

**COHESIVE STRATEGY  
CROSSWALK AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

**REPORT BY THE  
NATIONAL STRATEGIC COMMITTEE**

**Cohesive Strategy Vision for the next Century:**

*To safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a Nation, live with wildland fire.*

**Cohesive Strategy Goals:**

*Resilient Landscapes*

*Fire Adapted Communities*

*Safe and Effective Wildfire Response*

**SUBMITTED TO THE WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

**DECEMBER, 2016**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act of 2009 (FLAME Act) called for the development of a National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy). The Cohesive Strategy was created to serve as guidance to assist leadership, land managers and communities “live with wildland fire.” This initiative and report has been produced to both assess progress to date and identify additional opportunities as to how the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) can continue to influence progress toward achieving the Cohesive Strategy vision and goals.

Built from multiple discussions within the National Strategic Committee (NSC), this report represents a deeper evaluation undertaken to ascertain national progress made in implementing the Cohesive Strategy, identify gaps in implementation, and attempt to reaffirm the Cohesive Strategy’s goals as the pathway to achieving its vision. To accomplish this, the NSC conducted a crosswalk and evaluated the strategic alignment of actions recommended in the Cohesive Strategy foundational documents and the 2014 Quadrennial Fire Review.

This report identifies a set of potential opportunities within the context of the Cohesive Strategy’s three goals for WFLC consideration for future direction, decision-making and reporting, including Cohesive Strategy reports to Congress. It also offers a basis for continuity of the Cohesive Strategy going into the new Administration, and assistance to new WFLC members as they transition to this wildland fire leadership role.

## INTRODUCTION

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Since the passage of the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act of 2009 (FLAME Act), many efforts have been undertaken within the context of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy). A systematic evaluation of those efforts has not occurred until now. In May of 2016, the NSC, a group chartered in 2015 by the WFLC to carry out WFLC's vision and expectations for implementing the Cohesive Strategy and other priorities, initiated a two-part project – developing a crosswalk of Cohesive Strategy actions as indicated in numerous Cohesive Strategy documents and reports; and performing an analysis and strategic alignment of the actions called for within those bodies of work. The documents used in this analysis are:

- *The National Strategy – The Final Phase in the Development of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy*, April 2014.
- *National Action Plan – An Implementation Framework for the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy*, April 2014.
- *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy Barriers and Critical Success Factors* (see Appendix E), August 2012.
- *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy Performance Measure Data Dictionary* (see Appendix H), January 2014.
- *Wildland Fire Leadership Council Strategic Priorities* (see Appendix I), November 2015.
- *2014 Quadrennial Fire Review*, May 2015.

The crosswalk serves as a tool to facilitate the analysis of Cohesive Strategy efforts and initiatives conducted at the national level to date. *The National Strategy - The Final Phase in the Development of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy* (National Strategy) report served as the foundation for evaluating and comparing actions recommended in each of the documents listed above. Also developed to support the National Strategy are the National Action Plan and Regional Action Plans for the Northeast, Southeast and Western Cohesive Strategy regions, which were not evaluated in this report, but serve as an extension to the field level.

Analyzing the crosswalk provided NSC members an opportunity for national level Cohesive Strategy programmatic review and evaluation. In their analysis, the group sought to ascertain national progress made in implementing the Cohesive Strategy goals, identify gaps in implementation, and attempt to reaffirm the Cohesive Strategy goals as being the basis for fostering the ability to live with wildland fire.

## Cohesive Strategy Crosswalk and Strategic Alignment Report

The subsequent strategic alignment provides a guide with future direction and decision-making opportunities identified, as well as a foundation for future Cohesive Strategy reporting, including future Cohesive Strategy reports to Congress. It also offers continuity for the Cohesive Strategy going into the new Administration, and assistance to new WFLC members as they transition to this wildfire leadership role.

## SUCCESSSES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Success and accomplishment in the context of the Cohesive Strategy has manifested itself in many ways – from purposeful discussion and planning to informed decision-making, increased collaboration and cultural shifts. The impact of the Cohesive Strategy and the various steps to build it has inspired a change in operational culture and how wildland fire and land management as a whole are being approached. The three goals of the Cohesive Strategy are now ingrained in much of the planning and implementation of the agencies and organizations that work to create resilient landscapes, expand fire adapted communities, and ensure safe and effective wildfire response. The Cohesive Strategy is embraced in how programs are being structured and how funding is reaching the ground. “Cross-boundary” and “cross-agency” are commonly used terms, addressing not just intent but action, as well. Joint or leveraged funding sources are becoming commonplace. Below, each of the key documents in the development of the Cohesive Strategy and its implementation showcase some of the direct and indirect outcomes stemming from the change in approach and culture around these issues, setting the stage for further opportunities to be considered by leadership in the near future.

### National Strategy

The National Strategy sets broad, strategic, and national-level direction as a foundation for implementation of actions across the Nation. It is informed by regional and national analyses, including in-depth scientific analysis that delves into the specifics of national challenges, underlying causes, and the management opportunities available to address them. The National Strategy explicitly links potential actions or opportunities to locations, a key element not found in prior documents. This report served as the starting point for the NSC’s crosswalk of actions identified in national level Cohesive Strategy documents. The National Strategy presents ten management options based on identified national challenges that provide opportunities to directly affect factors that contribute to wildfire risk. Actions identified or recommended in subsequent bodies of work used in this analysis were aligned with those management options. The individual management options are listed in the Crosswalk Matrix in Appendix C, and in the Crosswalk Matrix Codes Dictionary in Appendix D.

The purpose of The National Strategy is to help decision-makers understand the risks and consequences of decisions and how these decisions fit into the broader goals of the Cohesive Strategy—resilient landscapes, fire-adapted communities, and safe and effective risk-based wildfire response.

## National Action Plan

The National Action Plan provides a framework for actions and tasks necessary to implement the Cohesive Strategy at various scales. The actions described in the plan are strategic in nature and define long-term, ongoing work necessary to achieve Cohesive Strategy goals. National actions are significant in the context of this national commitment, and this plan describes the commitment made by the WFLC, the nation's highest-level collaborative wildland fire group, to implement the National Strategy.

## National Barriers/Critical Success Factors

As part of the development of the Cohesive Strategy, each of the three Regional Strategy Committees (RSCs), Northeast, Southeast, and West, working with the Cohesive Strategy Subcommittee (CSSC), identified barriers and critical success factors that can impact their ability to successfully implement the Cohesive Strategy. From that compilation, those that affected more than one region and had a high probability of achieving a positive outcome in the next five years were selected for further action and national attention.

Included below are some examples illustrative of efforts that support the mitigation of these identified barriers and critical success factors. It is important to note that these actions were not necessarily performed under the auspices of the barrier or critical success factor workgroups. For a full description of the National Barriers and Critical Success Factors and progress updates refer to Appendix E.

### **INCREASE FUELS MANAGEMENT ON PRIVATE LAND**

In conjunction with the work of the WFLC Strategic Priority Task Group on Smoke and Air Quality, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of the Interior (DOI) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have entered into a joint agreement and messaging that frames both the smoke and air quality issue, and the intent of the joint relationship. At the regional and state levels, EPA and state air and land management agencies are involved in enhanced discussion and coordination. If the ability to utilize prescribed and managed fire is enhanced through these and similar efforts, then the ability to increase fuels management on all land is expanded (see Appendix F for task group report).

### **INCREASE FUELS MANAGEMENT ON FEDERAL LAND**

Along with the WFLC Strategic Priority Task Group work presented above, the new Forest Service Planning Rule, as revised, provides relief from impediments for fuels management. In addition, states and tribes are using authorities derived from the Good Neighbor Authority and the Tribal Forest Protection Act to increase treatments on federal lands (see Appendix F for task group report).

## **GROWTH MANAGEMENT, LAND DEVELOPMENT AND ZONING LAWS**

The Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW) program is an initiative funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and private organizations. It provides technical consulting services in the form of land use planning using codes and ordinances in cities or counties with authority over local land use planning and zoning decisions. Qualified communities must apply and be accepted to participate in this program.

Land use planning, zoning and wildland-urban interface (WUI) building codes are also addressed in the *Wildland-Urban Interface: Fire Adapted Communities* six-day resident course offered by the U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Academy (NFA).

## **INEFFICIENCIES IN THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS STANDARDS**

Substantial progress has been made over the last several years via revisions to the National Wildfire Coordinating Group manual for national standards and qualifications, reducing the amount of time it takes to achieve qualifications, and through a comprehensive review and assessment of training conducted by NWCG staff.

## **REMOVE POLICY BARRIERS AND PROCESS COMPLEXITIES FOR SHARING RESOURCES**

NWCG has completed revisions to the Master Cooperative Wildfire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement that have streamlined the agreement process between state and federal agencies. In addition, language in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the "Farm Bill") removes confusion regarding state-to-state mobilization using the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS).

## **ENFORCEABLE STATE/LOCAL ORDINANCES**

In May 2016, the White House released an Executive Order (EO) on Wildland-Urban Interface Federal Risk Mitigation, setting an example for resilience by calling for the federal government to continue taking "proactive steps to enhance the resilience of" federal buildings on federal land.

The Mitigation Framework Leadership Group (MitFLG), a national coordinating structure established to coordinate mitigation efforts across the federal government, established a working group to identify ways the federal government can support the awareness, adoption and enforcement of building codes at the state and local levels. The report, *Mitigation Framework Leadership Group Implementation Strategy for Increasing Disaster Resilience through Federal Support for Building Code Adoption & Enforcement*, is forthcoming.

## **FEMA GRANTS (ORIGINALLY CALLED FEMA PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION PROGRAM)**

In addition to the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grant program, the task group included two other FEMA grant programs: Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grants. Potential actions in the areas of Awareness, Education and Outreach; Grant Policy and Guidance Development; Grant Processes; and Research Considerations were identified and are being addressed with FEMA grants personnel. While work to address these tasks has begun, the task group's final report will be delivered to the WFLC on November 30, 2016 (see Appendix G for task group report).

## **ASSISTING COMMUNITIES AT RISK (ORIGINALLY CALLED RATING FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES)**

An initial concern stemming from social science was that a national-level rating system could have negative unintended impacts related to making judgements about a community's level of "fire adaptation" based on criteria that may or may not be applicable. However, resilience or readiness assessments based on local needs and situations can be valuable tools for communities. A great example of a fire-adapted community (FAC) Self-Assessment Tool that has been developed independently but which supports the goal of fire adapted communities comes from the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network and can be found at <http://fireadaptednetwork.org/resources/fac-assessment-tool/>.

## **INVESTMENT IN FIREFIGHTING WORKFORCE**

The USFS's Volunteer Fire Assistance Program, administered by the states, continues to work well for providing training and increasing local capacity. For states having adequate administrative capacity to manage these grants, agreements for sharing personnel and equipment resources, both within the state and in some cases nationally, have been implemented.

Work continues on the evolving incident management system that has been transitioned to the Incident Management Team (IMT) succession planning effort.

Finally, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) is now a member of the NWCG Executive Board, and along with the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), brings a local and state government perspective that facilitates work with federal resources and supports interagency/intergovernmental training, development and integration.

## **IMPROVE FIRE DATA**

While some progress has been made to improve data accuracy, current emphasis is focused on better data collection and data management.

Recently, the USFS developed a spatial fire database spanning 1992 – 2013 which is comprised of data from dozens of disparate databases, including state, local, tribal, and remotely-sensed fire data. This database contains nearly 1.7 million records for the 20 year period, including information on fire location, discovery date, and final fire size.

More information on the database can be found at

<http://www.treesearch.fs.fed.us/pubs/49677>.

Additionally, under the WFLC Smoke Management and Air Quality strategic priority, a forum will be convened in the first quarter of 2017 to look at data gaps for use in smoke management and land management decision-making.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL WILDLAND FIRE GOVERNANCE**

This barrier is considered resolved through the revision of the governance structure, as depicted in work completed by USDA and DOI. See

<https://www.doi.gov/wildlandfire/wildland-fire-governance>.

## **Performance Measures – Accountability and Monitoring**

The Cohesive Strategy's broad goals have widespread acceptance. Expectations are high that wildfire risks will be reduced and the nation will benefit from incremental progress toward achieving the goals. Tracking progress toward these goals requires measurement of end outcomes as well as intermediate outcomes. As called for in the Accountability and Monitoring section of the National Strategy (p.76) *"A set of national outcome performance measures will allow Congress, the national wildland fire management community, and other stakeholders to monitor and assess progress toward achieving the results for each of the three national goals."*

A performance measures task group, convened from January 2013 through March 2014, developed potential performance measures that could be used to track progress on achieving the broad goals of the Cohesive Strategy. Appendix H contains the Performance Measures Data Dictionary developed by the task group. It was determined by the Wildland Fire Executive Council (WFEC) at that time that, although many of the proposed measures could be collected using existing programmatic reporting metrics, attempting to fully implement the performance measures using traditional reporting methods would likely place undue burden on the agencies and partners.

Quantifying Cohesive Strategy success remains both a challenge and an opportunity. Information from success stories at the local level and feedback on how the Cohesive

Strategy is being integrated into planning and implementation is dominated by qualitative and anecdotal data. A challenge has been to define quantitative metrics that assess progress in achieving the Cohesive Strategy goals. Several efforts that look to enhance landscape resiliency at a broader scale may more directly lend themselves to quantification as a result of Cohesive Strategy science and implementation. There is an opportunity to further coordinate these efforts for an even broader, more consistent picture of landscape resiliency. The use of research findings, remote sensing and modeling all have the potential to show the impact of activities over time. The opportunity to develop these methodologies can contribute to this endpoint of showing accountability and success.

### **WFLC Strategic Priorities**

In late 2015, WFLC established four strategic priorities, informed by the National Action Plan, through which WFLC members, both individually and collectively, can contribute to impactful progress and implementation of the Cohesive Strategy at the national level. The WFLC Strategic Priorities are presented in greater detail in Appendix I. WFLC recognizes that strategic input and progress within the context of one goal can have meaningful contribution to the other two goals and contributes to the overall Cohesive Strategy vision of living with wildland fire. WFLC continues to create and strengthen relationships by engaging agencies and organizations at the national level, and providing a platform to broaden discussion and work collaboratively to enhance Cohesive Strategy implementation. The WFLC Strategic Priorities below are an approach to creating an enabling environment nationally where continued progress can be made at regional and local levels.

#### **SMOKE AND AIR QUALITY**

*Minimize air quality impacts from wildland fire over the long-term, improve the resiliency of landscapes to wildfire, and increase the health and safety of communities, firefighters and the public by using fire as a land management tool.*

Examples of progress in this area include:

- Joint agreement reached with USDA, DOI and EPA for joint messaging around smoke issues.
- State air and land management agencies involved in enhanced discussion and coordination.
- WFLC forums are bringing together regulators, land managers, and scientists/researchers.
  - Smoke research gaps meetings held August 2016.
  - Smoke data gaps meetings to be held in early 2017.

## Cohesive Strategy Crosswalk and Strategic Alignment Report

- Co-convening the National Prescribed Fire Alliance (NRxFA) with the Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils.

Factors contributing to success:

- WFLC invested heavily in a core group of experts, with the WFLC Executive Manager as facilitator and “connector.”
- The participants were “ready” to collaborate.
- Engaged both political and career-level personnel.
- Leveraged existing active groups.

### **REDUCING RISKS TO COMMUNITIES**

*Build a suite of enabling conditions for the creation and enhancement of fire adapted communities across the country. Enabling conditions include: access to tools and materials, seed funds, relationship building, etc.*

Examples of progress in this area include:

- Funding analysis across WFLC member agencies for community mitigation and evaluation of inconsistencies in policies.
- USFS funding a land use planning pilot program (Headwaters Economics).
- U.S. Fire Administration/National Fire Academy courses.
- Headwaters Economics developed “Communities Threatened by Wildfire 2000-2014 Interactive Mapping Tool.”
- Proposal to catalog risk assessment attributes for use by communities to gain an understanding of various options for building a local risk assessment.
- Several state and regional risk assessment databases/interactive tools have been developed for agency, organization and community use, e.g., Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (SouthWRAP), Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (COWRAP), and others.

Factors contributing to success:

- Communities are “ready” for higher level of engagement, with demonstrated capacity for collaboration around these issues.
- A broad network at the national level is in place guiding these issues and keeping the conversation at the forefront.

## LANDSCAPE LEVEL COLLABORATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

For the purposes of this report, these two priorities are combined for discussion, as much of the progress to date has been a coordinated effort.

- Landscape level collaboration: *Increase the number and area of wildfire resilient and healthy landscapes, resilient communities, and efficiency of wildland fire response by expanding cross-landscape, cross-ownership collaboration.*
- Environmental compliance: *Conduct project planning and analysis in a timely, coordinated and efficient manner to expedite fuels management, restoration and maintenance of healthy, resilient landscapes.*

Examples of progress in this area include:

- Stakeholder conferences:
  - Collaborative Restoration Workshop held April 2016.
  - Restoring the West Conference held October 2016.
- Virtual Center for Excellence:
  - Funded and in development.
  - Web-based and searchable.
  - Forum to post success stories, lessons learned or questions.
  - Anticipate breaking down silos in disseminating information.
  - Platform/tool for practitioners to find information in one place to better navigate issues with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- 2017 hazardous fuels funding in the USFS and DOI are connected to cross-boundary collaboration and community engagement.
  - Some tribes (Tribal Forest Protection Act) and states (Good Neighbor Authority) are using authorities to increase treatments on federal lands.
  - Landscape Scale Restoration and state forest action plans are driving the USFS State and Private Forestry funding to look more at the landscape level and leveraging across boundaries and funding mechanisms.

Factors contributing to success:

- DOI and USFS have leveraged funds at the local level to achieve cross-boundary collaboration.
- Appointed and career senior staff have placed an emphasis on landscape-level projects (e.g., DOI Secretarial Order 3336).

## Quadrennial Fire Review

Conducted every four years by federal agencies with responsibility for wildland fire, the Quadrennial Fire Review (QFR) looks to the future environment in order to assess current strategies and capabilities around wildland fire. Moreover, it can inform strategic planning, investments, operational capabilities, and positioning. It is intended as a long-range view of wildland fire needs, by considering potential future scenarios, then proposing solutions or activities to best meet the challenges and opportunities in these scenarios.

Whereas the QFR is a 10-20 year outlook, the Cohesive Strategy focuses efforts for implementation in the near term. By evaluating the opportunities and approaches considered in both the near-term and longer-term, the wildland fire community will be better aligned to address needs across the continuum in a consistent manner. Several opportunities for matching short- and longer-term priorities include: co-management of risk across all wildland fire agencies and partners, from the federal level down through tribes, states and locals; collaboration and coordination through the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy; and public engagement in not only understanding forest and wildland management, but also understanding their role as being a part of the solution in building fire adapted communities and general awareness.

The QFR articulates a vision that looks toward the horizon and provides a multi-decade view of risks and threats to achieving Cohesive Strategy goals. Over the next half decade, the QFR can guide updates of the Cohesive Strategy.

## Regional Accomplishments

The WFLC charters the three Regional Strategy Committees (RSC) – Northeast, Southeast and West – to facilitate implementation of the Cohesive Strategy. The NSC did not include regional accomplishments in their analysis, but those efforts continue to drive Cohesive Strategy implementation at the local and regional levels. The following examples represent facilitated efforts by each region.

### **NORTHEAST REGIONAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

- Driven by the NE RSC Regional Action Plan, a task group worked on LANDFIRE issues and developed a proposal to increase coordination and improve LANDFIRE data for all NE wildland fire management partners. This proposal was accepted by the NE RSC which has obtained funding for a term coordinator, LANDFIRE update, and coordination support activities.
- The Northeast (NE) RSC reviewed the NE Regional Action Plan, updated actions and worked with the National Science and Analysis Team (NSAT) to incorporate NE relevant science information to aid leaders and managers in setting priorities.

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- As a primary partner in the NE RSC, the USFS Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry for the third year issued two annual wildland fire competitive grants requests for proposals (RFP) to the 20 NE States, one addressing the Cohesive Strategy resilient landscapes and fire adapted communities goals, and the other addressing the Cohesive Strategy response goal.

### **SOUTHEAST REGIONAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

- A gap analysis is being performed between the Southeast Regional Action Plan (SERAP) and the Prescribed Fire Action Plan developed by the Southeastern Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS). This is allowing collection of efforts to implement the SERAP across numerous agencies and organizations and will help identify areas of duplicate efforts which can be combined for larger impact, as well as areas where agencies can work more collaboratively.
- The SE RSC assigned an interagency work group to evaluate the SERAP to determine priority items to address. This work group identified eleven items as top priorities for implementation across the region. Agencies and stakeholders have worked to promote and implement those items.
- A survey of non-governmental organizations (NGO), state, and federal agencies was conducted to prioritize the 25 items in the SERAP pertaining to prescribed fire and smoke management concerns for the Southeast. This information was compiled and shared with the participants and has allowed a uniformed promotion of key issues related to prescribed fire across the region.

### **WESTERN REGIONAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

- In 2016, the planning and delivery of a Cohesive Strategy Workshop for key stakeholders in Wyoming and South Dakota occurred. This was part of the implementation of their strategic communications plan to expand the stakeholder base, increase learning and understanding about the CS, and support the implementation of CS across the West.
- The Western Region has published 44 newsletters in the past three years documenting Cohesive Strategy implementation throughout the Western Region by multiple stakeholders. The newsletters can be found at <http://westerncohesivestrategynewsarchive.blogspot.com>.
- WRSC reviewed the [Western Regional Action Plan](#) (2013) and crafted an [Addendum](#) (2015) to refocus the intent of the actions in the context of regional implementers and stakeholders.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR WFLC TO ADVANCE COHESIVE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

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The NSC identified the following potential opportunities for WFLC members, individually and collectively, to promote and accelerate implementation of the Cohesive Strategy. The opportunities have been determined by examining the following bodies of work: National Strategy, National Action Plan, National Barriers and Critical Success Factors, Performance Measures, WFLC Strategic Priorities, 2014 QFR, and input by the three RSCs. These opportunities are organized by the applicable goal and by supporting over-arching categories.

### Restore and Maintain Landscapes

- Promote additional and larger, cross-boundary landscape level restoration and resiliency projects; have agencies provide for seed money opportunities when and wherever possible.
- Encourage the use of authorities under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) and Good Neighbor Authority to expedite the cross-boundary planning/collaboration process and project implementation to treat large landscapes.
- Develop a process to incorporate funding and programs into a multi-agency, multi-party partnership to efficiently utilize in the development and coordination of collaboratives.
- Ensure the completion, data entry and future maintenance for the WFLC Virtual Center of Excellence (NEMAC) case management system project in support of landscape level collaboration.
- Enable agencies and others to put more prescribed fire on the land – increasing the fundamental base for using fire.
  - Continue active participation (collectively and individually) in the development of smoke management rules and support information being distributed regionally to EPA for consistency in implementation across the country.
  - Work with health and safety agencies on understanding the impact that limiting prescribed fire has on safety and health issues compared to uncontrolled wildfires in a larger geography over time.
  - Encourage scientifically-sound forest management practices, where feasible, to help re-introduce fire back into fire-dependent ecosystems, reduce hazardous fuel levels, reduce wildfire risk to communities, and as an economic approach to reducing fuel treatment costs.

## Cohesive Strategy Crosswalk and Strategic Alignment Report

- Continue to look for ways to make the environmental compliance process more efficient, e.g., categorical exclusions.

### Fire Adapted Communities

- Seek opportunities to expand and enhance the creation of fire adapted communities.
- Develop bridges with additional federal agencies to most efficiently provide services and mitigation funding to communities at risk.
- Promote efforts to encourage the creation and support of fire adapted community planning efforts, particularly as part of fire season preparation messages.
- Promote greater involvement of local fire departments in community wildland fire planning and implementation activities.
- Focus on promoting and supporting wildfire prevention and outreach programs and activities to reduce the number of unwanted human-caused fires.

### Safe and Effective Risk-Based Wildfire Response

- Support efforts to increase the number and effectiveness of wildland fire response cooperative agreements in recognition of qualifications.
- Expand and develop initiatives (e.g., USFS “Life First”) to further protect wildland fire responders and the public from unnecessary risk while protecting communities and restoring landscapes.
- Ensure agency efforts related to recruitment and retention provide educational and training opportunities that include transfer of institutional knowledge to the next generation of leadership.
- Promote understanding and further use of all management options presented in the National Strategy at all Preparedness Levels, e.g., “*Prepare for large, long-duration wildfires*” and “*Managing wildfire for resource objectives.*”

### Communication and Collaboration

- Provide for the united, visible, consistent promotion of the Cohesive Strategy vision, guiding principles and goals as a national priority in all relevant policy, budget justification, and other strategic communication opportunities. Avoid creating new initiatives, as these can create confusion and impede progress by causing current efforts to stall and lose momentum that must be re-gained.
- Encourage WFLC member agencies and organizations to promote a consistent “living with wildland fire” message and utilize significant events as communication opportunities to promote Cohesive Strategy goals.

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- Continue to promote Cohesive Strategy successes at the national, regional, and local levels.
- Seek to align funding, planning, grant opportunity timelines, and other processes with other agencies to allow for leveraged funding across landscapes and foster improved collaboration efforts. This could include efforts to streamline grants procedures and project planning, and align collaborative processes wherever possible.
- Actively encourage and recognize leadership at all levels to support collaborative activities that implement the Cohesive Strategy, e.g., encourage local leaders to engage with or promote fire adapted communities in their areas of responsibility.
- Develop new communication channels to transmit messages to new audiences and build relationships, e.g., the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) expanded focus on WUI and wildland fire and implementing the Cohesive Strategy.

### Breaking Down Barriers

WFLC member agencies and organizations can work within their spheres of influence to actively engage in breaking down barriers to Cohesive Strategy acceptance and implementation:

- Continue to support actions that break down identified regulatory, process, and other administrative barriers and address critical success factors (see Appendix E).
- Identify and promote better integration of agency/organization programs in support of the Cohesive Strategy goals (e.g. forest health, watershed restoration/resiliency, forest stewardship, urban and community forestry, wildlife habitat restoration, forest recreation, range management, and others).
- Encourage the use of science in all Cohesive Strategy management activities.
- Continue to encourage progress in developing and maintaining accurate, consistent and streamlined wildland fire occurrence reporting by all wildland fire agencies and departments.
- Encourage a combination of approaches to gather data and information for the proposed Cohesive Strategy Performance Measures to include collecting data from:
  - Current reporting systems used by Cohesive Strategy partner agencies and organizations.
  - Existing and new research methods using modeling, analysis or existing data.

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- Statistically sound sampling and survey methods.
- Engage in efforts that directly enhance Cohesive Strategy implementation at the regional level that national attention, as facilitated by the WFLC, can address.

## CONCLUSIONS

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The purpose of this report is to take a strategic look back to inform and identify new opportunities for WFLC-level engagement that promote and accelerate implementation of the Cohesive Strategy, as well as enhance successful ongoing efforts. While the crosswalk phase allowed for the evaluation of actions against the Cohesive Strategy's vision and goals, the strategic alignment analysis provides a context for WFLC's future priorities and actions.

In just a few short years true implementation of the Cohesive Strategy is gaining momentum, and we are starting to see outcomes that are directly making meaningful progress toward achieving Cohesive Strategy vision and goals.

Through collective WFLC action, and the actions of WFLC member agencies and organizations, engagement at the national level has given all wildland fire management partners a platform to broaden the discussion, focus resources, break down barriers, and work collaboratively to enhance the implementation of the Cohesive Strategy. These efforts have resulted in the creation of an enabling environment for regional and local implementation of the Cohesive Strategy.

The definitive opportunity for the WFLC is to institutionalize the Cohesive Strategy as a way of doing business across agencies, organizations, communities and landscapes.

## **APPENDIX A: Members**

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### **National Strategic Committee Members**

Pete Anderson, *Natural resource management area, National Association of State Foresters*

Denise Blankenship, *Fire management area, USDA/Forest Service*

Patti Blankenship, *NSC Chair, Community planning area, DHS/FEMA/U.S. Fire Administration*

Robert Cope, *At-large member, National Association of Counties*

Rich Cowger, *Fire Management area, International Association of Fire Chiefs*

Lynn Decker, *Community planning area, The Nature Conservancy*

Jim Erickson, *Cultural resource area, Intertribal Timber Council*

Will Meeks, *Fire Management area, DOI/Fish and Wildlife Service*

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## Cohesive Strategy Crosswalk and Strategic Alignment Report

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