



# WESTERN REGION

## Western Regional Action Plan

### Addendum 2015

#### Background

The Western Regional Strategy Committee (WRSC) is chartered by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) to facilitate implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy in the Western Region. In April 2013, the WRSC adopted the Western Regional Action Plan and it was subsequently approved by the WFLC.

In 2014, the Final Phase in the Development of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (National Strategy) and the National Action Plan completed the development of the national Cohesive Strategy efforts. Both nationally and regionally, the goal now is to achieve the shared vision and goals established by the Cohesive Strategy through collaborative implementation and integration of the tenets of the Cohesive Strategy into existing work and programs across all stakeholders and all landscapes.

The Cohesive Strategy is the natural evolution of not only wildfire and public land management, but an evolution of how to do business in the natural resource environment. It's been said, "fire can't solve fire's problem," and this is proving true in the Western Region. Stakeholders are many and diverse, from state, federal and tribal land management agencies to non-governmental organizations, communities and private landowners. Each shares a common interest – creating change to address the mounting real and subsequent costs of firefighter and citizen deaths, burned homes and infrastructure, loss of communities and natural resources, and the extreme monetary cost of suppression. The Cohesive Strategy is an integrated, collaborative approach that is already demonstrating success towards all three goals on the ground.

To meet the shared vision and goals of the Cohesive Strategy, the WRSC has evolved to take advantage of senior regional leadership and existing systems and networks to implement and integrate the Cohesive Strategy. The role of the WRSC has evolved as a vehicle for two-way communications to bridge the gap between the Western Regional Action Plan and how implementation and integration of the Cohesive Strategy is playing out at the local and regional landscape level; a natural evolution. Likewise, the WRSC also provides a communications channel from the Western Region to regional and national leaders, the WFLC and NSC.

The WRSC adopted a Strategic Communications Plan to take advantage of this structure and these networks to collect, inform and disseminate success stories and lessons learned from implementers across the Western Region. It also recognizes the value of personal

communications to help peer organizations see how their own work fits within the lens of the Cohesive Strategy.

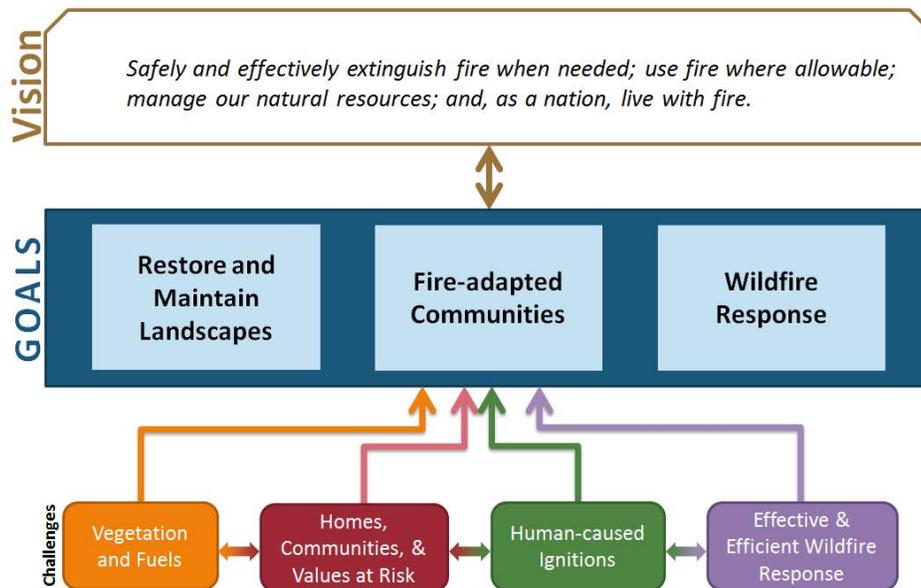
The recommendations in the Western Regional Action Plan are intended to help guide stakeholders to actions they can take, within their own purview, to make meaningful progress towards the three goals. At the time the Action Plan was written, there was an expectation that agencies and stakeholders would marshal the implementation of specific actions, ultimately leading to full implementation of the Cohesive Strategy. This tactic proved awkward, if not challenging, as successes across the region have been noted and continue to play out organically, from the ground up, among multiple stakeholders and across jurisdictions.

### **Action Plan Review**

With several years behind us and the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, the WRSC set about a full review of the Action Plan. The review confirmed that the vision, goals and objectives of the Western Regional Action Plan remain valid. The review also revealed that while the actions in the plan are still needed, many of the tasks and suggested leads are too prescriptive. It has since become clear that what implementers on the ground find really helpful are examples of creative solutions, current science, and support from the top, couple with the flexibility to adapt actions to meet local needs and ever-changing situations.

It is important to note that stakeholders at every level, across multiple landscapes, have and will continue to achieve success towards implementation under all three goals of the Cohesive Strategy interdependently. Success under the goal of Creating Fire Adapted Communities often results in success toward Restoring Resilient Landscapes and a Safe & Effective Wildfire Response. Rarely do activities contribute to only one goal of the Cohesive Strategy. This adds credibility to the value of the Cohesive Strategy in making meaningful progress towards understanding risk and resolving issues surrounding wildland fire.

The National Strategy supports this recognition in the identification of four challenges which, when confronted collaboratively, contribute to shared success under the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy.



The National Strategy also offers a vision for implementation that will reveal success in implementing multiple facets of the Cohesive Strategy. Based not on a singular goal, but rather basic elements, when operating in tandem, demonstrate successful implementation:

- Strategic Alignment – when parties agree to the same, goals, principles and strategic course of action.
- Communication and Collaborative Engagement – including governance, shared information, resources, communications, monitoring and accountability.
- Programmatic Alignment – individual agency or organization objectives are explicitly supportive of Cohesive Strategy goals, recognizing the separate missions, roles and responsibilities of each, the cascade of decisions required and fiscal realities and constraints.

In consideration of the goal before us now, the WRSC has synthesized the actions applicable to regional and local stakeholders in a way that better reflects the collaborative nature of what still needs to be accomplished.

This addendum is a guide to facilitate understanding of the Cohesive Strategy and how its tenets can be incorporated into existing efforts and new opportunities to achieve the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy.

### Internal Actions

The Action Plan identified a series of actions to be undertaken by the WRSC itself in order to provide for an organization to steer the engagement of stakeholders for the implementation of the Cohesive Strategy. These were enumerated in the Overarching Section of the Action Plan.

The WRSC has met the intent and objectives of this section pertaining to the structure and oversight of the organization and continues to respond to the needs of implementation across the Western Region with a focus on senior regional leadership and implementation within existing networks and systems. The WRSC has also met and exceeded the recommendations for a commitment to communications efforts with the development of the Strategic Communications Plan that will serve members of the WRSC and stakeholders over the next five years.

The WRSC will continue to review progress under the Action Plan and this addendum, and develop a yearly Program of Work for the WRSC that supports continued implementation of the Cohesive Strategy.

### **External Actions**

Outside of the WRSC organization, stakeholders are many and varied, ranging from the uppermost levels of federal, state and tribal agencies with great spans of influence to local individuals and groups with more immediate opportunities. Regardless of the level at which stakeholders operate, the core tenets of the Cohesive Strategy can be integrated to address the issues and impacts of wildland fire across jurisdictional boundaries in a collaborative manner.

For consistency and alignment with the Western Regional Action Plan, the following external actions will be listed by goal area using the same action item numbers. In some cases, the implementation of specific action items lies with national level agencies and policy-making organizations. In some cases implementation is influenced by national policy such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) and Occupational of Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). These national policies are the guidelines within which agencies and organizations must work to implement projects on the ground. Consequently, those actions originally intended for national level implementation remain “as-is” and are referenced as “NA” in this addendum.

The following actions are activities in which stakeholders across the Western Region can engage to integrate the tenets of the Cohesive Strategy into existing work and programs to ultimately understand and reduce risk.

## Goal One – Restore and maintain landscapes.

### Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire and other disturbances in accordance with management objectives.

#### Action

#### Item Updated Action

---

- 1.1.a. Promote and encourage collaborative planning and management.
  - 1. promote inclusiveness of ongoing restoration and maintenance activities
  - 2. support local collaborative management and response capacities
  - 3. promote and coordinate planning and implementation activities across jurisdictional and ownership boundaries.
  - 4. encourage federal, state, tribal and local partners to maximize collaboration and use of existing tools and authorities (1.1.b.) that will expedite the creation and maintenance of resilient landscapes.
- 1.1.b. Maximize state and local authorities for implementation (refer to Action Plan section 1.1.b. for additional recommendations).
  - 1. Encourage tax and other incentives for work done on non-federal lands to implement landscape resiliency projects.
  - 2. Recommend reclassification of grant funds utilized to reduce fire risk on private lands as conservation activities (in the tax codes).
- 1.1.c. Implement projects using the best available tools.
  - 1. maximize the use of available legislative authorities and funding sources to enter into procurement contracts, grants and cooperative agreements for vegetation and hazardous fuels treatment activities on all lands.
- 1.1.d. NA
- 1.1.e. Expand use of collaborative landscape restoration efforts.
  - 2. consider existing landscape treatment efforts that integrate partnership interactions among, federal, state, tribal, local agencies, and NGO collaborators.
- 1.2 Use a collaborative approach in landscape assessment and prioritization process to identify areas for investment.
- 1.3 NA
- 1.4 Understand the implications of NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that define project implementation.
- 1.5 Examine legislative related barriers that are impeding implementation of collaboratively developed landscape health-related projects and identify potential solutions.
  - 1. Work collaboratively with regulatory agencies to reduce barriers.

## **Goal Two – Fire Adapted Communities**

### **Populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.**

#### **Action**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Updated Action</b>
-------------	-----------------------

---

- |     |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1 | Continue to create and update Community Wildfire Protection Plans and tribal equivalents. (refer to Action Plan section 2.1 for additional recommendations).                         |
| 2.2 | Coordinate and support activities to achieve and maintain Fire Adapted Communities (refer to Action Plan section 2.2 for additional recommendations).                                |
| 2.3 | Develop and promote local collaborative capacities to implement fuels treatments, forest restoration and respond to fires (refer to Action Plan 2.3 for additional recommendations). |
| 2.4 | Use available local, state and west-wide communications resources to achieve Fire Adapted Communities (refer to Action Plan 2.4 for additional recommendations).                     |
| 2.5 | Facilitate shared learning of what it means to make progress towards becoming a Fire Adapted Community (refer to Action Plan 2.5 for additional recommendations).                    |
| 2.6 | Understand opportunities to create and maintain Fire Adapted Communities with FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation and Assistance to Firefighters Grant programs.                            |

## Goal three – Safe & Effective Wildfire Response

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

### Action

#### Item Updated Action

---

- 3.1 Strive to eliminate unprotected areas by establishing/extending jurisdictional responsibilities so that all burnable acres have the appropriate jurisdictional wildland response (refer to Action Plan section 3.1 for additional recommendations).
- 3.2 Improve firefighter and public safety (refer to Action Plan 3.2. for additional recommendations).
  - 3.2.a. Understand fire response risk management protocols on national, regional, local levels (refer to Action Plan section 3.2 for additional recommendations).
  - 3.2.b. Understand risks and trends in firefighter safety relating to firefighter exposure to smoke and heat related illness.
  - 3.2.c. Consider using the [www.SAFENET.nifc.gov](http://www.SAFENET.nifc.gov) non-fault reporting process.
  - 3.2.d. Understand ongoing EMS certification guidelines for state-to-state reciprocity on incidents.
  - 3.2.e. Strive for wildland fire prevention programs to be consistent with wildland fire hazards and values to be protected (refer to Action Plan section 3.2.e. for specific recommendations).
  - 3.2.f. NA
- 3.3 Integrate local, state, federal, tribal and private response capacity when and where possible.
  - 3.3.a. NA
  - 3.3.b. NA
- 3.4 Increase capacity where necessary in order to improve overall local response effectiveness and reduce the need for external (non-local) resources.
  - 3.4.a. NA
  - 3.4.b. Increase local response capacity including supporting the development of Type 3 incident management teams (refer to Action Plan section 3.4.b. for additional recommendations).

### Outcomes

As noted in the National Strategy, an unavoidable principle of risk management is that choices made today affect all future options. A more ideal solution is a trajectory that marginally increases risk in the short-term, but begins paying long-term benefits relatively quickly and keeps risk at manageable levels. Through the integration and implementation of the Cohesive Strategy, three key outcomes will demonstrate meaningful reductions in risk:

1. **Prioritization of investment and use of resources.** Reducing risk significantly will require that existing resources are used more efficiently. This may require reallocation of resources across agencies, geographical areas, or program areas.
2. **Acceptance of increased short-term risk.** Significantly reducing fuels across broad landscapes will require expanded use of wildland fire to achieve management objectives. Using fire as a tool carries inherent risks that must be accepted in the short-term to achieve the longer-term benefits
3. **Greater collective investment.** Even with greater efficiency and acceptance of short-term risks current levels of investment may be inadequate to achieve the levels of risk reduction desired. All who have a stake in the outcome, from property owners to the federal government must share the financial burden.

Participation in the implementation of the CS is an opportunity that provides numerous benefits; it is not an edict. While federal agencies and many non-federal partners recognize the urgency of implementing the CS and are committed to moving forward, the WRSC will continue to foster inclusiveness and encourage a broader group of stakeholders to join in the effort. The principles of the Cohesive Strategy encourage partners to leverage resources and work together across jurisdictional and political boundaries to achieve results that would not be possible by an individual agency or stakeholder acting independently.

## **Conclusion**

The outcome of the Cohesive Strategy effort is more than a set of documents. It is a commitment to the doctrine that, as stakeholders, we all share responsibilities for managing our lands; protecting our nation's natural, tribal, and cultural resources; and making our communities safe and resilient for future generations. This addendum is intended to be used as a guide, to help agencies, organizations and individuals see themselves in the vision of the Cohesive Strategy – taking part in the collaborative behaviors that lead to successful integration of the philosophy.