

ROSS Partner Conference Call Notes
May 15, 2003

Participants:

- ROSS Team—Neal Hitchcock, Jon Skeels, Nancy DeLong, Beth Grey Cloud, Mary Ann Szymoniak, Sue Rod Chaffee, Andy Gray
- Southern—Pat Boucher
- Rocky Mountain – Flint Cheney, Debbie Bozarth, Rob Juhola, Jay Wickham
- Southwest – Cheryl Dickson, Nicole Montoya, Beth Spencer
- Eastern—Laura McIntyre-Kelly, Dave Boyd, Ann
- Northwest- Phil Cardin
- Western Great Basin – Kathy Wiegard
- Eastern Great Basin – Julie Landreth (on detail from Eastern Area)
- Western Great Basin – n/a
- Northern California – Susie Stingley-Russell, Ed Duncan
- Southern California – n/a
- Northern Rockies – Larry Elder, Sharon, Rosanna Finley, Ray Nelson, Rhonda
- Alaska- n/a
- NICC – n/a

Note: Additional “post-conference call information,” if any, is shown in bold text below.

Business Community Update – Neal Hitchcock:

- This is an exciting period – a few dispatch centers have “tested the deep end of the pool and are getting by okay”
- We can all learn from their ideas and suggestions
- Things are going well
- We’re moving along and good work is being done
- Had a very routine NWCG meeting this week in regards to ROSS
- Let’s hope for a more routine fire season this year

Project Update—Jon Skeels:

- Hats off to the dispatchers in the Southwest who were brave enough to “jump in first” by using ROSS Dispatch to mobilize/demobilize multiple Type 2 fires
- With every incident you’ll get better at using ROSS
- Every new system is imperfect and brings some discomfort during the transition – it’s a big transition for the dispatch community
- Our goal is to mitigate all the problems we can
- The ROSS Helpdesk and staff at Lockheed-Martin have done a great job
- Some slowness experienced on the Practice server yesterday (which is being used for practice and training sessions)
 - Sized for about 250 users and we had 379 on yesterday
 - We’ve increased its capability and today there are 280 users on Practice
 - Remember, Production is sized for 2,048 users (400 are on today)

- All the lab testing we've done can't simulate the actual load of 50 to 60 networks hitting servers. We learn from actual use and we'll increase server capacity as we need to. We plan to lease an additional server this summer.
- Lessons-learned:
 - Best to stagger practice sessions (i.e. not have whole country practicing on Wednesdays)
 - Need to keep the Helpdesk and Lockheed-Martin in the loop during heavy practice periods
 - Some specific sites (e.g. Craig, CO; Rawlins, WY) have very slow networks. We'll work with the agencies to see what can be done to maximize speed there.
 - The ROSS Helpdesk is being contacted by dispatchers asking for on-the-phone ROSS training during fire busts
 - We anticipated this, but it's not their role (although they want to help)
 - Please use training materials, ROSS Tips and reference materials that are on the web
 - Data entry – need to follow the published standards
 - If you get started off on the right foot on a fire, you'll get through it much easier
 - If mistakes are made on the fly (e.g. entering rental cars as resources rather than rental car service) we can help you get through it
- Current stats:
 - 167 incidents
 - 3,000+ requests (for teams, air tankers, lots of equipment, overhead, etc.)
 - All in all, things are going well
- NICC may be directing all GACCs to implement ROSS Dispatch at the GACC level next week.

Question: Andy Gray: Jon, how should GACCs coordinate when they practice to minimize impacts on the server?

Response: Jon Skeels: NICC and the GACCs need to coordinate that. If one GACC practices with a neighboring GACC or internally, it shouldn't impact the system much. Also, we didn't know the Northwest was entering data last week for an exercise this week, so we recycled the data on Monday. If you're entering data and planning a big exercise, please let Beth Grey Cloud or Nancy DeLong know in advance so we can time the recycle accordingly.

Comment: Ray Nelson (Northern Rockies): We're conducting on-going training and practice. The update on Monday caught us off guard – data and different roles.

Response: Jon Skeels: We needed to release v1.2.5.1 and 1.2.5.2 this week to allow NICC and others to dispatch external incidents. Some changes:

- Now if a dispatch organization is to dispatch with ROSS, the administrator must remove the "Office Not Dispatching - ROSS" role from all users in that dispatch organization. Otherwise, the organization will remain "status only."
- A new user role is "resource status" which is a user in a ROSS dispatch organization who will only do status.
- You can create an external dispatch organization using the dispatch office i.d.
- The next version (v1.2.6 – scheduled for June) will let you retrieve requests without having to call an office and ask them to UTF it.

Comments: Ray Nelson:

- As we move forward this spring, if we encounter any changes (new versions, etc.) that require us to change all the user roles, it'll be an impact us.
- We're going to activate ROSS Dispatch on Monday (May 19).
- There's a lot to understand with ROSS – We don't want to overburden the Helpdesk, but they will get lots of calls requiring help.

Comment: Nancy DeLong:

We'd intended to send out a release notice before the new versions were released. We couldn't quite pull it off this time but we'll do better the next time.

Comments: Jon Skeels: Ray, were there any particular area in ROSS that you need help with?

Response: Ray Nelson: There are many "nuisance" items, but we can use ROSS to do everything we need to do.

Comment: Dave Boyd: The Users Guide needs to be fixed. It's too large and complex.

Response: Jon Skeels: We've received feedback that our reference materials are too basic and too detailed. Nancy and Beth will call you to discuss specific areas where we can improve it. We currently have a couple of people dedicated to updating these products. Be sure and use the online "Reference Material" until that happens. It is located at <http://ross.nwccg.gov>; "Implementation/Training" tab.

Implementation Update - Nancy DeLong:

We'd like to spend some time hearing from the Southwest Area. They used ROSS to mobilize a couple of Type II teams. Beth Grey Cloud went to Alamogordo (Lincoln Zone) this week to coach them along.

Comments: Beth Grey Cloud:

- Lincoln Zone was the first to mob a Team in ROSS and they did well
- They ordered dispatchers with "special needs" (ROSS trained), but no one saw that when they filled the requests. The lesson learned is to make a follow-up phone call when you place a special needs request. **Note: a change request item has been placed to include a "flag" of some sort to draw attention to a pending request with a special need.**

Comments: Nicole Montoya (Lincoln Zone): We ordered our team using O-1.2, O-1.2, O-1.3, etc. The Management Team uses I-Suite, which doesn't accept this type of request number.

Response: Jon Skeels: We're aware of this situation. I-Suite is not a national system, although several teams have been using it. It is now sponsored under the NWCCG Incident Base Automation project. The Incident Obligation Project is the top priority – following that, our next priority is upgrading I-Suite, which will include expanding the field to accept this sort of request numbers.

You still can also order teams by individual request numbers. It'll take more time, but would still be quicker than filling out a resource order form with individual request numbers.

Comments: Cheryl Dickson (Southeast Arizona Zone):

- The Time Unit Leader on our team used a “work-around” – they just entered the team as one O-number in I-Suite and then noted the separate numbers in a remarks entry.
- We ran initial attack with air tankers, lead planes and air attack; handled the radios; ordered the team and responded to a shelter deployment all with a 5-person shop. We found we could do it all without setting up expanded.
- There are consistency issues in ROSS moving from screen to screen (analogy of Hearts and Spades card games – in one game you want the queen and in the other you don’t).
- Jumping back and forth between the phone or radio and ROSS – it’s hard to know where you are in ROSS. Suggestion: some sort of button that would return you to where you last were working.
- We also couldn’t print for a while for some reason. We found a PC that we could print from later. We could print reports but not from individual screens.

Response: Jon Skeels: This is great information. Please write it up for us so we can follow-up.

Comments: Cheryl Dickson:

- I hear Ray Nelson’s trepidation about beginning to use it, but it really works. One or two people in your shop can do all the ordering and keep it going.
- If your people have been trained but haven’t used ROSS in a while, they’ll need some help and coaching.
- The beauty of it is you can log on and trouble-shoot for people in other offices (Cheryl logged on and helped the Lincoln Zone).
- We used it for initial attack – even reassigned air tankers and lead planes – and everything is doable. I love it – it’s a good program.
- I’m disappointed we can’t do supplies in ROSS.

Response: Jon Skeels: Supplies are coming – but not this summer. Andy Gray is leading a separate NWCG project to re-engineer ICBS. That will include an interface with ROSS for supply orders.

Comment: Ray Nelson: When you print a resource order off ROSS the type is so small it doesn’t fax well.

Response: Jon Skeels: We’re going to enlarge the header and improve the form.

Question: Rod Chaffee: How long did it take you to create an incident in ROSS?

Response: Cheryl Dickson: About one to one-and-a-half minutes. The largest amount of time was spent getting a team member to write down directions to the incident. Once you have the information in ROSS, you can run with it.

Partner Update: Andy Gray:

Two items this month:

- Welcome Julie Vogan – A new Partner who is leading California’s ROSS Implementation
- The ROSS Newsletter

Communications Update: Mary Ann Szymoniak:

Andy sent a note out earlier. I'd like to set aside part of the ROSS Newsletter for articles written by ROSS Partners. The deadline for the May/June Newsletter is June 1.

Note: contact Mary Ann at: mszymoniak@fs.fed.us (or 208-947-3715).

Business Team Update: Rod Chaffee:

- Mostly busy with testing, assisting Implementation Team and the Helpdesk
- Focus right now is testing v 1.2.6

Question: Julie Landreth (Eastern Great Basin): When will the Detail Request Form be functional?

Response: Jon Skeels:

- A big issue with supplemental forms is that there is no ability to print them at this time. We hope to resolve this by this fall.
- All forms can be used internally to ROSS
- The Detail Request form will receive some updates in version 1.2.6.
- The Food Service Request form is functional but won't print right now. We're working on it.
- Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) form – the form has changed. We're working on incorporating the new version in ROSS. In the meantime, use the version in the National Mob Guide.
- Infrared Request (IR) Form – Working on it, too. In the meantime continue to use the form in the National Mob Guide

Comment: Phil Cardin (Northwest): The Northwest will hold ROSS practice sessions this Thursday and next Thursday (5/15 and 5/22). Steve Arasim will coordinate with Beth and Nancy.

Question: Jon Skeels: We plan to replace the current "Practice" data with another snapshot of "Production" data on June 23. We currently have April 14 Production data on Practice. What database snapshot do the users want?

(Consensus from Partners on the call seemed to be replacing April 14 snapshot with production data closer to June 23. That will give everyone a few weeks to clean up their databases with better information).

Comment: Pat Boucher (Southern Area): Concerned about moving ROSS Dispatch implementation date up to May 19 in the Southern Area. Will discuss with Jon and Andy.

Response: Jon Skeels: Implementing ROSS Dispatch is a business decision between NICC and the GACCs, not a ROSS Team decision. We'll discuss it with you but NICC and the GACCs need to work out the timing.

Note: Following the ROSS Partner Conference Call, ROSS Team members discussed ROSS Dispatch use on conference calls with the Southwest and Eastern Areas. Both expressed a desire for "quick reference" type products of various types that could help dispatchers using ROSS again for the first time since training.

A number of products are available on the web:

- A resource order form showing corresponding ROSS screens can be reached from the ROSS Homepage (<http://ross.nwcg.gov>) and clicking on “Color Resource Order”
- Reference cards for: New Incident, New Request, Request Status and Pending Request can be found on the ROSS User Support website (http://ross.nwcg.gov/user_support.htm).
- A number of instructional streaming video presentations are available at (<http://ross.nwcg.gov/presentations.htm>)
- ROSS Tips are found at (<http://ross.nwcg.gov/rosstips.htm>)
- ROSS release notes for versions 1.2.5.1 and 1.2.5.2 - versions that correct minor issues in version 1.2.5 can be found at (http://ross.nwcg.gov/release_notices.htm)
- Dispatch Instructor’s Reference Guides are on the training page (the page that is open to the public). While these can be more detailed than some user’s want, they can provide users with helpful information, particularly those areas where the users guide is not yet complete. (<http://ross.nwcg.gov/training.htm>)
- We are currently working on “Training Paths” that will assist supervisors in getting dispatchers up to speed or current on ROSS. These should be completed by mid-June.

Additionally, the Southwest Area has created some of their own one-page “ROSS cheat sheets” which can be accessed from the “Dispatch” link on the SWCC website <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/fire/>. Once on the website, click on “ROSS Tips & Answers.”

Next call—June 19, 2003 same number.