



USDA FOREST SERVICE—FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS ADVISORY GROUP

CHARTER

Background

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) consist of the airframe, sensor and communication technologies, telemetry systems, and guidance equipment required for safe launch and recovery. The application of UAS and related technologies is currently being adopted by several agencies to monitor and characterize conditions of resources, structures, weather, etc. to support a variety of operational applications and information needs. The potential benefits of these technologies to the Forest Service include rapid and focused deployment, unique data acquisition and communications capabilities, and reduced risks to personnel.

UAS and associated technologies are rapidly emerging and hold potential to support operational needs across several deputy and staff areas within the Forest Service. Consequently, the ongoing rapid advancement in UAS and associated technologies, and the requirements for UAS operations to adhere to Federal Aviation Regulations, necessitate the need to facilitate an agency-wide approach to coordinating and managing the operational implementation of UAS in the Forest Service.

Name

The name of this group, hereinafter referred to as the Advisory Group, is the USFS Unmanned Aircraft Systems Advisory Group. The Advisory Group will operate under the auspices of the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management (FAM).

Authority

The Advisory Group is established pursuant to the authorities granted by the Director of Fire and Aviation Management.

The deliberations of this Advisory Group are exempt from the Federal Advisory Committee Act under section 204 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995.

The Advisory Group receives leader's intent and direction from the Director of Fire and Aviation Management and reports to the Assistant Director of Aviation. The Advisory groups also receive advice and input from the additional Deputy / Staff Directors.

The Chair of the Advisory Group is authorized to convene meetings, schedule agenda items, make contacts, negotiate work assignments, make commitments on behalf of the Advisory Group, may charge members or technical specialists with tasks, create working groups and task teams, or commit such resources as are available within the Advisory Group or as authorized by the Director of Fire and Aviation Management.

Purpose

The Advisory Group is established to ensure Forest Service UAS planning and operations enhance the ability of the agency to perform its mission more efficiently and effectively.

- Scope - The Advisory Group will primarily focus on UAS strategic planning, assess implications of decisions on current or proposed manned aircraft programs, and risk assessment of any proposed operations.
- Objectives -
 1. Create interim protocols to conduct requisite UAS missions and inform future operational use of UAS.
 2. Review existing aviation policies and recommend changes to agency policy related to the acquisition and operational use of UAS and associated technologies.
 3. Prepare relevant guidance documentation for UAS implementation within the Forest Service (e.g., communication plan, strategic plan, and risk assessment document).
- Tasks to be completed -
 1. Develop and implement a process for the field and units to create a platform needs assessment (manned versus unmanned).
 2. Develop mission by mission approval process and mission protocols for UAS projects.
 3. Recommend agency UAS standard operating procedures (e.g., mission planning, UAS airworthiness criteria, spectrum management, pilot requirements, Project Aviation Safety Plan, risk assessment, after-action review, mishap/accident reporting, etc.).
 4. Establish protocols to engage external agencies to support Forest Service mission objectives and information needs (e.g., development of Memorandum of Understanding/Agreements, procedures to request and utilize UAS resources, mission coordination, etc.).
 5. Assess feasibility of integrating UAS technologies into existing government programs and systems (e.g., Federal Aviation Interactive Reporting System [FAIRS], Working Capital Fund [WCF] Aircraft Program, Automated Flight Following [AFF] system, etc.).
 6. Document and disseminate relevant information regarding UAS program activities (e.g., awareness materials, past and upcoming UAS missions, points of contact, standard operating procedures, etc.).
 7. Identify observations and challenges of Forest Service deputy and staff areas that could be addressed by UAS technologies.
 8. Develop comprehensive strategic planning documentation to guide UAS implementation within the Forest Service.
 9. Identify unique risks associated with UAS operation.
 10. Develop risk assessment documentation for Forest Service UAS operation.

Membership

The Advisory Group is composed of members from several Forest Service deputy and staff areas representing aviation management, technology/application development, and potential agency application areas.

Advisory Group Membership

- Advisory Group Chair (Aviation Management Specialist FAM - WO)
- Airworthiness/Aircraft and Pilot Inspection (Aviation Safety Inspector Airworthiness - WO)
- Aviation Policy (Regional Aviation Officer)
- Aviation Safety (Aviation Safety Manager - WO)
- Communications (National Interagency Incident Communications)
- Engineering (Remote Sensing Program Manager - WO)
- Forest Health Protection (National Aerial Survey and Aviation Safety Manager)
- Forest Service Information Technology (Fire GIS & IT - WO)
- ICS/Fire Suppression (Fire Incident Commander)
- Law Enforcement and Investigations (LE&I Representative)
- Remote Sensing Applications Center (RSAC)
- Regional Aviation Officer (RAO)
- Research and Development (R&D Fire Laboratory Representative)
- Technology and Development (SDTDC)

The Advisory Group Chair will be approved by the Director of Fire and Aviation Management. The term of the Advisory Group Chair appointment will be three years and may be extended at the discretion of the Director of Fire and Aviation Management.

Primary members for the Advisory Group will be approved by this charter. The term of each member will be three years and may be extended at the discretion of the Advisory Group Chair. Technical specialists may be added as interim members with Advisory Group Chair approval. Representatives from external agencies (e.g. DOI USGS/OAS, USDA, NASA, NOAA, DHS, etc.) may be invited to participate in a consultative role, as needed and approved by the Advisory Group Chair, to assist in fulfilling group objectives, tasks, and deliverables.

Advisory Group recommendations, reviews and decisions will be reached by consensus and documented by a briefing paper for leadership. Advisory Group recommendations and decisions approved by the Director of Fire and Aviation Management will be documented by official correspondence to the field in a Decision Memo or letter.

Organization

The Advisory Group operates under the direction of the Director of Fire and Aviation Management and the Assistant Director staff listed in the Authority section. The Advisory groups also receive advice and input from the additional Deputy / Staff Directors.

The Advisory Group may create units and task teams with the approval from the Assistant Director staff listed in the Authority section.

Cooperation and Coordination

The Advisory Group will coordinate with identified representatives of Forest Service deputy and staff areas to identify application areas and data/information requirements for the specific agency use of UAS and associated technologies. The Advisory Group will also coordinate with and leverage the experience and expertise of representatives from external agencies that are either currently evaluating UAS technologies or have transitioned them to program operations.

Responsibility

The Advisory Group is primarily responsible for reviewing and recommending agency policy relating to the procurement and utilization of UAS platforms and associated technologies and conducting UAS missions; and, developing strategic planning and guidance documentation for the implementation of UAS platforms and associated technologies within the Forest Service.

Charter Amendments

Periodic review of the charter will be conducted to maintain accordance of the Advisory Group's efforts with evolving agency business needs and information resource governance objectives. Changes to, or revocation of, this charter must be reviewed by the Assistant Directors listed in the Authority section and approved by the signatory Directors. Changes to, or revocation of this charter will be documented by official correspondence to the field in a Decision Memo or letter.

Changes to, or revocation of, this charter will be listed here by official date and document title.

Approval

The Unmanned Aircraft Systems Advisory Group and charter are effective as of the date of approval by all signatory Directors, and shall remain in effect for three years from the date of approval or until otherwise revised or revoked. The specified group tasks and deliverables are required to be completed within this time period. This charter also will be documented by official correspondence to the field in a Decision Memo or letter.

Approved: /s/ Tom Harbour

4 July 12

Tom Harbour, Director
Fire and Aviation Management

Date

Approved: Emilee Blount

Emilee Blount, Director
Engineering

14 Sep 12

Date

Approved: Robert Mangold

Robert Mangold, Director
Forest Health Protection

9/13/12

Date

Approved: Carlos Rodriguez Franco

Carlos Rodriguez Franco, Director
Forest Management Sciences

13/ Sep / 20 12

Date