



National Fire Plan

WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

WFLC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In August 2001 “*A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10-Year Strategy*,” was approved by the Western Governors’ Association (WGA), the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, and many others including southern Governors, counties, and tribes. The Governors, Secretaries, and their partners subsequently approved the *Implementation Plan* for the *10-Year Strategy* in May 2002.

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) was established in April 2002 to implement and coordinate the National Fire Plan, the Ten-Year Strategy (a component of the National Fire Plan) and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. WFLC consists of senior level department officials, federal, state, tribal and county representatives, including all five federal wildland firefighting agency heads. WFLC was established to address interagency, interdepartmental differences to ensure seamless delivery of a coordinated fire protection program. The Council brings together wildland firefighting organizations to implement the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan. WFLC meets regularly to monitor progress of the Ten-Year Strategy, to discuss current issues, and to resolve differences among wildland firefighting agencies.

Accomplishments

Through collaborative work, the WFLC has been highly successful in working to reduce interagency and interdepartmental differences for a seamless delivery of a coordinated fire protection program. Among its many accomplishments, the WFLC:

- Implemented outcome-based performance measures supporting the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan. These performance measures represent a long-term commitment to protect communities and the environment from the impacts of catastrophic fire. The measures will indicate trends, unit costs, changes in the landscape, and other features associated with specific fire management actions and outcomes. These measures are an integral part of each wildland firefighting agency’s individual performance evaluation, and as such, represent a contract with Congress and the public to wisely use funds and resources.
- Established a real-time accomplishment reporting system for managers at all levels to plan and monitor hazardous fuel reduction treatments, post-fire stabilization and rehabilitation, and community assistance. The Council also decided to track all hazardous fuels reduction acres treated under the President’s Healthy Forests Initiative that result in condition class changes.
- Required fire suppression financial criteria and oversight and initiated large fire management and cost reviews. Interagency teams composed of representatives from various Federal and State agencies completed reviews on fires in Arizona, Washington, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Oregon in 2003.

Each review proposed recommendations to further improve efficiency and reduce operational costs. Large fire management and cost reviews are continuing in 2004.

- Chartered a Strategic Issues Panel on Fire Suppression Costs to examine wildland fire suppression activities from a broader land management context that integrates fire suppression and vegetation management. The panel will present its report on August 10, 2004.
- Adopted a standardized fire management plan template for use by all federal wildland fire management agencies.
- Approved development of major technological advancements and science-based decision-making tools for fire management planning, targeted fuels reduction, and monitoring of resources affected by wildfires. The Fire Program Analysis (FPA) system will provide managers with a common interagency process for fire management planning and budgeting that evaluates the effectiveness of alternative fire management strategies through time and that meets land management objectives. The new FPA application will allow for landscape-scale, interagency analysis at the planning unit.
- The Landscape Fire and Resource Management Planning Tools Project (LANDFIRE) will develop a multi-agency, inter-disciplinary research and development program designed to develop consistent and accurate data on vegetative conditions, fire fuels, risks and ecosystem status at the national, regional and local scales for use in implementing the national fire plan.
- Executed a Memorandum of Understanding between states and federal agencies for standardized priority setting for hazardous fuels projects.
- Executed a Memorandum of Understanding that establishes consistent policies and procedures across the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Energy to support the use of byproducts from fuels reduction.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding for consistent administration of wildland fire grant and agreement programs among the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.
- Adopted a common budget structure for the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior that establishes common definitions for similar activities, reduces the total number of budget items, links the budget to performance measures, and improves financial accountability.
- Approved a monitoring framework designed to track the achievement of the primary objectives of the 10-Year Implementation Plan and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act with emphasis on hazardous fuels treatments, restoration of healthy forests and the protection of communities.
- Chartered a working group to explore air quality and smoke management policy and guidance.
- Approved the National Wildfire Enterprise Architecture Steering group charter. The WFLC will provide oversight in implementing the action plan prepared for the GAO report entitled “Geospatial information: Technologies hold promise for Wildland Fire but Challenges Remain” (GAO-03-114T).
- Reviewed the “Changing Role and Needs of Local, Rural, and Volunteer Fire Department in the Wildland Urban Interface” Report prepared by the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). An action plan is under consideration by the WFLC.

- Endorsed and supported a National Fire Plan conference in partnership with the International Association of Fire Chiefs. This conference provided national recognition for accomplishments and training on plan implementation for local communities.
- Signed a memorandum of understanding with the American Red Cross formalizing a partnership among wildland fire agencies, National Fire Protection Association, and the American Red Cross to reduce loss from wildland fire in communities through cooperative education efforts.
- Facilitated a dialogue with partners by including stakeholder interaction as a component of WFLC meetings. A diverse group of stakeholders have met and attended field trips with Council members in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana and Montana.

10-Year Strategy Implementation Plan Update

- Recognizing that effective management depends on adaptation, WFLC initiated a review of the *Implementation Plan* in December 2004. As an important part of this review, WFLC considered an evaluation completed in November 2004 by the WGA Forest Health Advisory Committee.
- This updated *Implementation Plan* focuses anew on the collaborative framework essential for success, and as to the Strategy's four goals, sets forth desired outcomes, performance measures, and responsibilities for tasks identified. The goals are interrelated and mutually reinforcing: restoring fire-adapted ecosystems and reducing hazardous fuels will reduce risks to communities and provide economic benefits, as well as improve fire prevention and suppression. This updated *Implementation Plan* emphasizes:
 - Information sharing and monitoring of accomplishments and forest conditions to improve transparency,
 - A long-term commitment to maintaining the essential resources for implementation,
 - Landscape-level vision for restoration of fire adapted ecosystems,
 - The importance of using fire as a management tool, and
 - Continuing to improve collaboration consistent with the vision of the *10-Year Strategy* and this *Implementation Plan*.

Cost Containment

In August 2004, the WFLC Strategic Issues Panel issued a report entitled, "Large Fire Suppression Costs: Strategies for Cost Management." The report, developed by senior level managers and administrators from Federal, State and local governments, examined 12 reports that spanned five years and included more than 300 recommendations. The report identified factors that will affect wildfire costs for the coming decades, including forest fuels, demographic trends, and climatic conditions, and provided recommendations aimed at slowing the rate of such costs.

- Seven multi-agency, multi-disciplinary Cost Action Teams (CATs) were formed by the WFLC and have completed their work. The following provides examples of the Departments' efforts to date:
 - The Agencies are strengthening and improving the availability of local resources through coordinated Federal and State financial support. Federal and State partners are assessing existing fire service funding programs to: (1) determine how existing funding can be more effectively leveraged; (2) improve coordination between the programs; (3) improve program information flow to customers; and (4) provide grant preparation assistance and other technical services to rural fire departments.

- The Agencies have issued guidance to incorporate consideration of wildfire suppression costs and fuel management efforts in land and resource management planning.
- The Agencies will continue to implement initiatives that assist in large-scale planning such as: (1) the WFLC-sponsored burn severity mapping project; (2) LANDFIRE; (3) Fire Program Analysis; (4) FIREWISE; (5) Community Wildfire Protection Planning; and (6) Wildland Fire Decision Support Modeling.
- The Departments are working to integrate numerous data collection/analysis systems in order to reduce the cost of data collection, ensure data quality, and eliminate redundancy. The Fire Occurrence Reporting Study, which analyzed existing information collected in Federal and State fire-reporting systems, is scheduled for final delivery in February 2007. Under the National Wildland Fire Enterprise Architecture project, we are integrating resource mobilization analysis and support systems to serve as the vehicle for a cohesive business transformation process.
- The Departments have adopted a Stratified Cost Index performance measure that uses cost data from around the nation to set a benchmark of average cost for a fire incident that incorporates sensitivity to location and conditions. The Forest Service is implementing this performance measure this year. DOI is still compiling the necessary background data and research and the measure will be implemented as soon as this is completed.
- The Forest Service has created a Comptroller position to focus on cost containment and large fire strategic and tactical decisions.
- As required by Congress, the Secretary of Agriculture has appointed an independent review panel, coordinated by the Brookings Institution, to conduct cost assessments on fires with suppression expenditures exceeding \$10 million.
- Cost Review Teams review fires in which costs exceed \$5 million in order to evaluate strategic, tactical and overall business management decisions on the incident.
- Scientific studies by the Southern and Rocky Mountain Research Stations and the Scripps Research Institute were conducted to determine the predictability of emergency suppression expenditures.
- The Agencies conduct “After Action” Reviews each Fall that assess the effectiveness of allocation of Forest Service and DOI fire suppression resources during high levels of fire activity at National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group/Geographic Area Multi-Coordinating Group postseason meetings.
- Standards were developed for Local Response Organizations (Type 3 Incident Management Teams) to enhance a community’s ability to independently manage fires.

Cohesive Fuels Treatment Strategy

Published in February 2006, “*Protecting People and Natural Resources: A Cohesive Fuels Treatment Strategy*,” focuses on several of the goals in the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan,

and outlines a coordinated approach to fuels treatment adopted by the five major Federal land managing agencies in the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, The Bureau of Land Management, The Fish and Wildlife Service, The Forest Service and The National Park Service.

- The WFLC developed four guiding principles: prioritization, coordination, collaboration, and accountability. The goal is to lessen risks from catastrophic wildfires by reducing fuels build-up in forests and woodlands in an efficient and cost effective manner. Congress, the Administration, States, tribes, local governments, and many others throughout the country recognize that this is a long-term challenge.
- Using the best available science and the four guiding principles of our strategy, WFLC will continue to work diligently with communities, Congress, and State, tribal, and local partners to attain the goals set in motion.