



# The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy: Northeast Regional Action Plan



## Executive Summary

This Northeast Regional Action Plan details the goals, desired outcomes, investment options, outcome measures, and priority implementation actions for the Northeast Cohesive Strategy Region. These actions, as identified by the Northeast Regional Strategy Committee (RSC), will help guide all the partners in wildland fire management in the Northeast Region to make progress in achieving the overarching national goals: Restore and Maintain Resilient Landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities, and Wildfire Response.

The Northeast Region encompasses twenty Midwestern and Northeastern states and the District of Columbia. The twenty states comprise the most densely populated region of the nation, home to more than 41 percent of Americans. Land ownership and management, weather and climate event-created fuel loading (surface fuels loading), high wildfire occurrence numbers, and extensive wildland urban interface (WUI) distinguish the Northeast Region from the West, yet the Northeast has similarities to the Southeast. The Northeast can be described in risk management terms as having a large number of small, mostly human-caused, wildfires with a low occurrence of large wildfires, but all these present a high risk to life and property when they do occur.

Wildland fire management in the Northeast Region is the result of collaboration, partnerships, and cooperation among states, Fire Compacts, federal fire management agencies (e.g. The Forest Service (FS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), National Park Service (NPS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Tribal governments, and many local fire departments. Addressing wildland fire is not simply a fire management, fire operations or wildland-urban interface problem – it is much larger and more complex. Each agency and organization represented by the Northeast RSC has the authority, responsibility, and autonomy to develop and implement their own policies. But long-term success can only be achieved through a unified, collaborative and focused effort of all. There are number of important considerations for Cohesive Strategy leaders and managers to keep in mind while implementing this Regional Action Plan:

- *The implementation actions expressed in this plan, while voluntary in nature, represent the collective work of the Northeast RSC and stakeholders to identify the most important actions needed to make progress toward achieving a more efficient, effective, and collaborative wildland fire management strategy for the Northeast.*
- *Leads and collaborators have been identified for each of the actions and task under each goal and option. It is important to note that not every agency and organization in the Cohesive Strategy partnership will have to work on every action and task.*



- *With each partner doing their share we can make significant progress in advancing wildland fire management in the Northeast as outlined in this action plan.*
- *While more funding is not anticipated in the near term, the Cohesive Strategy is focused on making current investments more effective and working within current programs to get better results with available funding. Collaboration is especially important during times of economic stress.*
- *A commitment to addressing the greatest needs and achieving our common goals with the Cohesive Strategy is essential. Diversity of organizational and agency missions does not preclude, but rather can strengthen achievement toward the collaboratively developed goals.*
- *We strongly encourage agencies, organizations, and stakeholders represented on the Northeast RSC to take timely, decisive and effective steps to follow the Cohesive Strategy's Goals and Guiding Principles as they implement the actions and tasks in this action plan.*
- *Success in achieving the three broad goals of the Cohesive Strategy is a long-term proposition – no single decision by policymakers or management actions by land managers will solve our Nation's complex wildland fire issues.*
- *The strength and success of this Regional Action Plan will lie in its ability to motivate collaborative actions to reduce wildland fire risk by the diverse agencies, organizations, and partners involved in the wildland fire issue. Regular communications among Cohesive Strategy partners will be essential for success.*

The Northeast Regional Risk Analysis completed in November 2012 identified a set of feasible investment options for addressing the Cohesive Strategy Goals in the Northeast U.S. For each of the investment options, the key risks, barriers, and opportunities were identified, and are addressed in this Regional Action. These options represent alternative strategies that wildland fire management organizations, federal, state, and local governments, non-governmental organizations and local communities can adopt in any number and combination to best meet their objectives and address the risks they may face from potential wildfire impacts. The options developed are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. ***There is no one preferred option to be applied across the Northeast Region.*** Instead the investment options should be balanced to achieve each of the national Cohesive Strategy goals and implement effective wildland fire management consistent with applicable land management objectives.

This Action Plan identifies key actions which are necessary to implement the options. As a starting point, the Northeast Region developed key actions under each option based upon feedback received from stakeholders during Phases I, II, and III of the planning process. The actions listed are key actions that are intended to be implemented during the next five years, and that will provide the most benefit to the region over that time period. The Action Plan describes the scope of the actions, the tasks associated with the actions, the lead and coordinating groups that will be implementing the actions, and the timeframe in which it is expected that the actions will take place.



The regional options for addressing each goal are summarized as follows:

<b>Goal 1: Restore &amp; Maintain Landscapes</b>	<b>Goal 2: Fire Adapted Communities</b>	<b>Goal 3: Response to Wildfire</b>
<b>Regional Option 1A</b> - Expand the use of prescribed fire as an integral tool to meet management objectives in the Northeast.	<b>Regional Option 2A</b> - Focus on promoting and supporting local adaptation activities to be taken by communities.	<b>Regional Option 3A</b> - Improve the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the wildland fire community.
<b>Regional Option 1B</b> – Maintain and increase where possible, the extent of fire dependent ecosystems and expand the use of fire as a disturbance process.	<b>Regional Option 2B</b> - Focus on directing hazardous fuel treatments to the wildland-urban interfaces.	<b>Regional Option 3B</b> - Increase the local response capacity for initial attack of wildfires.
<b>Regional Option 1C</b> - Focus on mitigating “event” fuels to reduce potential fire hazard.	<b>Regional Option 2C</b> - Focus on promoting and supporting prevention programs and activities.	<b>Regional Option 3C</b> - Further develop shared response capacity for extended attack and managing wildfire incidents with long duration fire potential.

The Northeast Regional Strategy Committee will continue to oversee, guide and coordinate implementation by all Cohesive Strategy partners. The Northeast Regional Strategy Committee is comprised of representatives from the following agencies and organizations:

- Department of the Interior
  - US Fish and Wildlife Service
  - US Geological Service
  - National Park Service
  - Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Department of Agriculture
  - US Forest Service
- Fond du Lac Indian Reservation
- Intertribal Timber Council
- Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters (20 Northeast and Midwest States, and District of Columbia)
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- National Association of Counties (NACO) (Lake Co., MN)



It is anticipated that in the near future, a permanent regional coordinating entity will be established comprised of the leaders from the partners in the Cohesive Strategy, or their designated representatives to oversee the continued coordination, implementation, monitoring and accountability responsibilities committed to in the National Cohesive Strategy for the Northeast Region.

Monitoring of progress and accountability for accomplishment of the actions in this plan by Cohesive Strategy leaders and managers is critical to the success of the Northeast Cohesive Strategy Action Plan. Monitoring will provide an essential feedback loop that is the basis for continuous improvement. Monitoring also includes the opportunity to identify and incorporate new accomplishment data and scientific information as it becomes available. A regular process of reporting performance measure and activity accomplishments will maintain a regular focus on the three Cohesive Strategy goals, communicate progress nationally, with the other Cohesive Strategy Regions, and among the Northeast Cohesive Strategy partners and stakeholders, and provide an opportunity to make course adjustments as work progresses.

A Regional Communication Strategy will be developed in more detail following the completion and release of this Regional Action Plan. This communication strategy will be designed to:

- Identify and share of Lessons Learned, and examples of Success Stories related to the implementation of the Cohesive Strategy's three goals in the Northeast.
- Expand and maintain stakeholder outreach to engage partners, stakeholders, and local communities in the development dialogue and collaborative solutions for making progress on the three goals.
- Improve the understanding and maintain the engagement within those organizations and agencies represented on the Northeast Regional Strategy Committee.
- Provide all partners and stakeholders with timely accurate information on Cohesive Strategy progress in the Northeast.