Southeast Regional Assessment
Mike Zupko
Southeastern RSC Chair
Representing S. Govs Assoc.
Southeast Snapshot

WHAT WE HAVE:

• High percentage of productive private land

• Hyperactive growing season of green yet highly flammable fuels

• Dense population (heavily distributed) throughout the hyperactive green stuff
Southeast Snapshot

What we DON’T have:

• A collaboration and coordination problem

• A need for broad policies constraining local managers

• A problem with moving woody material, though an uncertain future.
Southeast RSC
• 1 State Forestry
• 1 SGA
• 2 USFS (Regional Forester and Station Director)
• 1 FWS Regional Fire Director
• 1 NPS Deputy Park Superintendent
• 1 BIA Regional Fire Director
• 1 IAFC Representatives
• 1 Tribal Agency Administrator
• 1 Science Team Liaison
• 1 USGS
• 1 County Commissioner

Southeastern Working Group
• 3 State forestry
• 2 USFS
• 1 BIA
• 1 NPS
• 1 FWS
• 1 USGS
• 1 TNC
Process Overview

• RSC & WG included representation from a diverse range of county, state, and federal agencies, NGOs, and entities active in the Southeastern fire management community
• RSC chartered WG during spring 2011 meeting
• WG held weekly conference calls and met in July and August
• RSC held bimonthly conference calls
• RSC met to review WG’s work in September, providing guidance for revising and expansion of regional report
Process Overview

• Phase II Southeastern Cohesive Strategy effort based on foundational documents:
  – Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment
  – Southern Forest Futures Project
  – State Forest Action Plans

• Success in the Phase II effort was due in large part to close relationships between members of the Southeastern fire management community at all levels
Process Overview

• SE Phase II Outreach effort had four primary efforts:
  – Review of foundational documents of fire policy and science in the Southeast as well as Forest Resources Assessments for the 13 Southeastern states and Puerto Rico
  – Two focus groups held in Columbia, South Carolina and Pearl, Mississippi drew 80 participants
  – Online comment form sent to 1,400 Southeastern stakeholders and widely recirculated and posted online
  – Multiple conference calls and webinars to capture input from regional stakeholder groups
Process Overview

• What worked well
  – Already strong collaboration across the South, relatively easy to pick up and run with the charge

• What didn’t
  – Time constraints
    • Limited use of NST knowledgebase / modeling to inform process (2.5)
  – Limited “doers”

*Would echo most of NE and W additional comments*
Overview of South’s Situation

- Strong collaboration already – excellent history of cooperation
- Working forests and relatively strong market infrastructure
- Private landowners, many motivated to manage land
- Active prescribed burning throughout the region
- Fairly extensive road system allows for rapid IA from RFDs
Overview of South’s Situation

• Year-round fire season
• Significant wildfire activity
  – Over half ignitions and 40% of large fires
• Large and expanding WUI
  – Over half of all WUI in the country
• Smoke management is a challenge with ↑ WUI
• 89% private land bring 5 million reasons for owning land
• Fragmentation
• Invasive species
Policies and Regulations

• State and local legislation – put it out
• Federal legislation – review and make determination

• Compacts (SE and SC and bridges to other regions)
• Interagency agreements
• MOUs – closest resource
Policies and Regulations

Barriers to effective collaboration:

• Conflicts related to land agency policy *(federal v state v local)*
• Nearly 90% of acreage in the Southeast is privately held
• Balancing expectation for wildfire protection with safety of firefighters and the public with available resources.
• Landscape fragmentation as a result of rural development
• Land management agency policy v other agency policy
• Reimbursement challenges / differences
Values, Trends and Risks

- Ecosystem – air, water, and other ecosystem components
- Infrastructure – human infrastructure, habitations, other structures and property
- Societal – human, social, and cultural values
- Economic – direct and indirect costs of wildland fires
- Fire Management – wildfire response capacity and capability
Values, **Trends** and Risks

- Population growth and rapid development of WUI
- Land fragmentation
- Smoke management
- Future of RFDs
Values, Trends and Risks

- Inherent risks to firefighter and public safety
- Impact on ability to manage (both land and fires)
- Impact to forest resource
  - Natural system (habitat etc)
  - Future of top economic contributor in most Southern states
Goals and Regional Objectives

Restore and Maintain Landscapes:

Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.
Goals and Regional Objectives

Restore and Maintain Landscapes (5):

• 1.1 Build and maintain resiliency in Southeastern landscapes through strategic use of prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, grazing, etc., and manage wildfire where and when appropriate based on ownership and landscape context

• 1.2 Promote strategic interagency policy development and planning across agencies, organizations and the public to more effectively integrate wildland fire planning into land-use planning and economic development
Goals and Regional Objectives

Restore and Maintain Landscapes:

• 1.3 Develop and sustain capability and capacity required to plan and carry out landscape treatments, including prescribed fire

• 1.4 Encourage increased public awareness to ensure public acceptance and active participation in achieving landscape objectives

• 1.5 Mitigate environmental threats other than wildfire (i.e. storm damage, insects, ice storms, hurricanes, insects and disease) that reduce ecosystem vitality and increase susceptibility to wildfire
Goals and Regional Objectives

Fire Adapted Communities:

Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property
Goals and Regional Objectives

Fire Adapted Communities (3):

- 2.1 Support development of, and maintain engagement with communities by developing and leveraging partnerships through community wildfire planning for improved preparedness

- 2.2 Eliminate loss of life and minimize loss of structures

- 2.3 Coordinate public policy and shared responsibility across jurisdictions
Goals and Regional Objectives

Response to Fire:

All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.
Goals and Regional Objectives

Response to Fire (2):

• 3.1 Increase firefighter safety by using risk management

• 3.2 Increase and leverage resource capability and capacity. Streamline and support training across all areas to maximize effectiveness
“Strategic Opportunities”
“Strategic Opportunities”

- Expand outreach and education to landowners and residents, particularly those new to the region and/or non-traditional
- Enhance collaboration, training and capacity building across agencies
- Continue/Enhance proactive fuels mitigation through all management techniques, including prescribed burning

*Four potential Management Scenarios were considered*
Alternatives to Achieve the Goals and Objectives

Four potential Management Scenarios were considered

• Alternative A: Present Management Situation
• Alternative B: Increased Personal Responsibility and Action Through Outreach and Education
• Alternative C: Increased Firefighter Safety and Wildfire Response Through Enhanced Collaboration, Training, and Capacity
• Alternative D: Increase Proactive Fuels Mitigation Through All Management Techniques, Including Prescribed Burning
Alternatives to Achieve the Goals and Objectives

• “Phase 2.5”
Southeast Regional Strategy Committee

• Mike Zupko – Chair, Southern Governors Association Representative (Executive Director, Southern Group of State Foresters)
• Kevin Fitzgerald – Vice Chair, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Deputy Superintendent, NPS (alternate: Liz Struhar – Fire Planner, NPS)
• Liz Agpaoa – Regional Forester, Southern Region, USFS (alternate: Dan Olsen – Director of Fire & Aviation Management, Southern Region, USFS)
• Tom Boggus – Texas State Forester, NASF
• Ed Brunson – BIA (alternate: Larry Mahler - Forester, BIA)
• Rob Doudrick – Station Director, USFS (alternate: Kier Klepzig – Assistant Director, SRS)
• Bob Eaton – Chief, Division of Fire Management, FWS
• Jim Ham – County Comm, GA
• Tom Lowry – Choctaw Nation
• Alexa McKerrow – Biologist, USGS
• Bruce Woods – Department Head, Mitigation and Prevention, Texas Forest Service, IAFC
Working Group Members

- David Frederick – Chair, Fire Director, Southern Group of State Foresters
- Darryl Jones – Vice Chair, State Fire Chief, South Carolina Forestry Commission
- Tom Spencer – Vice Chair, Predictive Services Department Head, Texas Forest Service
- Forrest Blackbear – BIA
- Vince Carver – Regional Fire Ecologist, FWS Fire
- Margit Bucher – North Carolina Fire Manager, The Nature Conservancy
- Alexa Mc Kerrow – Biologist, USGS
- Shardul Raval – Assistant Director, Fire & Aviation Management, Southern Region, USFS
- Rachel Smith – Natural Resource Specialist, Presidential Management Fellow, USFS
- Liz Struhar – Fire Planner, NPS
Coordination and Logistical Support Team

- Sandy Cantler – SE Coordination Lead, USFS
- Carol Deering – (on NEMAC SE site as member) USGS
- Jim Fox – Director, NEMAC, RENCI, UNC Asheville
- Jeff Hicks – Geospatial Software Engineer, NEMAC, UNC Asheville
- Matthew Hutchins – UNC Asheville
- Jim Karels – WFEC Liaison (FL State), Florida Forest Service
- Danny Lee – Director, Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center, Southern Research Station, USFS
- Karin Lichtenstein – Project Manager/Research Scientist, NEMAC, UNC Asheville
- Tom Quigley, Contractor, National Science Team
QUESTIONS?