



**Western Regional Strategy Committee
2013 Year in Review**

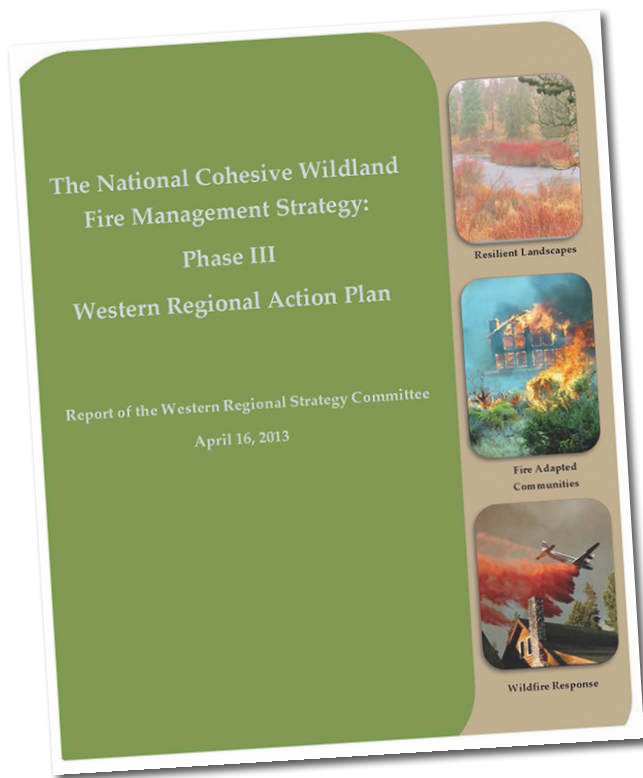
RESTORING RESILIENT LANDSCAPES
CREATING FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES
IMPROVING WILDFIRE RESPONSE

Prepared by Kate Lighthall - Non Profit Solutions - Klighthall@bendcable.com
for the Western Regional Strategy Committee
March 2014

Western Region Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

*Resilient Landscapes
Fire Adapted Communities
Wildfire Response
Supported by Science*

Western Regional Strategy Committee 2013 Year in Review



A YEAR OF PROGRESS

The Western Regional Strategy Committee (WRSC) entered 2013 with significant goals - complete the Western Regional Action Plan and begin implementation of the highest priority actions. With a new Regional Coordinator on board and a fierce commitment to leveraging collaborative behaviors, the remainder of 2013 saw tremendous advances in institutionalizing a culture of "working better together."

Looking ahead, the WRSC will continue to foster and encourage collaborative efforts despite budget constraints to make significant improvements and advancements towards the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy.

Thank you for your continued participation and support,

Your Western Regional Strategy Committee Co-Chairs,

Kent Connaughton
Regional Forester
US Forest Service
Pacific Northwest
Region

Tony Harwood
Forest Planning Manager
Confederated Tribes
of the Salish & Kootenai

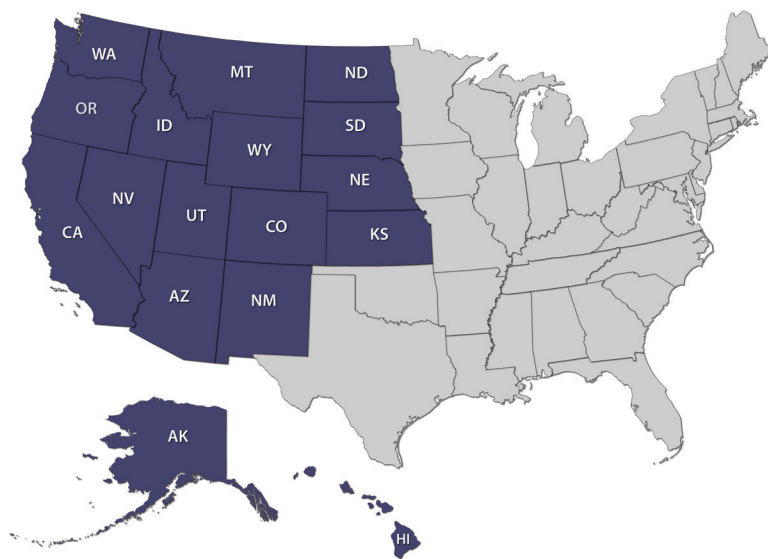
Ann Walker
Western Governors'
Association Contractor
Ann Walker Consulting

THE NATIONAL SCENE

The WRSC participated regularly in the broader context of the National Cohesive Strategy effort through the Cohesive Strategy Steering Committee (CSSC) and the Wildland Fire Executive Council (WFEC). WRSC Leadership and Work Groups played a vital role in the national direction of Cohesive Strategy with the development and expansion of:

- Critical Success Factors and Barriers,
- Performance Measures,
- The National Strategy - The Final Phase in the Development of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (National Strategy),
- Draft National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: National Action Plan (National Action Plan)

These documents were reviewed by the WFEC and progressed to the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) for approval and implementation. The final National Strategy and National Action Plan are currently under administrative review and expected to receive approval in 2014.



The Western Regional Strategy Committee covers 17 Western States, Alaska, Hawaii and the Pacific Island Territories

Western Regional Strategy Committee Membership FY 2013

Kent Connaughton, Co-Chair

US Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region

Tony Harwood, Co-Chair

Confederated Tribes of
Salish & Kootenai

Ann Walker, Co-Chair

Western Governors'
Association

Kate Lighthall

Coordinator

Dick Bahr, NPS

Leon Ben, BIA (A)

Aitor Bidaburu, USFA

Gary Bowers, BLM

Kevin Burke, NLC

Chuck Bushey, IAWF

Corey Butler, IAWF (A)

Robert Cope, NACo

Vincent Corrao, NGO

Rich Cowger, IAFC (A)

Carol Daly, NGO

Dave Driscoll, IAFC

Jesse Duhnkrack, NPS (A)

Pam Ensley, FWS

John Erixson, NGO (A)

Jonas Feinstein, NRCS (A)

Sam Foster, USFS

Joe Freeland, BLM (A)

Rich Homann, CWSF

Lynn Jungwirth, NGO (A)

Phyllis Kreitz, FEMA (A)

Doug MacDonald, WFEC Liaison

Rob Mangold, USFS (A)

Gary Moyer, NACD (A)

John Philbin, BIA

Peg Polichio, USFS (A)

Cyndi Sidles, FWS (A)

Vernon Stearns, ITC (A)

(A) = Alternate



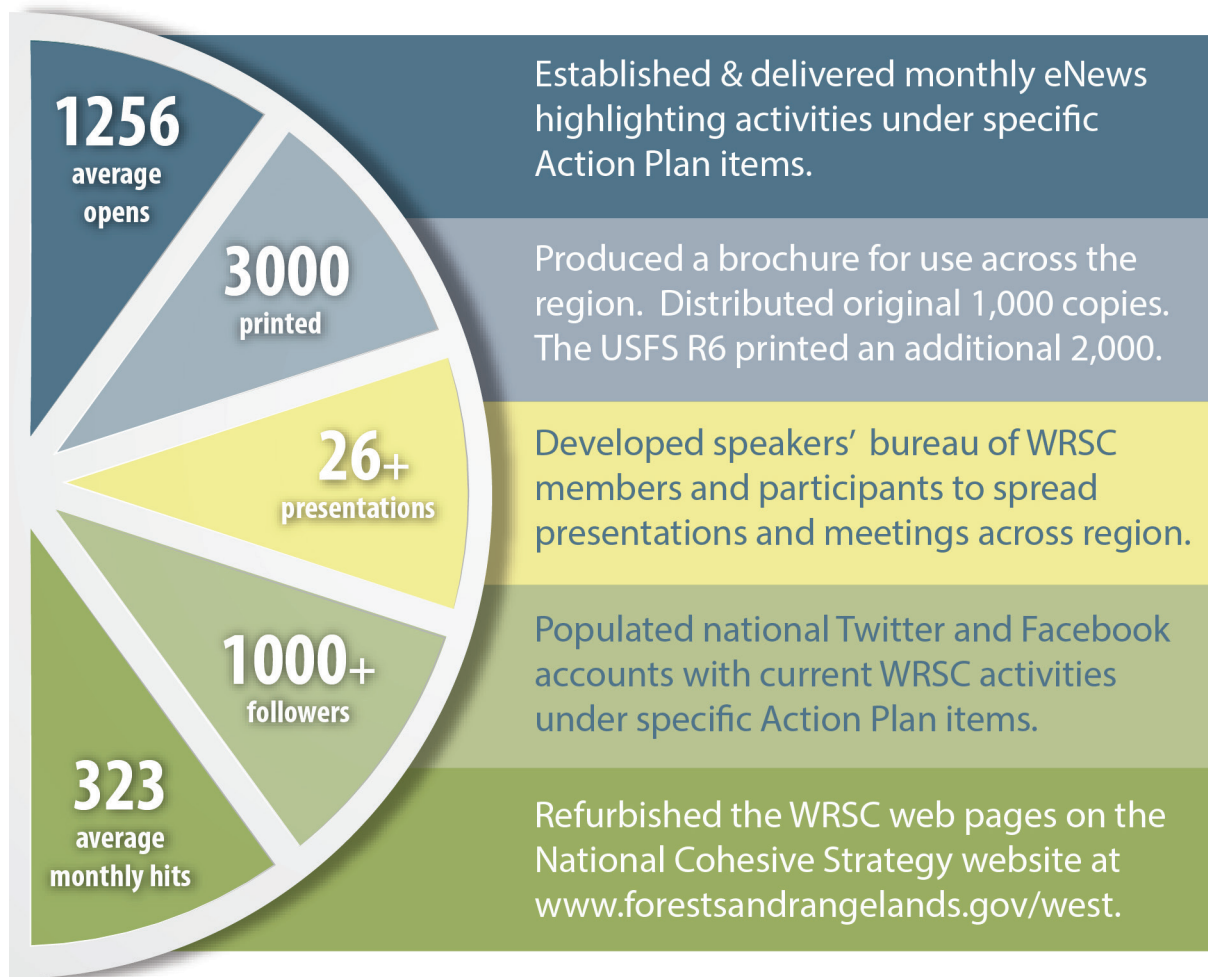
WRSC members, alternates and work groups gathered November 12-13 in Salt Lake City, UT. The presentations included examples of regional implementation, the final data analysis from the National Science Analysis Team (NSAT) and a review and tasking of the priority regional actions for continued implementation across the West.

“If we continue to operate and execute forest management programs at our current pace, large scale wildfire will be the dominant signature across the landscape.

In contrast, if we ramp up the program of work, we will have the opportunity to change wildfire behavior. We are making progress in that direction.”

*Kent Connaughton
Regional Forester
US Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region*

COMMUNICATIONS ACHIEVEMENTS



Action O.1 states “Maintain and enhance communications efforts.” Recognizing the value of proactive and steady communications, the WRSC hired a part time Communications Support person and established a variety of information outlets through which WRSC activities and regional examples of implementation efforts can be shared. In addition to the successes demonstrated above the West participated in the development of national communications products and messages.



WRSC Brochure

IMPLEMENTATION ACHIEVEMENT



Alan Ager sharing "downscaled" analysis

Action 1.2 "identify and prioritize landscapes for treatment" has significant implications to many land management agencies and landowners. Ultimately, prioritizing landscapes will determine how resources are allocated to implement projects. The USFS Pacific Northwest Region is working to identify tools and information available to assist decision makers in the identification and prioritization process. Additional stakeholders such as communities and counties will also benefit from these tools as they identify and prioritize local hazardous fuels treatments

and update Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). Action 1.2 calls for collaboration and utilization of risk assessments along with consideration of local and regional values such as sensitive species, air quality and economic opportunities. A diverse group of stakeholders representing Federal, state, Tribal, private and non-governmental interests met on January 29, 2014 for an introduction to the National Risk Analysis and a preliminary "downscaled" risk analysis on Pacific Northwest forests which may prove useful with further development. As next steps, the group plans to explore the information offered in the Westwide Risk Assessment and examine the scalability of the available tools and information. *Contact: Craig Goodell, cgoodell@blm.gov (503) 808-6595.*

INVESTMENT IN THE WEST



PILOT PROJECTS IN THE WEST

With hundreds of examples of successful implementation across the West, three projects received Federal funding to develop collaborative approaches to the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy. In each case, the projects include diverse stakeholders across multiple ownerships to restore landscapes, reduce the threat and intensity of fire, protect communities at risk, create fire adapted communities and provide for coordinated, safe and effective response to fire.



BLUE MOUNTAIN PROJECT, NE Oregon and SE Washington

- Original investment \$345,000
- Completed comprehensive CWPP revisions
- Prioritized landscape scale projects across Federal, state and private boundaries
- Completed biomass economic feasibility project
- Local collaboratives to benefit from capacity building grants as result of Oregon Wildfire Protection Act
- \$1 million NRCS grant to USFS for Elkhorn Mountain project & \$1.6 million for overlapping private land conservation projects

Contact: Mark Jacques, mjacques@odf.state.or.us, 541-963-3168



ISLAND PARK SUSTAINABLE FIRE COMMUNITY, Island Park, Idaho and West Yellowstone, Montana

- Original investment \$600,000
- Conducted comprehensive risk evaluation, communications and mitigation strategies for communities at risk, and prioritization of landscape level projects
- Utilized chips from projects for biomass to electricity
- Developed messaging for communications & draft media plan
- Developed strategic plan with TNC assistance
- Hiring full time project coordinator
- Submitting proposals for next round of state grant funding

Contacts: Liz Davy, edavy@fs.fed.us, 208-652-1203 and Craig Glazier, cglazier@fs.fed.us, 208-659-1131



MONTANA COHESIVE STRATEGY PROJECT, West Yellowstone, Montana

- Original investment \$402,001
- Conducted outreach and communication for risk assessment on private lands for summer mitigation by Hebgen Basin RFD
- Conducted assessment on past fuels mitigation on reducing fire behavior and protecting firefighters and structures
- Established competitive grant program, "Buy Montana Wood" program, Montana Forest Products Retention Roundtable, and a "Forest Products Industry Week"
- Developed a Cohesive Strategy appendix to the Montana State Forest Action Plan

**Contacts: Scott Waldron, swaldron@hbrfd.com, 406-646-9094
Bob Harrington, rharrington@mt.gov, 406-542-4304**

SUPPORT FOR WESTERN EFFORTS

The Western Regional Strategy Committee operated in 2013 thanks to support from the US Forest Service, Washington Office through the Western Governors' Association that provided for the Coordinator's position, Communications Support, Non-Federal travel reimbursement and other WRSC business-related expenses.

BUDGETED EXPENSES

Category	Expense	Actions Implemented
Coordinator Contract	\$91,359	O.2A, C Establish western coordination organization. Coordinator hired through WGA contract to provide oversight, communications and management of WRSC. Monitor effectiveness of WRAP.
Other Facilitation & State Contracts	\$136,688	O.2 A, B, C Facilitate improved alignment & cooperation between Federal, state, Tribal & local agencies.
Communications	\$16,800	O.1 Maintain and enhance communications efforts. Hired Communications support person through contract with WGA to produce monthly eNewsletter.
Non-Federal, State, WGA Travel Reimbursement	\$66,885	O.2A, B Allowed for travel to over 26 speaking opportunities and for members and alternates to participate in face-to-face meetings, conferences and work group activities to complete and implement Action Plan.
Meeting Expenses	\$8,042	O.2 A,B Allowed for meeting space, internet, call-in capabilities, equipment and miscellaneous expenses related to necessary meetings.
Conference Registrations	\$1,607	IAFC WUI conference for Coordinator, RSC/FHAC members.
Printing & Postage	\$4,092	O.1A and O.2A Allowed for printing of Phase III report, Executive Summary, Western Regional Action Plan and postage costs to support activities under these actions.
Total	\$325,473	

These expenses represent those incurred through December 2013. Some travel and contracting expenses represent work completed in 2012 but paid in 2013. Utilizing the support provided by the US Forest Service, Washington Office, the WGA dispersed the funds, supporting the implementation of the Western Regional Action Plan as described above.

IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS



North Lake Tahoe Block Party for Fire Adapted Communities

The Western Regional Action Plan includes 39 specific actions and 194 tasks. Of these, the WRSC has prioritized 21 actions as top regional and national priorities for implementation. Much work toward all the goals has been completed in the past year. The WRSC continues to emphasize that the Cohesive Strategy is not a new program or set of policies. It is a framework by which all levels of stakeholders can work collaboratively toward the three main challenges confronting land managers, communities and those responsible for fire response.

	Western Regional Top Priority Actions	Implementation to Date
O.1	Maintain and enhance communications efforts	See page 4 for full implementation in 2013. Communications recognized as increasingly important in implementation.
O.2A	Establish western coordination organization	Regional Coordinator hired. Governance document approved, diverse membership filled. Exploring future funding opportunities for WRSC.
O.2C	Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of Western Regional Action Plan	Developed web based tracking and spreadsheets to monitor implementation of actions. Updates shared monthly with WRSC, WFEC.
1.1B	Maximize state and local authorities for implementation	Work group examining tax and other incentives for hazardous fuels reduction work on non Federal lands. Also examining potential for reclassification of restoration/fuels work under conservation grants.
1.2	Identify and prioritize landscapes for treatment	USFS Pacific NW region taking the lead to examine what scalable tools are available to assist in this decision-making process.
2.1	Support CWPPs/Tribal equivalent development, implementation and updating.	IAFC updated Leaders Guide for CWPPs. FAC groups expanding across region, working on CWPPs. Funding is the big issue here, investigating if BLM CA grants can include development and capacity building in grants.
2.3	Establish and promote trained workforce capacity.	Establishing model program for trained local workforce as part of the Blue Mountain Pilot Project in Oregon.

	Western Regional Top Priority Actions National in Focus	Implementation to Date
O.2B	Align regulatory and management agencies for Cohesive Strategy implementation to improve cooperation among agencies, states, and Federal government.	JFSP, IAFC, DOI bureaus and Dept of Ag included CS tenets in future visions, leaders' intents, etc. State Forests including in State Forest Action Plans as they are updated. IAFC developing CS Leaders Guide.
O.6	Evaluate barriers to risk reduction.	11 top priority barriers & critical success factors evaluated & updated by CSSC task groups - produced actions for National Action Plan.
O.8	Formalize a comparative risk model that includes Federal, state, Tribal and local costs. Use the model to complete a trade-off analysis and establish a risk base point.	NSAT developed data for National Strategy and Risk Analysis. It does not include a trade off analysis.
1.1A	Promote collaborative planning and management.	The draft National Action Plan addresses this as top priority. OR passed Wildfire Protection Act to increase the pace and scale of Federal forest restoration.
1.1D	Simplify administrative processes regarding the exchange of funds between and within agencies.	Barrier #33 task group developed actions to simplify processes.
2.1	Support CWPPs/Tribal equivalent development, implementation, and updating.	IAFC updated CWPP Leaders Guide. FAC groups expanding, working on CWPPs. Investigating if BLM CA grants can include development/capacity building in grants.
2.2	Coordinate and support activities to achieve and maintain Fire Adapted Communities.	USFS FAC program continues to expand. Multiple regional and national examples of communities addressing wildfire challenges in collaborative environments.
2.5	Establish and maintain learning networks.	FAC LN (partnership of USFS, TNC, WRTC) hubs in high risk areas, expanding each year. Website launched, tools to assist communities.
2.6	Streamline and coordinate FEMA support programs.	Task group compiling current support programs to make recommendations to include CS criteria in FY 15 grant programs.
3.2D	Improve firefighter safety and health by: increasing the recognition and acceptance of certification of EMS responders on incidents from state to state.	NAEMSO currently addressing barriers to develop possible solutions.
3.2E	Establish a fire prevention program.	Multiple programs expanding nationally.
3.2F	Develop a human factors-based approach to wildfire ignitions prevention.	Many states in the West have adopted educational campaigns focusing on human caused fires such as debris burning.
3.3A	Integrate incident communications.	DHS, USFS & DOI working within NWCG IT Committee to improve.
3.3B	Continue to implement a national wildland fire qualification system that applies to and is accepted by all firefighting agencies and departments under NIMS.	NWCG is implementing a training initiative that will leverage EMI FEMA training for ICS positions that have common objectives with existing NWCG courses.

The background of the page features several thick, wavy, green lines that flow across the page. These lines are layered, with some appearing in front of others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors range from a light, pale green to a darker, forest green. The lines are irregular and organic in shape, resembling natural patterns like smoke or water ripples.

The Western Regional Strategy Committee operates in support of the
National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

www.forestsandrangelands.gov

Contact: westerncohesivestrategy@gmail.com