



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

**An Implementation Framework for the
*National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy***

April 2014



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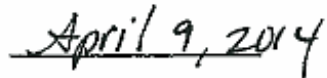
WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The WFLC was established in April 2002 by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to provide an intergovernmental committee to support the implementation and coordination of Federal Fire Management Policy. In April 2010, the Secretaries of Interior, Agriculture and Homeland Security authorized the continuation of the WFLC. The Council meets regularly to provide oversight and coordination of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

Agencies: U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of Homeland Security/U.S. Fire Administration, Western Governors' Association, National Governors' Association, National Association of Counties, Intertribal Timber Council, National League of Cities, National Association of State Foresters, International Association of Fire Chiefs



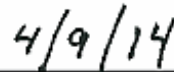
Rhea S. Suh
WFLC Co-Chair
Assistant Secretary
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Date



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Date

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Congress passed the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement (FLAME) Act (FLAME). In the FLAME Act, building on earlier reports from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congress directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to develop a national cohesive wildland fire management strategy. The third and final phase of the effort to develop a cohesive strategy culminated with the release of *The National Strategy: The Final Phase of the Development of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (National Strategy)* and this *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: National Action Plan (National Action Plan)*. This *National Action Plan* is a companion to the *National Strategy* and supports its implementation. The *National Action Plan* is the result of a collaborative effort by Federal, state, local, territorial and tribal governments and non-governmental partners and public stakeholders.

The purpose of this *National Action Plan* is to provide a framework for implementation actions and tasks necessary at various scales. The actions identified herein have been developed collaboratively by and for stakeholders, as a proactive, collaborative approach to implementing the *National Strategy*. Scientific data analysis underpins all aspects of the *National Action Plan*. Using science and data analysis to support implementation planning and decision-making must continue. Coordinated engagement and action on the part of all stakeholders provides our best opportunity to restore and maintain landscapes, protect communities from wildfire, and effectively respond to wildfires when they occur. National actions are significant in the context of this national commitment and this plan describes the commitment made by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC), the nation's highest collaborative wildland fire group, to implement the National Strategy.

In 2012, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) adopted the following 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.

The three primary, national goals identified as necessary to achieving the vision are:

Restore and maintain landscapes: Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.

Fire-adapted communities: Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.

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

NATIONAL VISION & GOALS

NATIONAL WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

As outlined in the *National Strategy*, achieving the national goals requires that the Nation address four broad challenges:

- Managing vegetation and fuels;
- Protecting homes, communities, and other values at risk;
- Managing human-caused ignitions; and
- Safely, effectively, and efficiently responding to wildfire.

As described within the *National Strategy*, the broadly applicable, national management options and implementation planning guidance associated with each of the national challenges is included below. In addition, more specific but wide-ranging elements of these national challenges will require management consideration and action in the short- and long-term. These include:

Continued Expansion of the Wildland Urban Interface in all Vegetation Types
Expansion of the WUI and all it entails – homes, citizens, transportation and power corridors and local economies -- continues to present a variety of challenges for all stakeholders, including land owners, business and commerce leaders, fire managers, tribes, and governments, in all three goal areas. Leaders must continually focus on making investments to protect life and property; but reducing risks to both WUI values and responders often comes at the expense of other values.

Changing Climate and the Effects on Wildland Fire Extent and Seasonality
Climate contributes to shaping fire regimes and through weather influences fire behavior. We are clearly seeing the impacts of a changing climate in the form of extended drought periods, longer fire seasons, timber stands susceptible to insect infestation and mortality and greater rates of fire spread, all of which contribute to larger and more complex and costly incidents. Less clear are shifts in ignition probability, both through vegetation condition and potential changes in lightning and storm patterns.

Together, these impacts are challenging the fire community to provide more annual coverage and response capability for a longer period of time, as well as maintain a high initial attack success rate on faster growing fires, all while managing incidents of unprecedented size and complexity. Understanding and anticipating trends in, and impacts from, changing climate is necessary in order to most effectively manage changes in fire regimes and fire behavior and meet all three goals.

Vegetation Stressed by Insects, Drought, Disease, Invasive Species and Legacy Management

Many of our nation's forests and rangelands have been adversely affected by a variety of factors, such as fire exclusion, droughts, insect infestations, invasive species and accumulations of hazardous vegetative fuels, resulting in stressed vegetation that is more susceptible to fire-induced mortality and less likely to regenerate in its previous form. Stand dynamics such as composition, age distribution and structure influence fire behavior, as well as the risk of other stressors.

All of these stressors are interconnected and influence each other, and all are influenced by climate and other factors. Drought influences disease and is

influenced by climate; legacy management influences invasive species which can then influence insect infestation, all while being influenced by climate. Understanding stressors and the interactions among them, and managing to minimize their impacts, is necessary to effectively achieve desired healthy vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Species of Management Concern that are Disturbance Sensitive

Many species of concern are sensitive to fire-related disturbance. Managing fire's contribution to deteriorating habitat requires an understanding of species and habitat requirements and how these disturbances interact to affect them. Each species requires a uniquely tailored approach in order to improve their status.

Landowners, tribes, and managers are increasingly faced with more complex and wide-ranging species of concern, such as the Greater Sage-grouse. The imminent threat to the species in the Great Basin comes from fire followed by invasive species encroachment, resulting in a repeating cycle of fire-invasives spread. To avoid further habitat degradation, action must be taken to effectively suppress fire as well as actively manage vegetation to include fuels treatment, post-fire stabilization, and habitat restoration actions. With continued development, changing climate, and other widespread stressors, other species of concern require special management consideration on a multi-regional scale.

Recognizing that no one-size-fits-all approach exists to address the challenges facing the Nation, multiple options and strategies must be utilized to address wildland fire challenges. The management options and implementation planning guidance for each national challenge are additionally carried forward from the *National Strategy* in this *National Action Plan* to support cohesive implementation planning at all scales and among the various stakeholders.

Managing Vegetation and Fuels

Management Options

- **Prescribed fire** – One of the more effective and cost-efficient means of managing vegetation for multiple purposes, including hazard reduction, ecosystem restoration or maintenance, silviculture and others.
- **Managing wildfire for resource objectives** - This option refers to a specific choice to use unplanned ignitions to achieve resource management objectives.
- **Fuel treatments using mechanical, biological, or other non-fire methods** – These treatments are often needed before wildland fire can be re-introduced into many landscapes.

Implementation Planning Guidance

- ✓ *Where wildfires are unwanted or threaten communities and homes, design and prioritize fuel treatments (prescribed fire, and mechanical, biological and chemical treatments) to reduce fire intensity, structure ignition and wildfire extent.*
- ✓ *Where feasible, implement strategically placed fuel treatments to interrupt fire spread across landscapes.*
- ✓ *Continue and expand the use of prescribed fire to meet landscape objectives, improve ecological conditions, and reduce the potential for high-intensity wildfires.*

***Protecting
Homes,
Communities,
and Values
at Risk***

- ✓ *Where allowed and feasible, manage wildfire for resource objectives and ecological purposes to restore and maintain fire-adapted ecosystems and achieve fire-resilient landscapes.*
- ✓ *Use and expand fuel treatments involving mechanical, biological, or chemical methods where economically feasible and sustainable, and where they align with landowner objectives.*

Management Options

- **Home and community action** - Communities benefit by focusing on protecting individual homes by implementing actions formulated by property owners.
- **Building codes** - Making buildings more resistant to ignition by focusing on building materials and construction standards would reduce loss.

Implementation Planning Guidance

- ✓ *Promote community and homeowner involvement in planning and implementing actions to mitigate the risk posed by wildfire to communities and homes situated near or adjacent to natural vegetation.*
- ✓ *Emphasize proactive wildfire risk mitigation actions, such as CWPPs and other methods of comprehensive community planning, where new development and expansion into natural vegetation is occurring.*
- ✓ *Pursue municipal, county, and state building and zoning codes and ordinances that mitigate fire risk to protect life and property from wildfire.*
- ✓ *Ensure that wildfire mitigation strategies consider protection of community infrastructure and values, for example, municipal watersheds, cultural assets, viewsheds, parks, and transportation and utility corridors.*

***Managing
Human-caused
Ignitions***

Management Options

- **Reduce human-caused accidental and intentional ignitions** - Programs that target the prevention of human-caused ignitions have the potential to substantively affect wildfire occurrence and extent in essentially every county in the nation.

Implementation Planning Guidance

- ✓ *Emphasize programs and activities that prevent human-caused ignitions, whether accidental or incendiary, where these ignitions, combined with high levels of area burned, suggest the greatest need. Programs should be tailored to meet identified local needs.*

***Safely,
Effectively, &
Efficiently
Responding to
Wildfire***

Management Options

- **Prepare for large, long-duration wildfires** - Because large wildfires cause significant challenges, it is important to know where large, long-duration wildfires are likely to occur and plan accordingly.
- **Protect structures and target landscape** - The opportunity to employ greater flexibility in the tactics used in suppressing and containing fires might be explored. Greater flexibility could lead to enhanced ecological benefits, reduced overall suppression costs, and perhaps less direct risk to firefighters.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Protect structures and target ignition prevention** - Initial and extended responses are complex and vary when analyzed at a national scale.

Implementation Planning Guidance

- ✓ *Enhance wildfire response preparedness in areas more likely to experience large, long-duration wildfires that are unwanted or threaten communities and homes.*
- ✓ *Enhance wildfire response preparedness in areas experiencing high rates of structure loss per area burned.*
- ✓ *At the community level, emphasize both structure protection and wildfire prevention to enhance the effectiveness of initial response.*

Achieving the vision for wildland fire management as outlined by the WFLC is a complex undertaking that necessitates the engagement and action of many different agencies, organizations, and individuals throughout the Nation. Recognizing the different roles, responsibilities, and the opportunities for implementation as well as understanding the challenges, tensions, and realities that may exist among partners and stakeholders is a necessary next step.

Long-term success will be achieved through collaborative leadership, planning, implementation, and monitoring (for accountability) among:

- Local, state, territorial, tribal, and Federal government agencies;
- Non-governmental organizations and constituent groups;
- Elected officials;
- Communities;
- Citizen groups; and
- Individuals

The shared vision for implementation requires actions unique to the responsibilities of agencies, organizations, and individuals as well as collective actions among partners and stakeholders to achieve shared goals and outcomes. Actions will occur at a variety of scales within the context of this action plan. The National Strategy recognizes the need to tailor and pursue regional and local actions to specifically address regional (and local) conditions. These scaled actions should be based on the National Strategy, the Regional Action Plans, and the recommendations of the task teams assigned to evaluate the critical success factors and barriers and created through a collaborative process. The *National Action Plan* is recognition of individual and collective responsibilities and a commitment on a path forward. Progress will be demonstrated through outcome and intermediate measures as a mechanism for ensuring accountability and monitoring.

NATIONAL ACTIONS

The actions described below are strategic in nature and define long-term, ongoing work necessary to be successful now and into the future. The actions provide a consistent approach and focus for agencies, organizations and stakeholders to adopt based on their individual roles, responsibilities, and activities. The national actions create a framework for detailed implementation plans to be developed by agencies and organizations, all meant to be coordinated with stakeholders. These overarching national actions are fundamental to accomplishing all aspects of the *National Strategy*.

LEADERSHIP

- **Maintain an efficient and effective leadership capability**, to provide for coordination, support, and monitoring of the implementation activities. Leadership must continue to be inclusive and reach beyond traditional boundaries and partners at all levels of wildland fire and land management.
- **Actively commit to implementation actions necessary for achieving the vision for the future of wildland fire management**, including action needed on the part of all stakeholders across the Nation.

PLANNING

- **Evaluate and integrate applicable wildland fire management strategies and actions** from the National Strategy, National Action Plan, Regional Action Plans including recognition of reserved treaty rights, and *Wildland Fire in America: The Scientific Basis for the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy* into planning and decision-making, such as through future revisions of individual land management plans, threatened and endangered species (T&E) habitat and/or recovery plans, state forest action plans, agency work plans, community wildfire protection plans (CWPP) and their equivalent, county plans, and other relevant land, resource and community planning efforts.
- **Identify and adjust protection responsibilities** based upon effectiveness and efficiency while ensuring safety in wildfire response.
- **Align federal assistance activities** to demonstrable actions by stakeholders, communities, and individual landowners to mitigate wildland fire risks through planning, zoning, and other programs.
- **Increase coordination between stakeholders and land and fire managers to increase protection for community values**, such as water quality and quantity and wildlife habitat for sensitive species.
- **At regional or landscape scales, assess the prioritization and resources necessary to maintain landscape resiliency**, desired ecological processes and condition, and objectives for landscape-scale threatened and endangered species.

Restore and Maintain Landscapes

Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives. Forest and rangeland management programs are strengthened to accomplish risk reduction.

- **Seek means to assist private landowners with managing fuels.**
- **Promote prescribed fire certification and training** to provide safe use of fire.
- **Promote landscape scale fuels management activities** that address creation and maintenance of resilient landscapes.
- **Include fuels reduction and fire risk management activities** into existing and future land management programs.
- **Promote cost-effective active forest and rangeland management.**

Fire Adapted Communities

Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property. Ignitions caused by humans are reduced and lower threats to communities.

- **Adopt and implement planning and zoning measures** to reduce risk to communities from wildfire.
- **Align public investments in fuels treatments to demonstrable risk reduction activities by communities and landowners.**
- **Utilize fuels management programs to address protection of communities and their values.**
- **Encourage communities and landowners to actively manage land for fuels reduction.**
- **Reduce human caused ignitions.**
- **Engage non-traditional partners, such as the insurance industry and non-governmental organizations,** in efforts to promote fire-adapted communities.
- **Examine and develop solutions to better utilize grant programs** that address community and homeowner fire mitigation efforts and activities for risk reduction.

Wildfire Response

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

- **Develop and implement standards and protocols** that strengthen national mobilization capabilities.
- **Invest in the wildland fire firefighting workforce at all levels** (federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local) to meet the increasing complexities and demands of firefighting in the wildland urban interface.

**PERFORMANCE
MEASUREMENT,
MONITORING, &
ACCOUNTABILITY**

Performance measures provide the means for assessing progress toward desired outcomes established in the science-based *National Strategy*. A common set of national outcome and intermediate measures will enable Congress and other legislative bodies, agency and community leaders, the wildland fire management community, and other stakeholders to assess national progress toward achieving each of the three national goals. Performance measurement must be risk-based to illustrate the change in risk over time.

- **Strengthen capabilities to collect, analyze, interpret and integrate** all types of data and information, including recognized data gaps, to provide for sound decision-making.
- **Utilize performance measure and monitoring information** to assess effectiveness and accountability.
- **Develop capabilities and support training and utilization of support tools** to better inform decision-making and trade-off analyses at all levels of fire and land management.
- **Document successes and determine common themes of successful projects.** Maintain knowledge and information resources that are easily accessible to stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Our success depends on collective commitment by all stakeholders at all levels to take action toward meaningful reductions in risk in the short and long-term. The *National Strategy* and this *National Action Plan* were developed collaboratively through a top-down and bottom-up approach to ensure that the strategic direction and national actions could be translated cohesively into specific actions by agencies, organizations, governments, communities, and individuals. Meaningful reduction in wildfire risk is a difficult proposition that requires the engagement of all stakeholders to:

1. **Prioritize investment and use of resources.** Reducing risk significantly will require that existing resources, including budgetary resources, are used more efficiently. From a national perspective, this may require reallocation of resources across agencies, regions, or program areas.
2. **Accept 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 considered in the short-term to achieve the longer-term benefits.
3. **Achieve greater collective investment.** Even with greater efficiency and acceptance of short-term risk, current levels of investment may be inadequate to achieve the levels of risk reduction desired. All who have a stake in the outcome, from individual property owners to the Federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local governments, must share the costs and level of effort necessary to redeem responsibilities for reducing risks posed by wildfire.

This *National Action Plan* represents a commitment by the WFLC to implement the goals, guiding principles, and national priorities of the *National Strategy*. The *National Action Plan* provides a **framework for implementation** by identifying the strategic actions needed to achieve a more efficient, effective, and collaborative wildland fire management strategy for the Nation. The actions listed are national, long-term priority actions that must be implemented collaboratively among all partners consistent with applicable land management objectives at the federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local levels.

The expectation is that all stakeholders will use the science-based *National Strategy* as the strategic direction necessary to address the significant, long-standing challenges to managing the ever-growing wildland fire risks. Implementation actions are the responsibility of the individual stakeholders, including agencies, organizations and homeowners alike. However 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. The WFLC is committed to providing direction and oversight to achieve a committed, coordinated, and effective approach to implementation.

At the national level, a steering committee established by the WFLC will provide overall coordination on national issues; the mechanism for outreach and communication among stakeholders; and the leadership oversight to complete the remaining resources for implementation such as an outreach strategy, outcome and intermediate measures and associated data descriptions, and tech transfer and availability of science and data. At the regional level, regional collaboration committees will be utilized to provide regional leadership in implementing the three national goals; utilizing regional strategies for implementation among stakeholders; and providing information on accomplishments for national level reporting.

With each stakeholder taking individual and collective action toward shared goals, significant progress will be made to improve wildland fire management across the Nation.