employees with drip torches burned their way north, and Barnes 1, several USFS employees, Mark Radzak and I burned to the south and we met generally in the middle with our burnout. We had 1 larger spot fire less than 1 acre (from a burning snag too close to the line) and a few other small spots which were easily contained. We were burning out the line when the wind shifted to the West, and fire behavior really increased in the main fire and with our burnout during this time; where we had tried just an hour prior to get fire to carry and couldn't now was carrying very well and torching trees. After the burnout was complete and secured I released the USFS engines, Blaylock, Barnes 1, and the Ladysmith 1 Engine to be re-assigned. Winter 1 and my 4x4

continued to patrol the burnout area of the division until after dark. We drove the roads back to the Winter Engine and Darren worked on putting the heavy unit back together to pick up the Winter 1 tractor plow. I notified Line/Deputy Line E. Martin that the line was looking secured and that we could be reassigned. We were told to report to Conners Meadow and Sand Road for food/water break and re-assignment.

I was re-assigned to Division Kilo and given a map of the fire, but intel on the specifics of where fire had burned in the Kilo division was incomplete. After a break and the tractor-plows getting re-fueled we went up to Beauregard Lake Rd (east-west stretch) and again started to follow behind the Right Group. My resources on this division were my Type 6 4x4 with Eric Serrine, Barnes 1 (Kasinkas) tractor-plow, Hayward 1 (Lempke) tractor-plow w/ rider, and Hayward Ranger (Sokolowski) w/rider. We arrived at this division after 01:00. We used Beauregard Lake Road as the fire break as we could see the fire paralleling the road a way in and the soils were wet, causing issues with line construction. Right Group bumped up the road to a gate and improved the road from Beauregard Lake Rd north back to where they reached the fire. My division burned out Beauregard Lake Rd (or tried to) to the east, to this gate; then followed the line in a short distance to where we could not drive engines anymore. Everyone got out on foot, we brought all the drip torch fuel we had and with the 2 tractor-plows we burned-out the line behind the right group. The burnout did not carry well, basically only burning where the torch fuel was being applied in a beautiful

figure 8 pattern. We got maybe 30 feet of black along Beauregard Lake Road, and only about 10 feet of black along the line in the woods. From the gate the line snaked through the hardwoods in generally a north direction, about Y, way along the line burning out was totally ineffective and did not carry at all (05:00). At 06:35 we finally made it out to Rocky Lake Road where we met with the Right Group and waited to be brought back to our vehicles, brief incoming relief crews, and be released from the fire.

What Was Planned?

Hold line, burn-out as needed, put the fire out.

What Actually Occurred?

We successfully held the line, burned out where we were able, and eventually the fire was put out.

What Went Well?

Coordinating our actions with the Right Line Construction Group went well, and having my GPS with road and topo map layers was critical.

What Can be Improved?

The way we burned out the line on "D" was not ideal. The way we met in the middle put crews a longer distance from any large amount of cold black to be a safety zone if things had gone bad when we met. But given the circumstances and the timing of everything it was important to get this X mile secured in a speedy manner. I do recall telling a few

people on foot that if things did go bad, which direction was the closest good black to where they were patrolling.

There was confusion on whether everyone was to report back to ICP to demob or not. It took a long time from when we reached the Rocky Lake Road, to find the incoming relief crews, and found all the pieces of the heavy units to get the tractor-plows loaded and put back together before we could leave the fire; 06:35 out at the road – 10:30 en route back to Brule Station. This process should be looked at to speed up this transition.

MATT SLATER

Division Supervisor

5/15/13

04:45 Called at residence and told to report to Germann Rd. ICP ASAP.

08:45 Checked in at ICP - Received assignment-G Div. Headed out to the line, made radio contact w/ G-Night (Mouw). Met w/ G-Night and E-Night (Shaney), discussed line, fire behavior, maps, etc.

I Met w/ Hayward 2 (Sobralski) and rider. Also informed now that Dozer 2 (Dorskocil) was also assigned to the division as was already working on the line. Slatted Hay 2 east of Moore Rd to improve line & driveable break.

Met w/ Doz 2. Assigned to improve line & driveable break both sides of Moore Rd. Doz 2 informed me that Doz 1 was also already on the line and working in Div. E.

Met w/ Div E (Fischer). Agreed to push div

break back to CTH A, and overlap our work areas. Informed Div E that Doz 1 (Rakitnichan) was on his division and working towards CTH A.

Word on radio of accident at 27 & N, being at 27 at the east end of the line, I head down to the accident scene to see if any additional assistance is needed. None was.

Topped off with fuel in town.

Hay 2 & Doz 2 assignment complete, good drivable break throughout the line. Told to stand by at the road, lunch to be delivered soon.

Picked up lunches on CTH A near Commisky.

Delivered lunches to Hay 2 & Doz 2, discussed afternoon plan. Determined that Doz 2 was no longer needed on Div G.

Offered Doz 2 to Div J, not needed.

Offered Doz 2 to Ops for reassignment. (Div E offered up Doz 1 at the same time)

Doz 2, having transport readily available, transported Doz 1 to right flank, then returned and transported Doz 2 to the right (D/F break).

Hay 2 to begin mopup 50-100' in, between Moore Rd. & Hwy 27. Div G begins mopup 50-100' in as well.

Div G to Rock Lake for water refill.

Hay 2 assignment complete, begin mopup 50-100' in west of Moore Rd. Div G begin mopup 50-100' in northeast off of A.

Div G to Rock Lake for water refill.

Hay 2 return to ICP.

Met Div G-Night (O'Mara) at staging area for briefing. Div G returned to ICP for demob.

21:50 Night lodging in Rice Lake.

5/16/13

07:00 Returned to WAU.

At approximately 08:30 relief resources began arriving on the fire. Before leaving the fire I briefed the incoming resources on the condition of the area where I had been working. I also briefed the new Line (Riewestahl) and then travelled to the ICP in Gordon to check out.

ROSE HILLEBRANDE

Division Supervisor

Alpha-Bravo

I arrived at the fire around 17:00 and was assigned Bravo division by Deputy Line (Eric Martin). The right side of the fire was operating on RED and the left side on BROWN. I was to contact Deputy Line on BROWN. Two riders were assigned to the Division, Shane Dalbec (Brule) and Dave Brygger (Barnes). We were to hold and secure line. Barry Stanek was on Alpha with Washburn 1 and once secured he was to be released. We patrolled Bravo on foot with hand tools putting out anything near the line. I met up with Stanek near the origin, he had Washburn 1 putting in drivable break on Alpha and stayed on Alpha until this was complete. As Alpha and Bravo were both short, I then took over Alpha and had Washburn 1 build driveable break on Bravo. Brygger then got Barnes I Type 4 engine and used it to mop-up and patrol Alpha. Alpha was mainly through small red pine and there were very few hotspots

(assume snow had only recently melted). Bravo was a mixture of young plantation and more open recently cut areas and some larger pine. The open areas had more hot spots but with the moisture in the ground many could be put out with a rake. Once Washburn 1 had driveable break in on Bravo (for type 7), I released him. This was around dusk. Dalbec then used Washburn Type 7 to patrol and mop-up on Bravo.

I heard on the radio that Charlie and then Delta had secured their Divisions and were looking for re-assignment. This was a new idea to me - leaving divisions unattended but I contacted line and let him know that Alpha/Bravo was secure. I released Dalbec to check out at ICP and Brygger on Barnes 1 type 4 and I met up with line and everyone else on Sand Rd for food and reassignment.

Ida (Radio on RED)

After equipment was fueled and we got food, I was reassigned to Ida division. Washburn 1 and Winter 1 (with rider) and Matt Blaylock were assigned to the Division. Right Group had worked north from Sand Rd on Ida and hit a series of wet grassy areas. They had not been able to get around them before coming back to Sand Rd to refuel. We were to start on the gravel pit off Conner's Meadow road on the north end of Ida, and head south and try to tie into the wetland/line that right group had put in. Washburn 1 and Winter 1 started putting in line off the pit with Winter 1's rider (Darin) burning out. We hit wetland shortly after leaving the pit. Looking across the wetland we could see snags burning and some fire but it did not appear to be a moving front. Blaylock

has his smart phone and was able to pull up an aerial photo. The wetland area was quite extensive. The fire appeared to hit the grass on the wetland edge and go out on its own but we could not be certain if the right group had tied into this wetland and if it was holding. I ended up walking the edge of the wetland. It went west to Conner's Meadow Rd and then started heading SE. Trout Lake 1 heavy unit and Balcsik Farms private dozer also arrived on the division. As it appeared that the wetland was holding but it was unclear with right group had tied into it, Winter 1 and Trout Lake 1 were released for reassignment (had transport) and Washburn and Balcsik dozer stayed. There was a significant amount of large snags along the edge of the wetland raining sparks down. Although they were not starting additional fire in the wetland at present, it was unclear what the fuels were in the wetland in the dark and if this would be a problem the next morning when burning conditions picked up. I had Washburn 1 and Balcsik Dozer start constructing a trail that paralleled the edge of the wetland to provide access to deal with the snags while I continued to walk the edge of the wetland. I did finally hit right group's line. They had tied into the wetland.

I walked back to meet the equipment. They had been able to create a trail on high ground but had just dropped off into lower ground and it became too wet to work. We ended up pulling out at that point as we had confirmed the lines tied into the wetland and we were limited in what we could do in the dark. The sky was starting to get light as we walked out.

Kilo Division (RED)

We were then assigned to the north end of Kilo off the north/south Beauregard Rd. This included Blaylock, Washburn and Balcsik dozer. Washburn 1 loaded his unit and drove to Beauregard Rd. Balcsik Farms was to then take the truck to pick up his unit. Right group was coming up the south end of Kilo and we were to work back west towards them. Fuels were hardwood with various small drainages or wet ground. The fire had pretty much died out here. It was difficult to find dry enough ground for the dozer to work and we backed off south from the line and tried to plow high ground and tie into a wetland less than a quarter mile off the road. Washburn 1 got stuck just off the wetland. We tried burning this out but conditions were too damp to burn. I ended up walking the east edge of the wetland for about a quarter mile. It looked like the wetland was holding so I walked out to Beauregard Rd to bring the dozers into the south end of the wetland. Washburn 1 was able to get unstuck and Balcsik Farms showed up. Blaylock was able to bring up the aerial photo on his phone and from it, there appeared there was a series of wetlands that extended to Rocky Lake. I also heard that they were going to change out divisions shortly so we held up on moving equipment in. I was told to return to Alpha/Bravo to brief incoming resources on those divisions. Blaylock stayed on Beauregard Rd to brief incoming resources there.

Alpha/Bravo (BROWN/RED)

I returned to near the origin to wait for incoming resources. I drove Alpha/Bravo and it was pretty cold. Webster II (Schmechel and

Wallace) was the first to arrive. They had been assigned to Alpha and knew that the Division Boss was coming from Michigan but had not arrived yet. They had an updated map that showed that the division lines had changed and that Alpha now included what had been Alpha and Charlie and Bravo was what had been Bravo and Delta. As Alpha below Doetch Rd was secure, Webster II unloaded on Doetch and started working north improving the break and hitting hot spots.

As I had not been up what had formerly been Delta and no one had checked it, I drove the break north of Doetch Rd on what was now Bravo. It was pretty rough going in the Type 7 and I had to winch my way through a wet spot and put a dent in the side of the truck bouncing off the ruts. I asked for an ATV for the incoming resources. There were some smokes but not a lot and mostly on the north end. The Wautoma Heavy unit (Jeff) showed up as assigned to Bravo and Mike Harnois from the Forest Service as Bravo Division Boss. I briefed them on their division. White Golf was being set up as communication to Line and ICP. Harnois was not able to make this work so I notified Line that he may need to be contacted through Wautoma. I returned to Alpha to wait for the incoming division supervisor. Webster II TP and Type 4 had gone up the line. There was a wet spot a little over halfway up the division from Doetch Rd and the Type 4 could not get past. The dozer was patrolling north of that and the Type 4 engine south of it. They had put some turnarounds in. There were some smokes but not a lot. I was expecting the Division Sup to show up shortly so did not commit myself to going too far down the line. However the Division Sup did

not turn up until after 13:00. I turned the division over to him and checked out with Deputy Line.

Issues/Observations

I had some radio issues. This was the first fire I had used the P150 as I had a bad switch last year and it that didn't get fixed right away. I believe as a result of the type of chest pack I was using the volume knob would get turned and knock the volume down so I wasn't hearing anything. I noticed when things were awful quiet for a while. It also would knock the channel button onto another channel. I ended up taking the radio out of the pack a lot to check what channel I was on and ended up losing the antennae.

Leaving divisions unattended and moving onto new assignments was a new concept. On this fire with the division cooling down right away, it did not seem to be an issue however it would have been nice to have some patrol on these. Something that came up after the fire was that some of the wildlife people who used to be on the IMT team were no longer on the IMT due to the change to a regional team. They ended up not being involved with the fire at all. Many of the wildlife people work on prescribed burns and are fairly comfortable with fire, patrolling and mop up, They have ATVs with water tanks and radios and might be a source of reliable manpower to fill in on divisions in a similar situation.

Another issue that came up at post fire discussions was getting the heavy units back together and moved to pick up tractor plows. As I was working near the origin, I ran into the transport rider (not sure of exact title) for the

WDNR heavy dozer and another transport operator for private equipment. The WDNR transport operator was from the fire department and in Nomex and capable of driving a Type 4, the private operator was not in Nomex but had a reflective vest on. Both of these guys were available to help out and willing to. I had the WDNR rider watch the south end of Delta with a Type 4 for a while as he was parked there anyways. I just wonder if they might have been used to put units together and move them to pick up dozers or leap frog the units down the line.

ANDREW SHANEY

Division Supervisor

I arrived at approximately 20:15 and familiarized myself with some maps and extent of the fire. I positioned myself close to OPS and was placed on Echo Division and was instructed to report to Line Boss/Gallagher. Our duty was to construct driveable line on the left flank (E division) from Germann Road to Highway A - about 3 miles. With the aid of a private 850 John Deere and a WDNR 450 we did just that.

The biggest hurdle to overcome is that it is nighttime. This in itself is a red flag and in particular when trying to navigate country you have never seen and without good aerial photos. My fault for not asking for better aerial photos. So we pressed on and I flagged as straight as possible and as close to the fireline that I could see, a ribbon line here and there to guide the units. Of course nothing ever goes as planned and we hit the first swamp about X

mile north of where we started and a creek. Ended up tracking the units 2 miles around that mess to the north and started again on Red Pine Road.

We ordered fuel for the units around 00:00/01:00...we were informed it would be a while...05:00 fuel arrived...when you have a unit that uses 5-7 gals per hour, that is critical. About 01:00 I was informed by OPS that they had plans for me to take some rest and come back in the am to do Line. I was asked if that would work for the units doing the line to be on their own. Not a good idea in my opinion. They needed a scout during the nighttime as it would have compromised several Watch Out and Standard firefighting orders. Laid that plan to rest.

With daylight we made more progress than we did all night and eventually finished around 09:00 on the 15th. We did the best we could, I trust it passed. It looked good to me. 3 miles up, 3 miles back.

Observations/Recommendations

On arrival, IC was in transition from Barnes to Gordon...obvious confusion and as I assessed the goings on in IC, I noticed OPS had no one by his side taking notes etc. In my opinion, he should have someone to help him/her. Did not get a good briefing from OPS but with 30 plus years, I knew what to look for and where; i.e. weather, fire map, topo map, cover type etc.. Something to emphasize with very new fire folks. Was asked by IC to sit in on the briefing but was placed on the line before that happened. Never expect units to arrive at night and go it alone on line they are unfamiliar with and with no scouts.

In fact, building drivable line at night is somewhat counter-productive, especially in unfamiliar country. You need to keep that line straight as possible. And in fact the left flank was relatively cooled down and not a significant threat, since the winds had switched to the west/northwest. Could we have been used better elsewhere??? Perhaps but I won't second guess IC and the bigger picture. Assessing the fire's progress on the map, I noticed (but was not told) a large hardwood area to the east of the fire. I suspect the initial tactic was to try and push the fire to the east into that. My sense is the line group was not advanced far enough on the left flank to accomplish that along with aerial drops. Good choice though. I suspect this fire will be talked about for quite some time...it possessed a lot of interesting curve balls. Wind switch, structures, hazards of all kinds, evacuations, and on and on. All in all a heck of job done by initial folks. And, no one was seriously injured!! That is objective ONE.

DALE ROCHON

Division Supervisor

I was called at about 03:30 on the morning of Wednesday May 15, 2013 and requested to be at the Gordon Fire Hall (ICP) at 07:00 that morning. Upon arrival I was assigned to the F division, as a Division Supervisor. I was assigned the Spooner heavy unit and an ATV for holding and patrolling the line. Upon arrival on the division I was briefed by Rod Fouks about the division and what was accomplished overnight. Shortly afterwards

the division equipment arrived and I took the Spooner HU up to the Div. break with Div. I and had him construct line into the beaver pond to the west, as Rod had said that they didn't have good line there and I needed to secure that end of the Div.

I along with my rider did a foot patrol from the corner of Rocky Lake Rd that lies east of Rock Lake then headed to the NW as Rod indicated that no line had been put in between there and Beauregard Lake Rd to the east. I flagged on an unsecured line just east of the corner of Rocky Lake Rd where it had burned into some logging slash and had burned itself out. We proceeded north along a green swamp up to a small pond and headed east and south along the east side of the unburned green swamp. We found a several acre unburned island along the NW corner of the pond that I had Spooner tractor tying line into from Beauregard Lake Rd. We flagged that island out as well.

Once Spooner tractor had tied into the pond we had him bump north to secure the unburned island to prevent a rekindle from making a run along the west edge of the pond. I left my rider there to help with the line construction and I went back to Rocky Lake Rd where I picked up my truck and met with the ATV operator who had arrived on the south div. break. I drove him up to Rocky Lake Rd to show him the north end of his patrol route. We built a bit of hand line along the west side of the structure to secure the house from some unburned fuel. I left the ATV there to patrol the north end of the constructed line. Shortly after, I heard patrol indicate that we had a breakout along the constructed line between Rocky Lake Rd and E-W Beauregard Lake Rd.

I contacted D Div. Sup. to see if he had a unit close and asked if I could get that unit headed my way. I also contacted my Spooner unit and had him head to the breakout. This portion of line had a lot of unburned leaf litter along the length of it. It appeared as though the unburned leaf litter ignited and made a run at the line and jumped in several spots. CL415's were dropping on the breakout for some time and once they cleared we moved the Whiting tractor in to contain the right flank of the breakout. The Spooner and Whiting tractors constructed line on the left flank and contained the breakout, which ended up being 9 acres. A request was made for a large dozer to build drivable break form E-W Beauregard Lake Rd up to Rocky Lake Road to improve patrolling. A Douglas County dozer arrived and constructed drivable break. About the time we had containment of this breakout, patrol had radioed in another breakout East of Rock Lake in my Division, but had indicated that it was on I division. I Div. sup responded along with a large dozer and Blackhawk helicopters. It was determined that the breakout was in the area that I had flagged earlier, but the fire never burned past my ribbon line, but was more internal as there were many pockets of unburned fuel well into the original burn area. When I arrived a large dozer was putting in control line on my flag line. I released I Div. Sup and had the Spooner tractor assist with mop up of this area. Line was patrolled and mopped up for the rest of the shift.

On my second day, 5-16-13, I was again assigned to Div. F at the morning briefing. This day I had an ATV and the Woodruff Muskeg assigned. The ATV was assigned to patrol and mop up the constructed break form

E-W Beauregard Lake Road up to Rocky Lake Rd. Myself and the muskeg proceeded to the unsecured line east and north of 90 degree corner of Rocky Lake Rd. Constructed line could not be put into the area as the fire had burned down into a green swamp and burned itself out. There was no way to put in constructed line without burying a tractor. I flagged the hot spots and the muskeg operator put them out. We worked most of the way up to the small pond and secured that line. He was then ordered to patrol that line and mop up any smokes he encountered. I crossed over the green swamp to the east and flagged in numerous hot spots along that edge of unsecured line. I ordered up a tractor plow to help with mop up of that area as the muskeg wouldn't be able to navigate it due to the density of the timber. About this time, the plane reported a fire burning south of the structure on the south end of Rocky Lake Rd. I had the ATV respond to contain it. The line south of the structure had a fair amount of unburned fuel up to the line. When I arrived on scene, the ATV and Jay Riewestahl (Line) were working on the fire. I pulled 300 feet of hose off my 4x4 and between the 3 of us, contained the fire well within the constructed control line. I met up with the Wautoma tractor plow (Buchholz) from I Div. and walked him into the hot spots on the east side of the green swamp and mopped up that portion of line. Once this was done, the Wautoma tractor was released. Line was patrolled and some smoking stumps were extinguished near a structure on Rocky Lake Rd. to appease a landowner. Lines were patrolled and mopped up until we were told to head back to the ICP.

MATT BLAYLOCK

Heavy Equipment Boss

At approximately 14:45 first smoke was reported from the Highland Tower. The Barnes Ranger and his rider went en route to the fire, along with the 2 Heavy Units from Barnes. Gordon Ranger was also en route and also the two Gordon Heavy Units. Because the Barnes Type 8 was a listed resource on the OPS plan for the day I initially headed to the fire as well, however I was told to wait until I was dispatched. A short time later I had a phone conversation with Jay Gallagher and he instructed me to head to the fire, and during our phone conversation one of the riders from Barnes called stating he could see the smoke building and was wondering if he should come in as a rider or bring his contract dozer (Case 650) to the fire. Jay stated that he would like him to bring the dozer and check in at the Barnes Station for an assignment.

I then proceeded to the fire arriving on scene approximately at 15:30. I checked in with the IC near the origin and asked for an assignment. The heavy dozer with operator Smith arrived and I was initially assigned Left Group and was instructed to lead the heavy dozer up the left flank and build drivable break from the origin. Shortly after starting up the left flank I radioed Left Group Supervisor (Rod Fouks) and the decision was made to abort the drivable break and punch ahead to tie in with the 3 tractors on the Left Group. We caught up with the other tractors just north of Doetch Rd as the fire began to crown in the mature jack pine at approximately 16:10. I stayed with the Left Group assisting with burn out operations and

assuring that the line was holding behind us as we were starting to get a fair distance from the origin. I maintained good communication with Rod, the 2 riders, and the tractors.

We continued to build direct line until we hit a small wetland and pond on Bud Grant's property, which forced us to build indirect line and burn out at 17:10. I assisted with the burn out operation as Rod pressed forward with the tractors. Shortly after we encountered the first wetland we came to another wetland and creek bed of the Upper Ox forcing us again to build indirect line. We continued with the indirect line along the high ground on the south side of Upper Ox Creek heading northeast until we hit Connors Meadow Rd at 18:15. Once we hit the road we proceeded north as the fire had already crossed Connors Meadow Rd. The Left Group met with Jay and Eric and did a face to face briefing and conducted the burnout along Connors Meadow Rd at 18:30. We resupplied water off the heavy units, and then decided that I would meet up with DIVS D (Nichol Martin) and complete the burn out along the Ox Creek as Rod and the Tractors head north to continue with line construction. Rod left me the Barnes 1 Tractor (Kasinskas), and the Forest Service Engines and Leader (Rabuck) to assist with the burn out.

DIVS D and I met face to face and we planned our strategy for the burn out. The Winter 1 tractor was also assigned to DIV D and assisted with the holding. The winds had seemed to die and the burn out was proving difficult until the wind switch occurred and then we were able to complete the firing. We had a couple of small spots that occurred during the burn out (during the wind switch at 20:00) and were handled with the tractors. Once the burnout was

complete I radioed Deputy OPS (Martin) for another assignment. Eric assigned me as DIV I, with Washburn 1 tractor and the Forest Service Engines and Rabuck. My instruction for DIV I was to improve and patrol line for Sand Rd north until I hit Townline Rd. I met with my resources on Sand Rd and had conversation with Rod that the Left Group was experiencing problems with line construction due to wetlands and he advised that we stay south of the first "frog pond".

With the line being wet ground I released the Forest Service Engines for re-assignment. Myself and Washburn 1 completed improving the line to the pond and then made our way out to Sand Rd. and then we were instructed to meet on the road for meals and fuel. After eating, Deputy Ops sent me to the Barnes Ranger Station to get the ATVs to assist with line patrol. DIVS I was reassigned to Washburn Ranger (Hillibrand). I was assigned to India Div. and lead the Washburn 1 Dozer and Balsik Farms Contract Dozer building line along the wetland south of Town Line Rd until we hit wet ground that we were unable to operate in. We then loaded the dozers and were instructed to drive up to Beauregard Lake Rd and begin building line south to tie in with the Left Construction Group. We did not make it very far to the West of the road and we hit a significant wetland. At that point our initial shift had ended and we were instructed to go to the Gordon Fire Hall to demob from the fire. At demob we were told to head back to the Barnes Station and prepared to staff for the initial attack for the day.

GERALD THORPE

Engine Operator

Communications

As usual, radio communications seem to be the number one problem in all large scale events.

1#: Communications between area dispatch centers, Command Post and responding out of area units. Cell phone coverage is poor in many of the remote areas and responding units do not have all of the needed telephone numbers, therefore there is poor coverage for responding units to communicate with their home area and response area dispatch centers and the Incident Command Post.

Solution: Use the WISCOM Trunking system for responding units. When a unit is dispatched to a large incident, they should check out with their local Dispatch Center on the area dispatch frequency (white, blue, green, yellow), then switch to a WISCOM trunking channel. ("S-CALL-1" talk group in the "Mutual Aid" Trunking Zone of the radio could be used). The WISCOM Trunking channel could be monitored by all the "local area dispatch centers", the "response area dispatch center" and the "Incident Command Post". If ANYONE needs to get ahold of a responding unit to find out their location, ETA to the ICP, tell them to cancel and return home, etc., this state-wide-coverage channel can be monitored/used by everyone, therefore less confusion and guaranteed communications. The responding units could use this for communicating if they have vehicle problems, communicate with other responding units, etc.

Upon arrival at the Incident Command Post, the responding unit would then switch to the assigned Project Group and channel.

#2: Many W DNR personnel, (both part time and full time) did not know what radio "Zone" their radio should be on and how to program the "Scan" to enable them to listen to the frequencies used on the incident.

Solution: The "Communications Officer" who writes up the "Communications Plan" for the incident should pick a "Project Zone" to be used for the incident and assign channels within that radio zone. A channel plan could/should be preplanned for each dispatch area to avoid problems in the future. It worked well having the "OPS to Line" communications on the "White Golf" portable repeater and it worked well that the Pilots finally used the "Air-to-Ground" frequency for communicating with the ground units. Zones could/should be assigned the Blue-1, Blue-2, Yellow-1, Yellow-2 etc. simplex channels before assigning WDNR RED and WDNR BROWN (as they may be used by the local area on other fires).

#3: Since the area of the fire and the distance from the fire to the Command post were greater than the range of portable radios, the use of portable repeaters was/is necessary.

Solution: It worked out great having the "OPS to Line" communications on the "White Golf" repeater. However there were problems communicating from the "Line" to the "Zones". This could have been corrected by having a second portable repeater located out in the fire area that covers the "Fire" area

and the "Line/Zone" communications take place on this repeater. They could use "STAR-1" or "STAR-2" repeater channels for this. The Line supervisors should then have a radio on the "Ops to Line" repeater and a separate radio on the "Line to Zone" repeater (they should not depend on one radio with "Scan" as with a lot of traffic, they were missing some transmissions). The "Zone Boss" should also have a radio on the "Line to Zone" repeater and also on their assigned "Zone channel" which could be a simplex channel.

However, there were also some problems with units within the "Zone" communicating with the "Zone Boss" on a simplex channel with portable radios as some of the Zones were several miles long. A possible solution would be to mount mobile radios in the "Tractor-Plows" and the tractor/plows would be able to communicate 5 to 10 miles if needed. (The "Bowler-1" tractor-plow has a mobile radio in it and Tech Dave Marquette indicated that it worked great. Whenever he could not get through on his portable radio, he would use the mobile and there were no problems with the higher power mobile radio communicating with the "Zone Boss". If the mounting of mobiles in the Tractor/plows is too expensive, mounting a mobile antenna and a "linear amplifier" (cost about \$150 to \$250) on the "tractor/plow" and the operator connecting their portable radio to the amplifier would help. This would increase their 5 watt portables output up to 20 to 30 watts, through a "quarter wave" or "gain antenna" mounted on the Tractor/Plow", this greatly increase the coverage area.

Another solution would be using another portable repeater for some of the Zone

communications, if the Zone is too large. There are a lot of the 10 channel portable repeaters in the WDNR that are under-used I think that on a large incident like this, several portable repeaters from the other areas could be used. Note: Over the years, I have noticed that there are many smaller fires that the portable repeaters would have been useful. (The portable repeaters should not be reserved for just "The Big One").

Repeater Problem: (Note that at one point on Wednesday, someone turned on a second repeater on "White Golf" and there was great confusion and problems with communications as two repeaters were transmitting on the same channel at once). I called in and advised the ICP of this problem and one of the repeaters were later turned off. More attention should be made so this does not happen in the future, and more people should have been aware that there was a problem and what the problem was, as it went on for at least an hour before the problem was corrected.

4: There was a long period to schedule the units to respond to this incident.

Solution: Preplan on a daily or weekly basis as to what units from the area would be available to respond (state wide) to an incident. Those units that would be scheduled to respond would be able to make family plans etc. ahead of time, knowing that if something happened, they would be responding. Those units would also be required to be fueled up, equipment checked, "Red Bags" on board, and ready to respond at any notice. This could save 4 to 6 hours on a

response.

It would help if all responding units had "Shotgun Riders" and those riders certified as "Engine Operators". The extra personnel would make better use of the WDNR equipment at the scene.

#5: It was nice having meals delivered to the field. However some personnel did not get fed until 15:00 to 16:00. It was nice having a hot evening meal upon return to the "ICP" on Thursday Night. It would be nice to have a "Canteen" vehicle roaming at all times with snacks, Gator Aid, water, soda.

6: Having a fuel truck on scene worked great. It would work better if you made it mobile, (put a WDNR radio in it on the Line to Zone repeater and have them respond to requests from the "Tractor Plows" etc..

7: There were no close water supplies on the north end.

Solution: Have a WDNR Type 4 engine roaming to fill the Tractor/plows and Type 7/8 units or have a local Fire Department Tanker/Tender available to roam and fill. Or have a local fire department set up a portable tank, with a WDNR portable pump at a location close to where it is needed (Drop Point). Then have the local fire department tanker keep the portable tank filled. WDNR units could fill from the portable tank as needed.

AARON WALLACE

Engine Operator

Called out to Germann Fire on day 2. Arrived at Command Post around 08:00-08:30. Received orders of A Division and was on scene at 09:00. Found the Ranger in charge of A and B Division who had been there since the previous day. Updated ranger on the new division area because the divisions had been revised/re-drawn. Got on the A Division line and patrolled for any hot spots near the line and extinguished them when found. Around 15:00 Division Supervisor arrived on scene. Released from line around 18:00-19:00.

DAVE MARQUETTE

Tractor Plow Operator

Position & assignment on the fire: J

Division Engine Boss/Tractor Plow Boss

Estimated time of arrival: 05/15/013 08:30

Area of responsibility: J Division

Day One

Communication: I had to learn what radio frequencies to use by scanning radio traffic and then manually searching for a group that fit. The switching to White Golf helped reduce radio traffic, again a heads up at the ICP would have been better than trying to figure what Line and Sups were using on the way to the Division assignment.

Safety Issues

Safety concerns were addressed by having a good briefing from Division Supervisor. Division Sup. Chris Klahn provided a good face to face briefing. He articulated what night operations had completed and provided details on a map of 2 areas of concern. All safety issues and concerns were addressed at this face to face briefing. During scouting of the line I flagged all burning snags and high hazard trees with hazard tree flagging before the drivable break construction began.

Tactics & Actions Taken

While waiting for a change of Division Sup personnel, the initial assignment was to assess the 2 areas of concern. After assessing the 2 area of the line, I determined the area between Sand Lake and Circle Road was the highest priority to improve. It had 2 furrows, but had burning snags along the line and with predicted winds embers would easily blow across the line.

What Was Planned?

To build a drivable break from circle road to Sand Lake and begin mopping up 100 feet in from the line.

What Actually Occurred?

New J Division Sup Terry Trapp made contact and he concurred with the plan. I began to make drivable break with Bowler 1 tractor plow. Once the break was established, 2 firefighters in a UTV were assigned to the break to assist in mop up. The Bowler 1 rider (Welch) placed a

portable pump in the lake and also began mopping up. The portable pump in the lake also made for a quick fill site for the UTV. Snags were pushed over and a grid pattern of roads were made for UTV access along the line.

Day Two

Safety concerns were addressed at the ICP morning briefing from Division Supervisor. Bowler 1 rider was used to scout plow line ahead of dozer while building line, and no hazards were found.

Tactics and Actions Taken

First assignment was pulling out a stuck fire department truck along Ellison Lake. Found the truck and the operators were waiting for their replacements. A phone call to the J Division Sup was able to get them released by the Structural Branch Director. They were able to drive to the drop point and did not need to be pulled. Second assignment was to build a drivable break from Sand Lake Road to Hwy 27. We did get lunch today.

What was Planned?

To build a drivable break from Sand Lake Road to Hwy 27.

What Actually Occurred?

Found colored ribbons left by Div. Sup. Terry Trapp to mark the furrow. I began to make drivable break with Bowler 2 tractor plow. Rider Welch went to turn Bowler 1 around and got stuck. She quickly contacted me and I pulled the truck out with the dozer and went back to

building line. I built drivable break until I hit Hwy 27, which was about the time IC began pulling us off the line for the day.

What Went Well?

- Having a LTE rider was helpful in navigating to the fire and provided a look out while building breaks with hot spots and burning snags next to the line.
- Having a rider also provide another fire fighter to use equipment that would have just sat on the truck.
- Coordination and setting priorities with Division Sups. (Klahn and Trapp)
- Having a fuel truck at the drop off point that was also mobile made refueling easier.
- Second day had good morning briefing at ICP
- Having a NUVI Garmin in the truck to navigate roads.
- Having a mobile radio in the tractor/plow, there were times I could not reach the division sup with the portable, but was able to reach him just fine with the mobile.

What Can be Improved?

- Make sure everyone gets a meal. My rider and I did not get breakfast or lunch the first day and found no utensil for the supper upon returning to the ICP. Fortunately, we brought enough food from home for the day.
- Coordination for resources from other

Areas/Regions should go smoother. I was held at my station until 08:30 (understandable). My first order was to drive until I hit my 16 hours and then find a hotel. After a discussion with my Team Leader and Area Leader, a decision was made to go get 6 hours of sleep at home and be on the road at 04:30 (good choice). While at home getting my 6 hours of sleep I got a phone call from the apologetic Brule dispatcher at 01:00 asking me if I was on the road.

- A briefing for incoming units at the ICP would have been better before sending folks out to the line. The briefing could have covered radio groups, tactics used the night before, predicted weather and areas of concern along the whole fire.
- A copy of the action plan should be given to each person along with their assignment. I did not receive an action plan the first day (they were all gone), only a map and a slip of paper with the J Division and supervisor's name.
- Having a completed action plan – put names and cell# into positions and with equipment (Example: Bowler 1 – Marquette cell 715-999-0000). This would help resources as they are added or relocated to divisions. If changes are needed they can be done at morning briefing.
- Add LTE fire fighters/riders/trainees when ordering equipment to better utilize the equipment we are bringing to the fire. Involving some of the trainees, along with some of the Division Supervisors would have provided them a great learning experience.

- We need to better plan where units are coming from for a given fire in a given area (type of action plan).
- Look at doing a statewide morning web cast/teleconference during times of large fire mobilization, folks back filling in at stations were not aware of who was available in the adjacent stations or what units were at the big one.

Overall things went well, it was amazing on a fire this size that there was no one hurt or injured. I got to see a lot of new faces and a few old ones. Both my LTE rider and I had a positive experience and look forward to the next large fire mobilization.

MICHAEL MATTSON

Tractor Plow Operator

Position & assignment on the fireline: Right flank, third tractor to arrive on this flank

Estimated time of arrival: 15:20

Area of responsibility: Right flank “Origin to Rocky Lake Road”

- 14:50 Dispatched from Brule to the Barnes Ranger Station in order to cover/backfill.
- 15:00 Dispatched directly to the Germann Rd. Fire.
- 15:20 Arrived at Fire scene, notified Brule and switched to RED.
- 15:30 BRU 1 TP arrived at origin, briefing

with BAR 2 TP, BAR 1TP, and Right Group supervisor Fouks. Started line construction on right flank.

- 15:50 Continued building line across intersection of Germann Road and Doetch Lane.
- 16:10 Smokey Smith (JD-750) and Matt Blaylock catch up to us building line.
- 16:30 Blow up in mature PJ stand, backed up and held until it settled down, lost line-doubled back, anchored in and contained it.
- 17:22 Arrived at pond and started building indirect line with Blaylock burning out.
- 17:30 Lost line, double-backed, anchored in and contained it.
- 18:14 Arrived at Connors Meadow Road, held road for the burnout operation.
- 19:00 Continued building line to the NE towards Sand Rd.
- 20:00 Arrived at aspen slash as wind switch was occurring. Very difficult line construction, lost line several times. JD-750 Smokey Smith and I (BRU-1) got cutoff from Barnes 2 due to head fire jumping in between us. We went into the black and tied in again with Barnes 2 and eventually completed our line to the Sand Rd. at 21:20.
- 21:40 Face to face briefing and continued building line to the north of Sand Rd.
- 23:00 Slow progress through and in between many wetlands.
- 23:43 Dinner and fuel arrived on Beauregard Lake Rd.

00:30 Continued line construction to the north

04:00 Ended line construction at the south end of Rocky Lake Rd.

05:00 Inspected east side of Rocky Lake Rd. Very wet.

06:30 Started walking dozer north on Rocky Lake Rd to County HWY A for transport pickup.

07:00 Arrived at County HWY A. After several phone calls with the Brule Ranger, Nicky was able to help me locate my trailer and engine. She arranged getting me from my dozer to my engine. Thanks to the Brule Ranger!!

11:00 Loaded dozer onto Brule 1 transport. I was told not to go to the ICP for demobilization? So, I went in service back to the Brule Ranger Station.

11:30 Out of service at the Brule Ranger Station.

Communication, Safety Issues

RED was overloaded with radio traffic at first. Shortly into line construction Left Group went to BROWN and Right group stayed on RED.

Air Attack told the Right Group supervisor that they could not see us because of the heavy smoke on our line and that was the last time we heard from them (see "What Can be Improved" below).

What was Planned?

Anchor, flank and burn out the line.

What Actually Occurred?

Anchor, flank and burn out the line.

What Went Well?

Right Group Supervisor, Rod Fouks, served as our lookout. With as many break outs and slop-overs that occurred on our flank, he served us well and should be commended for his good work!

What Can be Improved?

- Need MREs on tractor plows
- Need mounted GPS units on tractor plows
- Need to carry more drinking water on tractors plows than the current standard (2+ gallons)
- Need someone (ICP) in charge of arranging transportation of equipment/tractor plow operators back to their transport units
- Another aircraft solely for the Right flank would have been helpful due to the extreme fire behavior and the geographic obstacles experienced on this flank.

MARK CONKEY

Tractor Plow Operator

At approximately 17:15 on Tuesday May 14th, I was dispatched to the Germann Road fire. I was instructed to report to the ICP at the Barnes Ranger Station. At approximately 18:30 I had a blow out of one of my trailer tires on the heavy unit along Hwy 70 west of Fifield. I was able to unload the dozer and change the

tire using my spare. When I was back in service I checked back in with Park Falls dispatch for further instructions. I was told that the ICP had moved and I was to report to the Wascott Fire hall.

When I was nearing the town of Wascott I contacted Brule dispatch for directions to the fire hall. I was told ICP had moved to Gordon and I was to report there.

I reached the ICP in Gordon at approximately 23:30. I was assigned to Charlie Division and checked in with them. Charlie Division was moving at that time and we relocated to Connors Meadow and Sand Roads. At approximately 01:00 on the morning of May 15th I was released from Charlie Division and reassigned to India Division and sent to a gravel pit area near the intersection of Connors Meadow and Beauregard Lake Road.

At approximately 02:00 I was reassigned to Kilo Division (Gallagher) with the Winter 1 tractor plow. We constructed line in tandem through hardwood areas on the right flank plowing east of Beauregard Lake Road. Line construction was slow due to the dense hardwood and wet areas. We constructed line into the morning until the ground became too wet to proceed any further.

At around 10:00 we were released from the fire for rest and told to check back in after being off for eight hours for possibly working the night shift. Winter 1 and I traveled to Spooner for lodging. When arriving in Spooner I went to the local tire shop and got a replacement spare for the trailer.

At 19:00 on May 15 I checked back in with the ICP and was told that Winter 1 and myself

would be staffing for the night shift.

At around 20:00 I arrived back at Gordon ICP. I was assigned as Echo Division with instructions to stage at Duck Pond and Sutfin Roads. I was to keep the dozer loaded to respond for any breakouts that may occur along the flanks and foot patrol line as necessary.

At 08:00 the morning of May 16th I was released from the incident and traveled to Hayward to rest before continuing on back to Trout Lake late that afternoon.

TIM BANSZAK

Tractor Plow Operator

5/15/13 - Arrived at the Gordon Fire Hall with pre-printed resource card in hand. Check in went smooth. Card was misplaced on resource board. Short delay in getting the assignment.

Assigned to I division with Mellen Rgr. and Mellen 1. Arriving at the scene, I was directed to pull out the stuck Spooner TP. We used a chain, clevis, and the tow strap. This worked well. We used WHITE project group on radios. No problems with radios or old headset.

Continued to improve line behind Mellen 1. Eventually got stuck. Used chain hooked to track, clevis, and tow strap to try to pull myself out. Gained ground but still stuck. Finally used blade angled down in muck to help pull TP along. That worked, as I gained < 1 foot at a time. Also used plow to lift up back end. Credit tech in service training for the ideas used.

Continued to improve line and ringed a spot

fire area with blade/plow. Bladed near a cabin and continued mop-up near a shed. Used foam nozzle on TP. Scotty foam system worked well.

5/16-17/13 – Assigned to patrol and improve line on A and C divisions. Found numerous hot spots under original furrow. Improved the line by opening up the line so a vehicle could drive the line without hitting trees. Set up a portable pump for mop up near a pond.

Assisted Wautoma Ranger with disabled 4x4 along Hwy. 53. Poor cell phone coverage at Barnes and the usual ARI problems delayed the LeMay repair truck to our location. The older 4x4s seem to be developing more and more problems. 19.6 hours of tractor/plow time. Had problems with Waupaca 1 on the way home. Garmin GPS worked great for getting to the repair shop in Eau Claire. Thanks to WDNR personnel at Eau Claire for assisting with plan B if truck did not get fixed.

Recommendations

- Consider moving units earlier in the day to either backfill or get closer to the incident.
- Define the call up procedure or contact person when units may be requested earlier than planned. (Incident-AFL-requested unit)
- Board sheet the hotel.
- Incident Command Post was run well. Good assignment and a good bunch of folks to work with.

MARK GUENTHER

Tractor Plow Operator

Communication/Safety Issues

There was a lot of radio traffic on the fire but it seemed as though things were split out enough to allow for radio use as needed. The only area of concern regarding communications was with the private dozers on the fire. I worked with two private dozers on the fire; neither was set up with a radio and headset. This was mitigated by assigning a Dozer Boss to one and having the other work behind me so if something came up he could be contacted.

Tactics and Actions Taken

From my arrival on scene until somewhere around midnight my assignment was to improve the fireline that had been put in by the line construction groups and to create drivable break.

I was first assigned to check the line on the left flank and catch up to the left group. As I was approaching the left group's location I was told to turn around and create drivable break back to the origin. I created drivable break with the dozer and widened the line out to allow a Type 4 engine to mop-up and patrol the line. As I was about to finish making drivable break on the left flank from the origin to Doetch Road A/B DIV was formed and I was re-assigned to A/B DIV and instructed to do the same on B DIV. After I had B DIV drivable I was reassigned to F DIV. I returned to the origin, loaded the tractor plow on the trailer and drove up the road to meet the F DIV Supervisor. He had me improve the line and create drivable break. Shortly after I started working on F DIV

the Barnes 1 tractor plow was also assigned to F Division we worked together for a while then I was re-assigned to I Division. I walked the tractor up the line and meet up with the I Div Supervisor and started building drivable break. We worked on improving the line until we came to the first marsh North of Sand Road that the Right Group had gone around. The Right Group advised that we shouldn't continue past the first wet area as they had difficulty getting through and the wet ground was not going to allow for the building of drivable break. At that point we walked the dozer out to Sand road and meet up with the Right Group. The Div Supervisor and Right Group Leader had food and fuel ordered so we sat tight until food and fuel arrived. After midnight until being released in the morning we attempted to put in direct fireline where possible as we were in an area with lots of low ground.

I worked with the Winter I unit for a short time putting in direct fireline. We ran into a marsh and couldn't go any further. Winter I was re-assigned to somewhere else and we picked up a private dozer, Galek Farms 650. We began building an access trail along the wet area in the black. The Div. Supervisor thought it would help with mop up the next day as there were quite a few snags along the edge of the marsh. While trying to build this trail through the black I got stuck and we could see the ground was getting too wet to continue at least until day light. We were re-assigned to the North end of K division and were to build line against the grain to the South West. I loaded the tractor plow on the trailer and hauled the tractor to the new location. The Galek 650 dozer was not near his transport anymore so after hauling my tractor we loaded

his 650 on my trailer and hauled it to our new work location as well. Again we didn't go very far and hit a wet area that blocked further progress. I tied into the wet area and turned around to head back out. I got stuck again but was able to work the dozer out with the plow and blade. At this point we were getting word we would be being released so we dropped the private dozer off at a gravel pit in a safe location and then loaded up my tractor plow.

What Was Planned

What was planned for me was to improve the line, build drivable break, and construct fireline.

What Actually Occurred

Things went as planned until we ran into the wet areas. At that point especially in the dark it was difficult to find a good path through some challenging country. The marshes were long and narrow so they didn't make good fire breaks and were too long to go around and switch to an indirect line tactic.

What Went Well

Improving line and creating drivable break in the sandy soils went good. My 450 J was well suited for the task.

While trying to find a way to get around the wet areas Matt Blaylock pulled out his personal cell phone. With his phone he was able to open up Google Earth and look at air photos of the area. This helped a lot with determining which way to go.

What Can be Improved

- Fuel seemed to take quite some time to get to our location. Some of this was caused by the marshes in the way which wouldn't let us come out to the next road to meet the fuel truck. Having a couple more fuel trucks on scene may have helped with this as there was a need to move the truck around to get to other units.
- Having a couple head sets and radios for privet dozer operators would help with communications.
- GPS units mounted on the tractor plow could help with navigation if we can get them to receive satellites while under the dozer canopy. I've tried my Garmin 76 on the dozer but can't get coverage unless I get out of the dozers' cab.
- Having a phone that can pull up photos or a field computer/ tablet with air photos pre-loaded available for the DIV supervisors and group leaders would be helpful in areas with low ground and barriers to equipment travel once air resources shut down for the night.

BROOKE HUSHAGEN

Tractor Plow Operator

I started en-route to the Germann Road Fire on May 14th around 20:00. I was told to check in with Brule dispatch when I got closer and to report to Barnes Ranger Station. I was diverted to a fire in the Friendship area immediately. As I approached WI Dells, I made contact with

Rapids Dispatch who informed me the Friendship fire was under control and I was to continue north to Gordon Ranger Station. (I later was informed it was Gordon FD). I was told to travel until my 16 hours were up and to overnight and travel again in the morning. I met up with Wautoma 2 in the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls area and we got rooms and overnighted there.

We arrived at the ICP at around 08:45 on May 15th 2013. We received assignments within 15 minutes. I was told to report to C Charlie Division and to use WDNR BROWN channel.

I asked who was assigned Division Supervisor of Charlie Division, and also asked for a phone number, and no one could tell me who it was.

As I was driving to the fire scene, I met many units coming back in to the ICP off of the fireline. I tried to raise Charlie DIVS many times on BROWN with no success. I found out later that Charlie DIVS hadn't been assigned yet at that point. I heard Line (Jay Riewestahl) talking on BROWN, so I made contact with him, and he gave me the assignment of patrolling the line and cleaning it up if need be. I was told of a wet spot in the line that I wouldn't be able to cross. I found where Charlie Division crossed Germann Road at the Division Break and unloaded there. Just as I was unloading, Charlie DIVS pulled up (Matt Wappler). We patrolled the line together and knocked out a few hot spots. The line was very clean and driveable upon arrival. C DIVS went to the north and scouted the line, and I was told load up and move to the north of the wet area on C DIV off of Townline Road. There I could access more of the fireline. I worked the area to the north of Townline Road in the

slash field, and patrolling east of Duck Pond Road for the majority of the day. I was told by C DIVS that the area to the south of Townline Road, off of Red Pine Road was just a short stretch and not to worry about that area. I patrolled down Red Pine Road one time that day, to the very short fire break that cut to the east into a swampy area. Later that afternoon, C DIVS found more fire area to the south near the log cabin, and told me that area did not need to be worked with my tractor plow. He stated it was a single furrow with minimal work needed.

The CL 415s and Blackhawks made multiple drops in the slash field to the north of Townline Road as we were working throughout the day. The slash continued to burn throughout the day, and I continued to push the piles around and put out smokes near the fireline. I worked until the end of the shift, returned to the ICP, then headed into Solon Springs for the night.

May 16th 2013 – I reported to the ICP at 06:00. I received my assignment and a briefing from Todd Kenefick (Deputy OPS). I was to report to C Division again and work with C DIVS for the day (Chris Klahn). Most of the morning I worked in the slash field again, breaking up the smoking piles, mopping up smokes within 100 feet of the line and patrolling. Later in the day, C DIVS scouted near the log cabin on Red Pine road and found some areas where the fire was burning deep into the duff layer near the fireline and needed attention. Further to the south off of the single furrow fireline near the cabin, DIVS trainee (Kirby D.) along with a few hand crew members from Northland found an area near a deer camp and little pond where the fire was peating in. Resources from DIV E (Ladysmith 1, Bowler Ranger) were combined

with C DIV and helped to haul water, mop-up and widen out the single furrow fireline, while I worked with the hand crew to work on some of the peat fire problems. A plan was formulated for the next day, to bring in a portable pump and a hand crew to work on the peat fires in this area near the pond.

The fireline also was not completely connected through the wet area, and hadn't been completely scouted until late in the day on the 16th. I feel that this area should have been scouted better the previous day (15th), and resources should have been deployed to this area sooner.

Most things went really well during my assignment. The only things that I feel needed improvement were a better briefing on May 15, as I really didn't receive a briefing at all. I was assigned to a DIVS that hadn't been assigned yet, so that led to a bit of confusion, but was mitigated by making contact with Line. I think the DIVS on C DIV on May 15 should have scouted a bit better and realized that the area by the pond needed more attention, especially since the fireline was not connected through the wet area.

Logistics were good. I had good luck getting a lunch sometime near noon on both days, but it sounded like others had a very hard time getting lunch until late afternoon (15:00). So it sounded like some improvement was needed there. There was plenty of water and food at the ICP, and the lodging accommodations were nice in Solon Springs.

ERIC SIRRINE

Tractor Plow Rider

On the day of the fire, I was working as Nichol Martin's rider. We were first dispatched to the Barnes Ranger Station about 15:40 to standby. We arrived at the Barnes Ranger Station at about 16:00, Kurt Janko was there with the IMT Trailer and the Winter 1 Heavy Unit and rider. We began setting up the ICP and I received a call from dispatch that Nichol Martin and I were being assigned to the fire, we were to go to the origin on Germann Rd and receive our assignment from Eric Martin. We arrived at the origin at about 1700 and were assigned to hold the line that was being constructed by the right group between Doetch Ln and Connors Meadow Rd. Winter 1 heavy unit and rider were also assigned to Nichol's command. Nichol instructed Winter 1 dozer to make drivable break on the right flank and we followed behind him. I was assigned the Brule 4X4 and the Winter 1 rider to hold the line. I then patrolled the line putting out any hot spots. I did not encounter any issues while on this assignment.

We came out onto Connors Meadow Rd about 23:00 and topped the Brule 4X4 with water. Nichol got back into the truck with us and we dropped Winter 1 rider at the Winter 1 engine so he could help load the dozer back up. Nichol and I then drove up to Sand Rd and met up with other resources to get some food and water. Eric Martin then assigned Nichol Division Kilo which was from Beauregard Lake Rd to Highway 27. Our planned assignment was to support the right

construction group by holding the line and burning out behind them. Initially burning out the line was successful. Line construction was slowed by topography and wet areas. Eventually the decision was made to burn out off of Beauregard Lake Rd going west because there was no good access to the fire due to the wet areas. About this time the Hayward Ranger with a rider and Hayward 1 with a rider were assigned to Group Kilo as well. Myself and a Hayward Rider used drip torches to bum out off of the road going west for about 1 mile. From there we tied in with an old logging road going north. At about this time the weather seemed to change and burning out the line was not as successful. The fire was not carrying very well through the leaf litter and "good black" was hard to create without putting down a lot of drip torch fuel. We did continue to burn out the line as best as we could while following the right construction group. We eventually came out at Rocky Lake Rd about 03:30 where we were informed we were demobilizing and were shuttled back to the truck. Besides the burn out operations not being as successful as hoped due to the change in weather the assignment went well. We did not encounter any other issues on this assignment.

ROBERT RAADE

Tractor Plow Rider

I had been working as a rider for the Ashland heavy unit with operator Mark Guenther. May 14 was my third day on the job with Mark. We were on standby at Ashland when we heard the

tower call in the small white smoke in the Barnes area. Within minutes we were dispatched to head toward Brule. As we approached Brule, we were told to head to the fire. Going south on highway 27, the smoke column indicated we on our way to large running fire. We arrived on scene after 16:00. Mark tied in with IC Martin and indicated to Martin that Raade was his rider and would be available for any other assignment if needed. Martin and I had worked together on the Washburn Ranger District prior to his present State position, so he was very familiar with my qualifications. At about 16:30, Mark and I started working up the left flank as part of the Left Group. We were the fourth tractor plow unit working up this flank. Maybe 30 minutes into this plan, IC Martin contacted Mark and myself on the radio to see if I would take an assignment as a dozer boss for a contract dozer that arrived on the fire. I walked back down the line and tied in with the Danny Haskins dozer, a 650 Case with a brush rake mounted on the blade. After some quick introductions and discussions related to his experience, we headed north along the plowed line to catch up with the rest of the left group. It was noted at this first contact that Haskins did not have any radio communications on this dozer.

We got up to the rest of the left group. Mark Braasch was the leader with tractor plows Jones, Stegmann, and Terry. Travis Esence and a retired DNR Ranger Barry Stanek were also part of the Left Group. We had a quick tailgate with all present and discussed our tactics of pushing out trees, putting two furrows, making the line passable, and burning out any unburned areas between the furrows and the fire. I pointed out that Haskins did not

have a radio. It was decided to not have Haskins in the lead, but keep him between the WDNR dozers or as the third dozer in line. Sometime around now the Jones tractor plow unit broke down and was removed from the fire. Later on Jones joined us on the line as part of the holding crew. So we had two WDNR tractor plow units, one contract dozer with a brush rake, Left Group Leader Braasch, operator Jones on foot, rider Esence, Stanek and myself. One or two drip torches were burning out line. Two or three of us had hand tools to act as holding forces on the burnouts. Several times, Leader Braasch would pull the dozers back to allow the burnout to settle down before the dozers got too far ahead. I appreciated his caution along the line and interpreted this that I was not working with some hotdog with a fetish for fire. At times, there was some serious fire ahead of us as displayed with a dark column of smoke. planes dropping water ahead of the dozers to cool things down. Those water drops were darn effective. As the last hand tool up the line, I was wondering why the burnout crew was missing so many areas a leaving them green. I stepped into this green and kneeled down to feel the leaves---they were soaking wet.

I carry a Garmin Oregon 400T GPS unit on all of my fire assignments. It has the entire US, including roads, lakes, streams, topographic lines and the names of all these features. More than once on this fire, someone in the left group would have a question related to our location— How far is County Road A from our location (the fire crossed A --- four miles from us)-- How far are we from Germann Road (Y, mile)- -From our present location (at night) in the wetland, it is about 100 yards to Upper Ox

Creek--We are crossing the Duck Pond Road and it runs north-south. We walked 11 miles from 16:30 to 06:00. What a great tool to have on a fire in country you have never seen before.

At one point the dozers went as far as they could go from the south side of Upper Ox Creek and had to be walked around along roads to the north side of the creek. They put their rigs in high gear and took off. Meanwhile the three of us foot pounders (Esence, Jones, and myself), hiked the 2.5 miles of roads to get to the north side. I had definitely worked up a sweat on that hike. We tied in with the dozers on Town line Road as they put in line to Duck Pond Road. Somehow, the dozers got way ahead of me again, and I started to pay the price for my rooky mistake earlier in the evening.

My fireline gear is set up in two packages. The base line web gear is good to get me through the initial day on a fireline---gloves, goggles, face mask, fire shelter, water, hardhat, GPS, shirt, pants, and boots. The second package is the yellow back pack that clips on the baseline harness. It has my needs to get through a night shift--brush coat, fleece, stocking cap, warm gloves, head lamp, rain poncho, plus more small potential needs. I left my yellow pack back with my transport--five miles away.

My head lamp was at the truck. Should be no problem as my night shift strobe light also has a flash light built in. But for some reason, the flash light would not work (days later I discovered a broken connection within the flash light). I ended up using my strobe to try to see where the dozer line was from the young plantation furrows, darn near impossible to do, and it was impossible to see

the terrain I was walking on with the strobe. That hike, in the dark, by strobe light, from Townline Road to Duck Pond Road was one of the most difficult hikes I have ever taken. You just could not see where you were going and what I was walking on. First thing I did when I got up to the dozers on Duck Pond road was to borrow a head lamp from operator Haskins. Later that night after our midnight lunch, I got a flashlight from the lunch crew.

We had a stand up lunch (burgers-chips-Gatorade-no coffee) at 23:30 on the Sutfin Road.

We did a lot of burning out north of the Duck Pond toward Lost Lake Road. The heat generated from the hot spots saved my butt. I was cold and wet from the 2.5 mile hike so I would use the hot spots to warm up and dry off. At some point in there, we had a sit down break at 03:00. I chose to lie down and get some rest. With the ground cold seeping into my body, I was so stiff I could hardly get up to move on 30 minutes later. At about 06:00 we tied in with a dozer from the other direction, walked out to Lost Lake Road and waited a couple of hours for a ride back to my transport.

Hooked up with Mark Guenther, headed to the IC at Gordon, checked out, got to Washburn and closed out the shift at 11:30 to be back on duty at 13:30 for standby.

Life just doesn't get any better than that, working a hot running fire, supporting three dozers, our own air show, and a long tough night shift with a brand new pair of Whites. My feet and groin held up well. My back was killing me by the end of shift, but that too passed and I was good to go after a short rest.

Some Recommendations

- Take the extra minute and think about what you have on your person and what you do not prior to leaving your rig to engage a fire.
- Tractor plow units should have a GPS unit on their dozers
- Good quality, well-fitting fire boots are a must for the ground pounders. Those with brand new, well-fitting Whites and Buffalos had no problem. He with a brand new pair of Red Wings could hardly walk by the end of shift.
- Tractor Plow operators have the potential to move into an arduous fire position after their dozer breaks down. They may want to consider pack testing to the higher level
- Contract dozers should have radios with head sets
- Coffee at the midnight lunch would be great

MARVIN MULLET

Bass Lake Fire Chief

On May 15th 2013, Jeff Peake and I reported to the Gordon Command Post and after signing in went to the staging area at Hwy 27 and Elison Lake Road. About 19:30 we received our assignment to the Beauregard Lake zone and were to report to Overhaul on Fire Ground Blue. We snuffed some hot spots and returned per Overhaul to the staging area around 21:30. Overhaul stated he was going back to Command to get new assignments. After 45 minutes or so

we resumed patrol. All was quiet in our area so we drove west on county A. In the Comminsky Road area we noticed a glow to the south. We tried to raise someone on F. Blue but no one answered. We had no phone numbers for anyone. As we observed, we could see the fire building and decided to go investigate from the next road south, where we could observe better and turned down Sunset Beach road; all the time attempting radio contact with anyone. At the end of Sunset Beach we drove to the left and encountered a gate. With shovels and back cans we hiked in the direction of the fire.

When we got to where we could see the fire we tried again to contact anyone else but couldn't. There was about a 35ft line of fire advancing into unburned material. We were able to reduce it to sparks before depleting our water, then headed back to the staging area for more resources. About 00:30, another boss showed up. He came with other firefighters to the Sunset Beach Road area. He staged out at the road while Jeff and I hiked back in. He then left the area without contacting us by radio, so we were on our own again.

We were able to make contact again as we got back out to A, and checked on a leaking propane tank. This boss also disappeared around 02:30, so we just drove around and observed.

At 06:00 when we were to be relieved, no one was there to do it. Finally one guy from Hayward took the fuel truck to Gordon. He came back with word we could go home, and didn't need to check out, just go home.

Problems

LACK OF COMMUNICATION

- No one knew about that fireline or that we were hitting it ourselves
- If it was important for us to be out there, there should have been command support.
- All we had were tactical channels with no way to radio or phone for help and advice. Hope this is helpful.