



# ROSS Newsletter



VOLUME 11

March/April, 2002

## 2002 Calendar

### April

- Formal Forest Service release of ROSS Dispatch
- SME ROSS Training Review: 4/1-5 Denver
- ROSS Core Team Meeting: 4/9-11 Arlington
- ROSS Lead Instructor Training for Eastern, Great Basin, Northern Rockies, Rocky Mountain Areas and NICC: 4/22-5/3 Boise

### May

- ROSS Coach Training for Eastern, Great Basin, Northern Rockies and Rocky Mountain Areas: 5/13-17 Boise
- ROSS SME Meeting: 5/14-16 Denver
- ROSS Core Team Meeting: 5/21-23 Denver

### June

- ROSS Lead Instructor Training for Alaska, Southern and Southwest Areas: 6/10-21 location TBD

## ROSS Dispatch Implementation Schedule Announced

ROSS Team representatives Jon Skeels and Nancy DeLong met with the National Coordinators the last week of February during their spring meeting in Phoenix. At the meeting a very productive discussion occurred regarding planning for this year's ROSS Dispatch implementation. This discussion resulted in a schedule for user training on the Dispatch portion of the ROSS application. The tentative sequence of Geographic Area Dispatch

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## ROSS Users Tackle Organization Relationships

ROSS Administrators from NICC and each Geographic Area recently converged at the new Forest Service Information Project Management Office in Lakewood, Colorado to learn more about entering organizations into ROSS. Each representative was asked to bring his or her most complex and challenging scenarios so that each could be considered on a case-by-case basis and the group could develop the best approach for each situation. Dispatchers across the country have been recently dusting off their ROSS Admin training materials and focusing on entering the rest of their data so they can begin to use ROSS to track resource status, so this working session was particularly timely.



Jon Skeels and Geographic Area representatives discuss the new ROSS Organization screen

Two people from User Technology Associates (UTA) ROSS Helpdesk also participated, which provided the additional benefit of allowing them to meet and get to know their customers better. The overall purpose of the session was to eliminate confusion and increase the comfort level of ROSS Administrators when entering organizational hierarchies into ROSS.

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## ROSS Dispatch Implementation Schedule Announced

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Training is as follows:

1. Rocky Mountain, Great Basin and Northern Rockies Areas - May to June 2002
2. Eastern Area - June to July 2002
3. Alaska Area - end of July to August 2002
4. Southern Area - August 2002
5. Southwest Area - August 2002
6. Northwest Area - November 2002
7. California - 2003

The ROSS Project Team agreed to do their best in scheduling training for these dates. If all goes well with the testing and new versions, they would plan and hold training sessions as early in May as possible.

Another result of the meeting was that the National Coordinators decided that most of the country would begin using ROSS to status resources by June 1, 2002. Dispatchers in every area except California were trained as ROSS Administrators last year. ROSS Team members Dennis Derr and Jerry Clements are currently assisting California Dispatch Centers with ROSS Administration Training and with entering resources.

At the meeting, several of the Coordinators offered valuable feedback on the current "roster" function in ROSS. Jon met with the SMEs the first week in March to share these suggestions and began the process to fine-tune that portion of the application.

The Coordinators will discuss current ROSS issues on their weekly conference call and are committed to making ROSS a success.



## Helpdesk Corner by David Kee

As the ROSS/DMS Helpdesk enters its fourth month of operation, call volume continues to increase. We continue to grow, prepare for our first full fire season, and learn more about our wildland community customers. We saw a 23.4% increase in calls between January and February. Recently, during a four-day period the helpdesk received 25 calls. The total for March was a record 132. All we can say is WOW! Keep those calls and e-mail messages coming.

We really like to hear from everyone, and we get great satisfaction from helping solve whatever questions you may have. Speaking of questions (and solutions), don't forget to check out the Helpdesk web page. It's really cool!

The easiest way to find it is to go to the familiar ROSS home page (<http://ross.nwcg.gov/>) and click the "User Support" tab. If you click the ROSS Helpdesk banner about midway down the page, it will take you to the ROSS/DMS Helpdesk home page. On this page we have: News, Frequently Asked Questions (recently updated), the Knowlix knowledge base and Heat Self Service.

I'd like to give you a brief explanation of the Heat Self Serve application in this issue of the ROSS Newsletter. In the next issue, I'll tell you about Knowlix.

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## ROSS Users Tackle Organization Relationships

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During last year's ROSS Administration training, dispatchers spent a lot of time sketching out the intricate relationships between the organizations in their areas before attempting to enter this data into ROSS. One assumption, which was taught at each ROSS Admin training session, was that an agency unit identifier ("unit ID") did not have to be unique in ROSS. For example, if "ID-BOF" were assigned to the Boise National Forest, that same unit ID could be used for any of the ranger districts within the Boise National Forest and ROSS would "ignore" the duplication. As with any new application, not everything was learned about the mechanics of how ROSS works until it was actually used, and further testing of ROSS Admin last December by Lockheed-Martin and the ROSS Project Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) revealed that duplicate IDs could not be used in ROSS without causing unforeseen problems. Since dispatchers had already entered several of their organizations in ROSS with duplicate unit IDs for the purpose of resource status, an additional field "Home Unit" was added to the Organization tab on the Resource Item screen in ROSS. This fix preserves the data that has already been entered, and allows tracking resource items to a subunit level (e.g., Boise Ranger District), while still being "owned" by a resource provider (e.g., Boise National Forest). The fix was tested and implemented, but the ROSS Project Team still needed to hold a working session to help users fix their organization data.

One essential notion that was emphasized again and again is that it is very important to draw diagrams prior to entering organizational data into ROSS. Whenever a question of how to enter a unique organizational structure arose, the first move was to go to the whiteboard to diagram the various agency and dispatch relationships. Only until the diagram made sense, was it time to begin entering the data. One was reminded of all those story

problems in algebra class. Just as in algebra, pictures speak volumes when it comes to ROSS organization entry!

The two days in Lakewood were time well spent. Everyone came away with a better understanding of the organizational structure of ROSS and was more at ease with how the data fit like jigsaw puzzle pieces into ROSS.

Some of the key points and tips from the two days in Lakewood are:

1. All names and unit IDs must be unique in ROSS.
2. For dispatch offices currently having the same unit ID as a Forest, a change must be made to one of them. Simply removing the "F" for Forest, and adding a "C" for Dispatch Center is a quick and easy fix.
3. For Ranger Districts currently sharing the Forest unit ID (or counties currently sharing the state unit ID), the new "Home Unit" box removes the need for duplicate IDs.
4. Data already entered in ROSS Admin need not be deleted and reentered. A little "massaging" and use of the new "Home Unit" field will remedy the vast majority of issues.
5. Unless your organization is very homogenous (e.g., a Forest Service dispatch office dispatching only for the Forest), draw a diagram of the dispatch and reporting affiliations, as well as the providers and owners. This will help you visualize the data entry.
6. Quality ROSS user support is a simple phone call away: 1-866-224-ROSS (7677).

Many of the issues dealing with organizations have previously been addressed in the 12/20/2001 letter sent to ROSS users and in ROSS Tips 1 through 9, which can be found on the ROSS web page at <http://ross.nwccg.gov>, listed under ROSS Tips & Tricks.



## Helpdesk Corner

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**HEAT Self Service (HSS)** is another way for you to contact the Helpdesk. If you're too busy to call, don't have time to e-mail us, or are just the sort of web-savvy person who likes to take matters into his or her own hands, HSS is for you! HSS allows you to log in and ask a question or tell us about a problem you're having. After you log in, you fill out a form and click "Submit." It's that easy.

What happens then? The Helpdesk is notified and soon contacts you about your item. The really great feature about HSS is that once you log in, you'll see a running history of every contact you've had with the Helpdesk. You can also send the Helpdesk a note (or update) to any "ticket" that is open in your name.

Sound great? Many of you already have a login; since the Helpdesk has been trying to create HSS logins the first time customers call us. If you have not called us and would like to try HSS, or if we missed creating you an HSS login during your first call, just follow these steps:

1. Contact the ROSS Helpdesk at 1-866-224-7677 (1-866-224-ROSS).
2. Tell the technician you would like an HSS login.
3. Provide the technician with your:
  - Name
  - Location
  - Phone number
  - HSS password
  - Answer to a security question for authentication

Keep those calls and e-mails coming! The ROSS/DMS Helpdesk is ready and waiting to help make you successful!

**The UTA Helpdesk may be contacted by e-mail at : [Helpdesk@dms.nwcg.gov](mailto:Helpdesk@dms.nwcg.gov)**



## ROSS Team Hits the Dispatchers' Workshop Circuit

Since the second week of January in New Orleans, ROSS Team members have been hitting the roads and airports to attend Geographic Area Dispatchers' Workshops to talk about ROSS and demonstrate the Dispatch Module of the application. With ROSS Statusing being implemented in dispatch centers across the country this summer and Dispatch soon to follow, interest in ROSS has been particularly keen this spring. Feedback from those dispatchers who have seen or run the Dispatch Module of the application has been positive. Several suggestions from dispatchers have been entered into the change management process or have been incorporated by the ROSS programmers from these demonstrations.

As in previous years, every member of the ROSS Team who had the time pitched in. This exposed a good cross-section of the Team to various issues that are important in different areas of the country, and brought different ROSS Team perspectives to groups of dispatchers. The ROSS Partners played an even larger role in this year's meetings, generally planning and leading the presentations. The ROSS Core Team, Business Team (Subject Matter Experts) and the Implementation Team were particularly well represented. "We wanted to have a member of the Implementation Team at each workshop, because it's so important to work closely with the area dispatchers as we begin training on ROSS Dispatch," said Nancy DeLong.

The two remaining workshops will be held in April in Alaska and the Rocky Mountain Area.