



Regional Transition Plan 2014-2015 From Planning to Implementation

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) is currently transitioning to a more involved, transformational and broadened leadership to promote greater collaboration, flexibility and continuity leading to the social, political and cultural change necessary to leverage success and achieve the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy – Resilient Landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities and Safe, Effective & Efficient Wildfire Response.

The Southeast, Northeast and Western Regional Strategy Committees (RSCs) recognize the completion of the National Strategy and the National Action Plan and the subsequent transition at the national level to implementation across the nation.

The RSCs are committed to providing the strategic leadership, the collaborative structure and environment, strategic communications and facilitating the tactical actions necessary to achieve meaningful, on-the-ground results.

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council has chosen a path forward to take advantage of a broadened, transformational leadership to endorse a greater collaboration, flexibility and continuity to leverage success in the fire and land management arena. Briefly:

- WFLC sets the vision, strategy and expectations for Cohesive Strategy implementation.
- The WFLC membership may be selectively expanded to address all three goals of the Cohesive Strategy.
- WFLC meets quarterly either in person or via conference/video capability.
- The National Strategic Committee (NSC) serves as a workgroup of WFLC to carry out the day-to-day transactions necessary to achieve the vision, strategy and implementation expectations.
- NSC will contract with a full time manager to coordinate strategic actions that ensure national and regional alignment related to WFLC's vision, strategy and implementation expectations.

The WFLC further asserts that regional coordination of CS implementation will continue to be necessary and has agreed that there is benefit in allowing the RSCs to identify their geographic reach, structure and needs for implementation, which WFLC/NSC shall review and approve.

The Regional Strategy Committees are looking forward to working with the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, the National Strategic Committee and each other, to take advantage

of a broadened, transformational leadership to achieve full implementation of the Cohesive Strategy.

This document provides an outline for the continued path forward in The RSCs.

STRATEGY FOR TRANSITION FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

Translating national priorities into local action requires complementary implementation decisions to be made at multiple scales. The WFLC, NSC and the RSCs have important roles in facilitating this “cascade of decisions” utilizing the capacities of existing and non-traditional and non-fire partners, in alignment with the WFLC vision and strategic direction of the NSC.

The RSCs agree that social, political and cultural change occurs from the both the ground up and top down, and each recognizes the value in collaborative behaviors that discourage the organizational and territorial “stove-pipe” management thinking that leads to fragmented efforts on the ground. To fully implement the Cohesive Strategy, reduce risk and achieve the three goals, the RSCs are committed to building new and improving existing relationships to cultivate a culture of collaborative behaviors in which these changes are demonstrated, promoted and celebrated.

Planning efforts thus far have established a firm foundation for achieving strategic alignment among partners and stakeholders of shared goals and principles. Collaborative engagement has been a critical component throughout the planning stages and will continue to be a high priority for the RSCs. As the RSCs continue with implementation, they are focused on exploiting the collaborative environments already developed to tip the culture among agencies, organizations, communities and individuals to one that embraces a new paradigm of shared vision, collaborative prioritization and decision making, and shared responsibility for meaningful wildfire risk reduction.

The RSCs have already embarked on implementation of the Regional Action Plans and embrace the continued path of regional implementation by involving senior transformational leadership, a broadened stakeholder/partner participation and interregional coordination with a strong focus on collaboration and communication to realize reduced risk on a landscape scale and achievement of the three goals. It is expected that adaptive implementation will continue over the next 3-5 years and beyond, to reach the levels closest to the landscape.

The RSCs have made significant progress to date towards the implementation of social, political and cultural change described above including:

- Improved communications with partners and stakeholders using a variety of strategic communications methods;
- Completion of specific actions in the Regional Action Plans;
- Tracking achievements and successes and sharing lessons to promote additional action;
- Examination and incorporation of the appropriate science to assist decision makers in prioritizing landscapes,

- Enhancement of existing partnerships to increase the understanding of the concepts and engagement opportunities stemming from what the Cohesive Strategy is and what it means to individuals and communities across landscapes, within agencies and non-fire partners.

As noted in the National Action Plan, the success of the Cohesive Strategy depends on the collective commitment by all stakeholders at all levels to take action toward meaningful reduction in risk in the short and long-term. This is a difficult proposition that requires the engagement of all stakeholders to:

- Prioritize investment and use of resources.
- Accept increased short-term risk for longer-term benefit.
- Achieve greater collective investment.

To collectively realize the shared, cohesive vision for the future of fire management, implementation plans of various scales and scopes will need to be coordinated among stakeholders.

In recognition of this guidance, the RSCs note the following components required to operate in tandem for successful implementation:

- Strategic Alignment – agreement of the same goals, principles and strategic course of action.
- Communications and Collaborative Engagement – shared information and resources, communications, governance, monitoring and accountability.
- Programmatic Alignment – the objectives of individual agencies and organizations are explicitly supportive of the Cohesive Strategy goals and appropriate adjustments are made, while recognizing their disparate missions, roles and responsibilities, the cascade of decisions required and their fiscal realities and constraints.

By promoting and fostering these components for success, the RSCs will continue with specific implementation efforts that lead to the engagement of all stakeholders as described above.

This Plan focuses on four primary areas:

1. Transformational Leadership and Structure
2. Broadened Stakeholder and Partner Engagement
3. Improved Communications
4. Continued Implementation of Regional Action Plans



Transformational Leadership and Structure

The RSCs agree that in an effort to strive for cultural change that will lead to positive impacts on the ground and increasing organizational efficiency, continued implementation of the National and Regional Action Plans are critical. Full support and engagement in these efforts is a key responsibility of the national and regional leadership as well as partners and stakeholders. Regional leadership stems from both alignment with regional CS priorities but also with expectations being set at the national level.

Meaningful reduction in wildfire risk, through co-management of risk and the cascade of decisions across organizations, is a difficult proposition. While allocation and implementation decisions cannot be mandated, cooperating agencies and organizations have a better chance of reducing overall risks by adopting strategic direction and sharing information and analytical tools developed collaboratively.

This will require the personal engagement of regional senior leaders such as State Foresters, Regional Foresters, State Fire Directors, key elected officials, Tribal leaders, and Fire Chiefs, etc. to establish and model the intent to transform the culture and behaviors within and among organizations. It is recognized that appropriate engagement of regional senior leaders will be necessary in order to achieve the consequential changes to collectively reduce risk to landscapes, communities and firefighters across the regions.

The role of senior leaders is envisioned to include the need for regular communication with employees and partners at their levels to insure there is a common understanding of what the Cohesive Strategy is striving to achieve; and ensure that their respective strategic plans, program direction, grant criteria, and budgets are coordinated as much as possible to achieve the common goals within their own organizations.

In an effort to implement this level of engagement, the RSCs will align to the WFLC and NSC new implementation structure to connect to and support the leadership and implementation actions at the national level. Each RSC will provide a representative to participate in the National Strategic Committee.

Senior Regional Leadership

While the RSCs will identify their individual organizational and operating structures, each understands the importance of senior regional leadership to achieving on-the-ground success.

It is expected that the national leadership (WFLC/NSC) and RSCs will actively strive to foster the engagement and participation of senior regional leaders.

Senior regional leaders will provide key strategic leadership to facilitate the necessary components of strategic alignment, communications, collaborative engagement and programmatic alignment to foster the engagement of all stakeholders to 1) prioritize investment and use of resources, 2) accept increased short-term risk for longer-term benefits, and 3) achieve greater collective investment in reducing wildfire risk.

Regional Strategy Committees

In addition to the senior regional leaders, the RSCs will include a diverse, broadened membership with a focus on values and resources that each brings to the table that assist in implementation efforts. This level of leadership holds a high level of commitment and responsibility within the RSCs including:

- Bringing assets such as staff time, funding and other resources to the table as well as a span of influence to support regional activities that lead to achievement of the three goals.
- Fostering collaborative regional environments in which leaders and partners see the value of the investment through engaging and participating in Cohesive Strategy behaviors and act to foster those environments in their own organizations and locations.
- Striving to remove barriers at the regional levels and elevate those that require WFLC/NSC attention.
- Emphasizing actions that will reduce overall risk on the landscape.
- Fostering communications, outreach, relationship building and partner engagement.

In general, the functions of the Regional Strategy Committees are to execute the Cohesive Strategy components: the National Vision, Strategy, and Action Plan; and address and manage regionally specific issues and opportunities through implementation of the three Regional Action Plans. This includes the exploitation of opportunities and examples where implementation is successful; assessing and addressing weaknesses and lessons learned; mitigating threats to success; and building on strengths and assets within the geographic regions.

Each RSC will identify their geographic reach (including any need for sub-geographic boundaries) and its operational/organizational structure to achieve results in their geographic regions.

Coordination

WFLC has acknowledged the need for continued regional coordination of Cohesive Strategy implementation. Much like the need for an Executive Manager for the NSC, regional leadership will include full-time coordination to achieve regional success through multiple activities including relationship and partnership building, tracking and sharing of achievement (as well as lessons learned), implementation of a robust communications strategy and management of committee activities. Each RSC will determine their coordination needs and how to fulfill them.

Fiscal Support

The RSCs agree that consistent funding for each region will be required throughout the next 3-5 years to support the overall implementation effort to achieve the social, political and cultural change for which WFLC and the NSC are striving. It is understood that this

will include financial and non-financial investments. Each Region will determine their sponsorship requirements and how they will fulfill them.



Broadened Stakeholder and Partner Engagement

In an effort to strive for cultural change and creating positive impacts on the ground, a broader partnership base including diverse, non-traditional and non-fire partners, will support greater achievement of the three goals.

Regional Strategy Committees will expand their partnership and stakeholder base to embrace partners whose missions are broader than fire management, include non-traditional partners and those with specific knowledge, experience and/or intellectual capital and resources for specific actions and tasks.

Through these new partners and with a continued enhancement of existing partnerships, the RSCs will increase opportunities and investment in Cohesive Strategy behaviors that lead to on-the-ground results and cultural change.

As noted above, RSCs will focus recruitment and retention on the value and resources they bring to the table for successful implementation rather than organizational position.

There is significant opportunity and expectation here for RSCs to build relationships with non-traditional partners for new actions not yet identified. The RSCs will continue to capture successes that can be shared to stimulate new partnership opportunities.



Improved Communications

The RSCs agree that communications and outreach at all levels, internally and externally, are critical to reducing risk and collectively achieving Resilient Landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities and Safe, Efficient and Effective Wildland Fire Response.

Each RSC agrees to identify and implement a robust communication strategy to provide timely, relevant and accurate information designed to promote collaborative and replicable behaviors across the nation.

These strategic communications plans will suggest specific actions to address internal and external needs for the activities described above such as the development of compelling messages designed to create a “rippling effect” where they are carried from person to person, colleague to colleague, etc. These plans will also address how the RSCs will display accomplishment of specific actions, cultural change, successes and other progress towards the three goals.

In addition, it is expected that national and regional leadership will promote continued internal agency communications and outreach to reach untouched staff and personnel critical to on the ground successes.

The RSCs also recognize the importance of communications in building relationships between partners and stakeholders and will strive to assist in these relationships where it is beneficial.



Continued Implementation of Regional Action Plans

Over the past year, the RSCs have concentrated on implementation of specific actions that lead to collective and individual accomplishment of the three goals. Moving forward however, the RSCs acknowledge the need for, and are committed to prioritizing actions that achieve greater collective investment, prioritized investments and resources, and an accepted increased short-term risk to achieve long-term benefits.

The RSCs will revisit and update the Regional Action Plans to include this recognition and prioritize actions to demonstrate and promote projects that achieve landscape scale risk reduction.

Conclusion

The success of this implementation effort is contingent upon the capacity of the RSCs to help the National Cohesive Strategy shift the current culture of territorial, “stove-piped” thinking about fire management to a new paradigm of shared vision, collaborative prioritization and decision making, and shared responsibility for meaningful wildfire risk reduction. The RSCs are committed to providing the strategic leadership, the collaborative structure and environment, strategic communications and facilitating the tactical actions necessary to achieve the on-the-ground, local actions of agencies, organizations, Tribes, governments and individuals with meaningful cumulative efforts.

The Regional Strategy Committees are looking forward to working with the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, the National Strategic Committee and each other, to take advantage of a broadened, transformational leadership to achieve full implementation of the Cohesive Strategy.

Resilient Landscapes
Fire Adapted Communities
Safe, Efficient & Effective Response to Wildfire

