Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy
National Goals; Collective Solutions

Response to Wildfire
Fire Adapted Communities
Resilient Landscapes
Supported by Science

Northeast Regional Strategy Committee (NE RSC) Update   **September 2012**

Fine Tuning: The Northeast RSC works the CS Alternatives

During the July meeting with the National Science & Analysis Team (NSAT), the Northeast RSC spent a good deal of time examining the investment options for each goal of the Cohesive Strategy. We discovered that while providing a good picture of the priority options they were not configured to represent true alternatives. Options by CS goal were recombined to form alternatives that represent feasible approaches to addressing the wildland fire risks in the Northeast Region.

In August, the NE RSC conducted outreach through the members to further develop our alternatives to illustrate and prioritize which combination or set of options under each goal may best represent the alternatives for implementing the Cohesive Strategy in the Northeast. The results of this data collection will greatly assist the NSAT in focusing their efforts to support our alternatives with pertinent data, models and spatial information that is more relevant, focused to the Northeast. This is our opportunity to begin to define the CS in the context of the challenges and needs for the Northeast.

The intent of the risk assessment and analysis is not to make a final decision as to which alternative management options will be selected. Rather, the intent is to derive information useful for further deliberations among stakeholders, partners, agencies, and policy-makers at multiple scales.

UPCOMING: NE RSC wants to hear from you!

The NE RSC Risk Analysis Report will be submitted on October 15, 2012. **We want your help** to shape our analysis – **please comment on the draft report** *between September 24th and 28th*. Prior to that date, the NE RSC will also be fully engaged with the NSAT in scientific analysis.

- September 5-7: Joint RSC/Science meeting in Denver to review and discuss the latest information for use in supporting alternatives
- Week of September 10: Draft Risk Report being prepared. NE RSC members will be reaching out to NE stakeholders for input into the draft report development.
- **September 24-28: Stakeholder comment period on the draft Risk Report. The draft report and comment form will be available September 24th at:** http://sites.nemac.org/northeastcohesivefire/.

Please plan your schedules to review and comment on the documents. We want to hear from you!

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A Real Picture of Wildland Fire: challenging fire managers & scientists

State and federal agencies have viewed fire occurrence data as a practical and relevant measure of forest health for over a century, but reporting remains incomplete and inconsistent among jurisdictions. In that the purpose of the Cohesive Strategy is to address wildland fire across such boundaries, various datasets are needed, and that introduces challenge. The NSAT has explored four major sources of fire information, assessed their merits and faults, and used them separately and in combination. These include NFIRS, State datasets, a range of inter-related Federal datasets, and hotspots detected from space.

(1) By far, the largest number of outdoor wildfires reported is in the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). These data include fires to which local fire departments have responded. Because of the large number of reporting entities, there are limitations to the precision of any analysis. For example, there are lightning fires for which the ignition source is listed as arson. Inconsistent participation may also be a concern, especially if reporting relates to socio-economic factors or capacity that may affect proposed actions or solutions.

(2) Federal wildland fire data is reported by multiple agency systems and is available in a number of formats. Large individual fires are captured in the Incident Status Summary (ICS-209) database, all federal (and some non-federal) fires are captured more generally in semi-daily Situation Reports, and individual fires are included in combined DOI and USFS databases. Federal data is the most reliable of the three reporting datasets.

(3) Individual states usually have their own wildland fire datasets, and these have been consolidated by an ongoing National Association of State Foresters initiative. These state data are highly variable in terms of included number of fires, years and land areas. Such limitations make this combined dataset the most challenging of the three to use in a national assessment and integrate with NFIRS, yet this set often includes fires not reported elsewhere, like state lands where local fire departments may not respond.

(4) MODIS hotspots provide a very different perspective on wildland fire of all types for the US. While space-based fire detection is hampered by fire duration, cloud cover, smoke, and tree canopy, this bias is different from the reporting bias that we get from the prior datasets, so it provides a useful comparison if not a reality check. We use appropriately-scaled National Land Cover Dataset information to separate out urban and crop residue fires from "natural" (forest and grassland) hotspots for comparisons.

The bottom line is wildfire dataset comparisons illustrate the importance of relying on a range of sources. We can't generate a single combined database of all wildland fires for the US, so we have integrated the first three datasets at a coarse, county-level resolution, useful for broad scale comparisons and analyses. A keen way to think of these datasets is that they provide multiple versions of the truth--diverse perspectives on our national fire situation--and as such, there is richness in each that we need to capture and communicate. *Contributed by Steve Norman, USFS, Research Ecologist, Southern Research Station*

Upcoming Success Story Profile:

Christmas Day Fire 2011
Spirit Lake, Iowa

A wildfire cause by debris burning in drought-stricken NW Iowa threatens homes and the Welch Lake Waterfowl Production Area. Previous fuels treatments using prescribed fire aided in the control of the fire and limiting its spread.

State of Maine, National Park Service, and local Partnerships Provide Community Wildland Fire Protection - Acadia National Park, Maine

A fuel reduction project on Baker Island brings together partners to create defensible space that both improves the health of an ecosystem and protects important cultural resources.

Find success stories from the NE at:
http://sites.nemac.org/northeastcohesive-fire/about-you
See our national Partner Perspectives and Success Stories at:
http://forestsandrangelands.gov