

2002 Calendar

July

- ROSS Core Team Meeting: 7/10-11 Denver
- IQS import routine released
- IQCS - ROSS Team Leaders Meeting 7/17-18
- Updated ROSS Dispatch Instructor Guide posted

August

- SACS import routine released
- Development and testing continues on ROSS Version 1.2.4 and Version 1.2.5
- Work continues on training materials and ROSS Tips

September

- ROSS Version 1.2.4 projected release: 9/23

October

- ROSS exhibit at National Association of State Foresters Meeting: 9/31 - 10/3 Burlington, VT
- ROSS exhibit at USDA Technology Showcase: 10/8-10 Washington DC

ROSS Demonstrated for State Fire Managers in the Southern and Northeast Areas

The 13 Southern Fire Chiefs and 20 Northeast Forest Fire Supervisors recently were given the opportunity to put their hands on the ROSS application and give feedback to ROSS team members at their annual business meetings. In mid-June, Nancy DeLong and Sue Roussopoulos provided a project update and fielded questions from representatives of the Southern group at their meeting in Montgomery, Alabama. The following week, Sue Roussopoulos and Andy Gray briefed the Northeast group in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. After each conference session, the ROSS representatives dialed into the ROSS application via phone line and demonstrated the application to the meeting delegates as they visited the exhibit area.



Sue Roussopoulos demonstrates ROSS for two meeting delegates from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Most of the interest seemed to center around the resource status function of ROSS, which is being used in some geographic areas and will soon be implemented nationwide. Some also were eagerly awaiting the release of web status, which allows authorized supervisors, individual employees and contractors to update resource status via the internet. Many of the state managers were particularly interested in the State Incident Qualifications System (IQS) import, which will allow them to quickly load their existing qualifications data into ROSS rather than hand-entering it one record at a time. Both of these ROSS features have since

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FY 2002 Statistics for ROSS Dispatch Training

The following figures cover the period beginning October 1, 2001 through the end of August 2002:

■ Numbers of students in each geographic area (including instructors and coaches)

Geographic Area	Students
NICC	20
Rocky Mountain	58
Northern Rockies	59
Great Basin	63
Eastern Area	9
Total Students Trained	209

■ Numbers of Instructors and Coaches

Geographic Area	Instructors	Coaches
NICC	1	2
Rocky Mountain	5	
Great Basin	7	2
Northern Rockies	5	6
Alaska	2	
Southern	6	
Eastern		5
CA South Ops		1
Total	26	16

Wow, 11 instructors and coaches in Northern Rockies—that's terrific!

All of the instructors and coaches who provided assistance at training sessions did a super job and we encourage all of them to help at other geographic area training sessions in the next year. The benefit to their home geographic area is phenomenal because of the increased knowledge and expertise they will gain at each session.

Training Schedule

Due to early and severe fire season and travel restrictions, ROSS Dispatch training scheduled for July through September has been postponed. ROSS Team Members are coordinating with the geographic areas' primary ROSS contacts to schedule sessions for FY 2003, beginning in early October. To view the currently planned ROSS training sessions, please open the ROSS homepage (<http://ross.nwcg.gov>),

click the "Implementation/Training" tab and click the "Schedule" link.

Training Material Update by Beth Grey Cloud

Much of the ROSS training material is completed and/or being revised. The ROSS training consists of classroom instruction, Web-Based Training (WBT), online help, and a User's Guide.

The classroom material includes an instructor's outline, student workbook, instructor reference guide, instructor scenario, student scenarios and profiles established on the training server that is populated with training data. The instructor outline is undergoing a revision that will incorporate suggestions and application updates. A new version will be posted on the web by October 1, 2002, however the current posted version is still an adequate reference document.

Some web-based training is also available for use. Ultimately, WBT will consist of a system overview and training on both the administration and dispatch functions. The ROSS overview is currently available via a link from the Implementation/Training tab on the ROSS web page. The overview is a general summary of the ROSS application. It is also the prework for students enrolled in the administration and/or dispatch course. To successfully use the WBT, it is important to read, "How to Use This Site," located on the front page of the WBT site. The administration portion of the web-based training is currently in development. The dispatch section will be the last to be completed.

Online help is accessed from within the ROSS application and can assist a user in maneuvering through screens or building a better understanding of the ROSS functions. Most of the online help is completed and available on the production server (Hint: If you chose a screen or topic that is not complete, the main menu will pop up instead of the help for that screen). We encourage all users to use online help when you have the opportunity, and to let us know of any changes that are needed.

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TRANSITIONS.....



Lori Malcolm, ROSS Project Administrative Officer, recently left ROSS and the federal sector to assume the “Recreational Trails Program Manager” position with the State of Colorado, Department of Parks and Recreation. Prior to her tenure with

the project, Lori’s background was in the Forest Service recreation program, and she’s excited about the challenges and opportunities in her new role. Lori was a key member of the ROSS Project Team from February 2000 to July 2002, and contributed significantly to its success. Her duties are being assumed temporarily by Carolyn Rutledge and Maggie Craig. Lori will be greatly missed by the ROSS Team.

Another change to the ROSS Team is that Sharon Miner, Forest Service Contracting Officer, left the agency in late July. Sharon, who supported the ROSS Team on a part-time basis for about the last four years, provided excellent advice and service to the Project Team Leader.

The ROSS Project is a very complex project involving several contractors, and Sharon, too, will be missed by the project team. Joy Bartlett, who is from the Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office, is currently providing contracting support.

ROSS Instructors and Coaches Needed

With many of this summer’s ROSS Dispatch training sessions being postponed due to extraordinary nationwide fire activity and travel restrictions, there will be a great need for ROSS instructors and coaches once training sessions are rescheduled. The ROSS Implementation Team currently lists adequate ROSS Lead Instructors and

Coaches in three of the five geographic areas where instructor training sessions were held. That means at least two geographic areas are having difficulty finding adequate numbers of instructors and coaches.

ROSS Partners are an excellent source for instructors and coaches, but any qualified Support Dispatcher with good training skills and support from their agency and geographic area can be taught to help train their peers in the use of ROSS Dispatch.

In order to build the cadre of ROSS instructors and coaches, the ROSS Team will conduct two or three more Lead Instructor and Coach training sessions throughout the country. The ROSS Implementation Team is currently working with Training Coordinators to reschedule all training sessions. The ROSS Team also plans to assist in conducting a review session at NICC and in each of the geographic areas that completed ROSS Dispatch training prior to the current fire activity. These sessions will help those who received instruction earlier in the year but who, because of fire activity, were not able to put their skills to use.

Based on information provided by ROSS Training Coordinators in each Geographic Area and at NICC, over 50 more ROSS Dispatch training sessions must be held throughout the country to train each area’s dispatchers in using ROSS. These will begin as soon as each area is ready to deliver the training. The ROSS Team will assist with these sessions as much as possible, but each Geographic Area is responsible for providing instructors and coaches for their user training sessions.

Geographic Area ROSS Training Coordinators should contact Rob Juhola, ROSS Training Logistics Coordinator (303-439-0336) with a list of potential instructors or coaches.



ROSS Demonstrated for State Fire Managers in the Southern and Northeast Areas

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been released. Web status instructions can be seen by opening the ROSS homepage (<http://ross.nwcg.gov>), then clicking on "Documents Library," then "Production Documents" and finally "Web Statusing Instructions." The IQS import utility and instructions can be accessed online by opening the ROSS homepage, then clicking on the "Download Application" tab. The Helpdesk staff is available to assist state users with web status or IQS import, and can be reached at 1-866-224-7677.

ROSS team members heard that budgets are particularly tight this year in several southern and northeast states. In some cases, this has resulted in significant staffing cutbacks, and has generally led to more severe travel restrictions for many agencies. While few, if any, states can afford to send dispatchers to two-week ROSS Lead Instructor training and then commit their people as instructors, most states expressed an interest in getting their dispatchers through the ROSS dispatch training. We heard that many states need 90 to 180 days' notice in order to obtain approval for any type of travel. The ROSS Project Team will work with the Geographic Training Coordinators to ensure as long a lead-time as possible when scheduling courses this fall and winter.

Some state representatives commented that implementing a new Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP) application and a system for tracking National Fire Plan (NFP) activities this year made the thought of learning and implementing ROSS somewhat overwhelming, but they realize that the transition to any new system requires some work. Many said they were anxious to see ROSS implemented in their Geographic Areas to see how it could improve information flow and efficiency.

One of the biggest issues broached at the Southern Fire Chiefs' briefing dealt with statusing state overhead resources for off-unit mobilization. Some concern was expressed about the workload involved

in managing resource status from a central location (as required by some State Foresters). When asked how they handle status now, they indicated that they really like the Resource Request List (or Shopping List) posted on the web by the Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC) to find overhead for hard-to-fill resource order requests. Many state fire chiefs use this list to prompt their agency management into making folks available for mobilization and are concerned that the list might go away when ROSS statusing is implemented.

In lieu of the Resource request list, a ROSS report could be developed to list unfilled orders by position and incident and posted to the SACC web site. This would give State Fire Chiefs the flexibility to status their resources using ROSS, work off the report on the web, or use a combination of both methods. This variability of reporting or not reporting available state resources currently exists in the 13-state Southern Area.

Representing 33 of the United States, the Southern Fire Chiefs and the Northeast Forest Fire Supervisors are key stakeholders of ROSS, and have a strong interest in its successful implementation in their parts of the country.

Helpdesk Corner by David Kee



Wow!!! The summer of 2002 is almost over and the ROSS/DMS Helpdesk has been up and running for over seven months. The Helpdesk staff is having a great time getting to know everyone and being able to help folks with questions and problems. We are learning a lot during our first official fire season as we talk to customers and track fires on our wall-sized map of the United States.

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Helpdesk Corner

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Extended hours of operation have been in place since June 1st, with 16-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week coverage; as well as on-call support. Remember the ROSS/DMS Helpdesk is staffed from 0700 EDT to 2300 EDT, 7 days a week. Keep those calls and e-mails coming; we really like being able to provide you with answers to your questions. Peak call times have been between 1300 and 1500 hours Eastern Time, but please feel free to call us anytime. The night shift folks get kind of lonely at about 2100 hours so you may want to give them a ring and let them know someone is out there.

Call volume for the last two months has been very steady with the Helpdesk receiving 182 calls for both June and July. Speaking of call volume, check out the Helpdesk web page and look at our new "Reports" section. To access the Helpdesk web go to the ROSS Homepage (ross.nwcg.gov), click the User Support tab and then click the UTA Helpdesk graphic. This section shows Helpdesk reports for the last three months and a year-to-date report of all calls by month. You can find out cool stuff like total number of calls, calls by problem type, calls by GACC, calls by hour, calls by day.

Another great source of information is the Knowlix® searchable knowledgebase. The Helpdesk staff just finished another knowledgebase update. Now there are over 95 total entries in the ROSS and DMS databases. Find answers to questions without even having to call the Helpdesk, like:

- Why is my DMS mail not showing up?
- How do I export a personal address in Netscape Messenger?
- Why can't I see the entire ROSS screen?
- Why can't I change a resource's availability status?

Knowlix® is easy, quick and fun to use. The best part is that new answers to questions keep showing up all the time. Just access the Helpdesk web site and click the Knowlix® tab on the left hand side of the screen. If you need some help using Knowlix®, or just a quick run through, give us a call.

Please let us know if we can do anything to better serve your needs. Your feedback is important to us and allows us to make changes to improve our effectiveness and to serve you better. Until next time.....



Training Material Update

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The partially completed ROSS User's Guide covers every function of ROSS in detail. The guide was available on the web until August, but was removed for an update. It will be reposted when the update is complete.

ROSS has a training and practice server. The ROSS training server is for classroom instruction and the ROSS practice server is for independent practice. The training server data is being reviewed and updated and will be ready by the end of September. The practice server is available for anyone with a user name and password, and allows users to practice in ROSS without jeopardizing important data on the production server. The data in the practice server is a copy of the production server data. Starting in September, the practice server will be reset every two weeks to erase all changes made by users since the last reset.

All of the ROSS training material will continue to evolve as updates and enhancements are made to the system. With classroom training, web-based training, online help, the User's Guide, the practice server, as well as the excellent support available from the ROSS Helpdesk, users have many opportunities to learn and practice ROSS. ROSS training products are available from the ROSS home page at: <http://ross.nwcg.gov/training.htm>.

