

USDA FOREST SERVICE



**An Agency Strategy for
Fire Management**



A Report from the National Management Review Team

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The National Management Review Team's examination of past reviews recognized a wide variety of issues concerning the Fire and Aviation Management program. The Review Team, led by Robert Jacobs and assisted by the Brookings Institution, recognized that most of the fire related issues are symptoms of larger issues relating to social, political, and cultural changes within our society.

In its report, *An Agency Strategy for Fire Management*, the primary recommendation is to develop and implement a national Large Incident Management Organization. It is a dramatic departure from our traditional beliefs that every employee has a role in fire support or firefighting. This report also affirms fire management's linkage with natural resource management as an essential element for protecting people and sustaining resources in fire adapted ecosystems. A major component of the report recognized that line officers play an inseparable role in initial attack and large fire management. A Large Incident Management Organization will help facilitate success of line officer direction in fire management programs.

Implementation of this report will take time and will receive much oversight along the way. I encourage you to become familiar with this report and understand its premise, findings, and recommendations. With your active participation and support, the development of a more effective fire protection program can be successfully implemented.


JANICE H. McDOUGLE
Deputy Chief
State and Private Forestry

Enclosure

Executive Summary

Over the past ten years, several significant programmatic reports highlight persistent and recurrent problems in fire management. Major cultural and demographic changes in the workforce, and significant programmatic changes in the agency, have resulted in increased costs and a significant reduction in agency workforce participation on large fires. Without making a significant organizational change, the overall ability to manage large fires will be compromised.

This report is a comprehensive and strategic examination of past reviews, policies, and direction for the fire management program.

The National Management Review Team consisted of representatives from Forest Service line officers, the National Fire Protection Association, the National Association of State Foresters, the National Park Service, the Brookings Institution, and Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management staff. A full range of alternatives (pathways) were developed, including designating a federal fire service, an outsourced fire services, and a "national" large incident management organization.

The primary finding of this review is that the current level of dedicated and available staffing for large incident management is diminishing. Therefore, the following recommendations were developed to address this and other issues concerning large incident management:

1. Develop and implement a national **Large Incident Management Organization**, dedicated and professional, to more effectively manage large fire operations and natural disasters. The recommendation is predicated on building a strong, local initial and extended attack fire program, and implementing an aggressive ecosystem restoration program. This represents a significant departure from today's operation and will require a major commitment of people and resources.
2. Clearly articulate to the field that **an independent Federal Fire Service will NOT be pursued** or entertained. The linkage to the agency's land management mission is simply too important to divorce aspects of fire management and fire use from the agency.
3. An **Implementation Team should be established**, comprised of a representative cross section of interagency partners and interests. Oversight to implementation would be provided by the Deputy Regional Foresters for State and Private Forestry, USDA Forest Service.
4. Establish a **continuous monitoring process** with annual reports on progress.
5. Assign an appropriate group to **resolve issues raised by the State Foresters** concerning the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review (December, 1995).

The recommended pathway is conceptual in nature. There are many actions necessary to successfully implement this pathway. Without a fundamental change in the way large fires are managed, we can expect to experience the problems of today well into the future, including a perceived lack of Forest Service capability to manage both wildfire and prescribed fire.

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INTRODUCTION

The Chief of the Forest Service commissioned a review team to look into several unresolved and lingering problems related to the fire management program. The Forest Service fire and fuels program is not well integrated with the land management program of the agency. In some instances line and staff officer relationships regarding fire management are ineffective. The Forest Service's ability to provide adequate support to large fires is diminishing. Many cooperators and partners think the Forest Service is ineffective and inefficient in fire management. These four problems are chronic. They have been identified over and over in many reviews in this decade. These four problems need immediate resolution.

It is time for change.

WHERE ARE WE TODAY

During most of its history the Forest Service pursued a policy of suppressing all fires. Essentially, this is a policy that tried to eliminate fire from the ecosystem. In 1979 the agency recognized the need for a more comprehensive policy to accommodate fire's role in ecosystem dynamics. The

Forest Service adopted a policy that allowed fire to occur under prescribed conditions which would benefit the ecosystem. This change emphasized fuels treatment as a necessary measure to prevent catastrophic wildfires through ecosystem management.

In 1991 the Forest Service expended \$7,800,000 on a fuel treatment program designed to reduce hazardous fuels and the cost of large fire suppression. This constituted less than 2.5% of the entire fire program expenditures. During this time the agency employed 50,238 people (Figure 1) who were required to make themselves available to fight fire. But many agency employees did not support emergency fire efforts occurring away from their assigned locations. By 1998 the agency expended approximately \$50,000,000 on the fuels program (8.5% of the total). The workforce had diminished to 39,782 by 1998, a 21% reduction. Fuels expenditures are forecasted to rise above \$100,000,000 in the year 2001 while the Forest Service workforce continues to decline in numbers.

The workforce is also changing dramatically because it is aging. The proportion of the Forest Service workforce age 45 and older was 37.9% in 1986 compared to 57.2% in 1999 and the average age increased from 42.4 years to 45.8 years over the same period (National Academy of Public Administration, 1999).

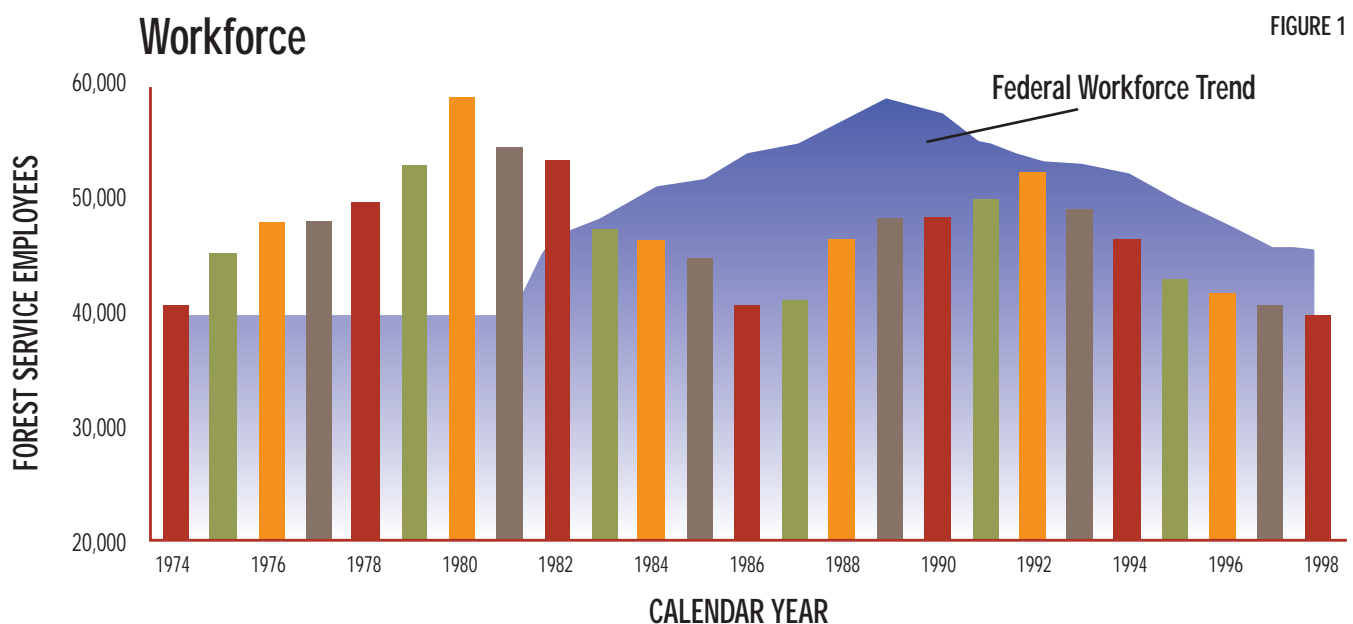


FIGURE 1

With the exception of Yellowstone in 1988, the 1994 fire season burned more acres than any other recent fire season (Figure 2). Thirty-four firefighters died in that fire season. Firefighting resources were in short supply and costs were high.

The severity of 1994 brought the problem of hazardous fuel conditions to the forefront. This season was a catalyst for the federal agencies to review their programs and make necessary changes in policy. Land management decisions can create ecosystems prone to adverse fire effects. Other areas of policy review were aimed at reducing the cost and risk of large fire suppression, improving line officer accountability in wildland fire management and strengthening the support and role of outside agencies in federal fire management, while assisting state and local government wildland fire protection.

The Forest Service review of the 1994 fire season (USDA Forest Service, 1995) resulted in the development of the "Course to the Future," which laid out the work necessary to make an effective fire management program in the face of increasing complexities.

The "Course to the Future" has underlain the changes that the Forest Service has made since 1994 in the fuels program (Figure 3). The recognition that fuels management is necessary for success in reducing large fire costs and

improving ecosystem health is well rooted in the organization as well as being recognized by the General Accounting Office (GAO, 1999).

Key recommendations from the "Course to the Future" remain unresolved. These include:

"By the year 2005, establish a multi-funded, interdisciplinary account for restoration and maintenance of fire dependent ecosystems."

"Develop a workforce capable of achieving, restoring, and protecting these ecosystems at this scale."

"Establish prescribed fire objectives and assess fire consequences into the land management planning process."

"Renegotiate state and local cooperative fire agreements with partners at the wildland/urban interface to clarify protection responsibilities."

"Move toward preparing 75% of the workforce to be trained, qualified, and available to support fire emergencies by the year 2000."

"Intensify training of line officers to better redeem fire management responsibilities."

These six recommendations can be categorized into four issues that inhibit the successful execution of the fire management program. The Forest Service identifies (USDA Forest Service, 1995) these as:

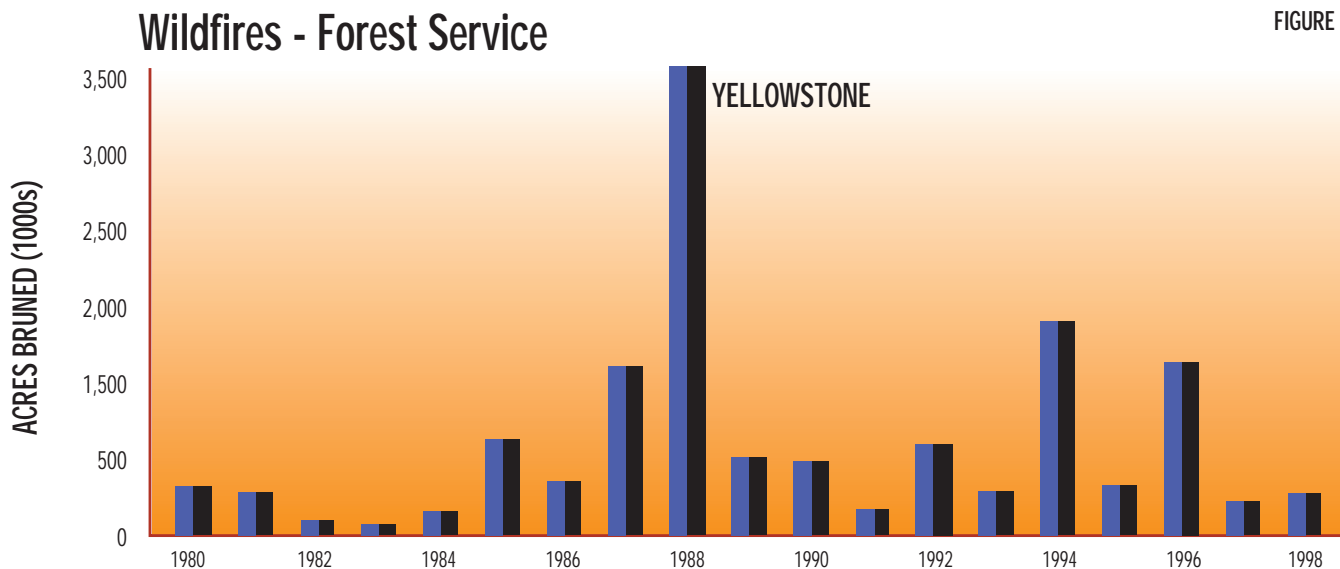


FIGURE 2

Integration - Integration of the fire and fuels program into land management decision making is, in many places, nonexistent. This integration is paramount. Land management decisions should not create, or further promote, a paradox where fire as an ecosystem agent contradicts the intended land management goal, yet they frequently do.

Relationships - Many fire program staff, and the line officers that are responsible, do not enjoy firm, stable, productive relationships. These relationships vary as a function of the individuals involved, rather than being founded on important principles and mutual respect.

Support - Large fire costs continue to escalate. The cost of fighting fire is incredibly expensive. The mechanisms for funding emergency fire suppression do not foster cost reduction in the current environment. Social demands tend to exacerbate the problem by requiring more and more resources be employed in essentially futile efforts at effectiveness. The agency cannot muster much of its own workforce to support large fire emergencies. This requires supply from outside sources, which are frequently more expensive to obtain and transport.

Role of Others - The Forest Service's external cooperators, particularly the state wildland fire protection organizations do not agree with many of the approaches to fire manage-

ment the agency uses. In addition, the expense of the federal fire fighting effort is prohibitive to the cooperators, causing less use and hard feelings. Many states are reluctant to help a cooperator who appears to be unable to help themselves (Forest Service).

WHERE ARE WE GOING

The charge of this National Fire Program review was to take a fresh look at the common problems that have plagued effective fire management over the years and see what **agency** actions are necessary to make it better.

Fire management is more complex as social, political, economic, and environmental pressures increase. Fire management considerations have to become part of land management decision making. To accomplish this task, line and staff must work effectively together, the agency must be able to support emergencies when they arise, and work effectively with cooperators, who are becoming more and more critical to success. The agency is at a crossroads: it can remain as is, or do something fundamentally different to meet these challenges. This report proposes the latter.

Fuel Treatment Program

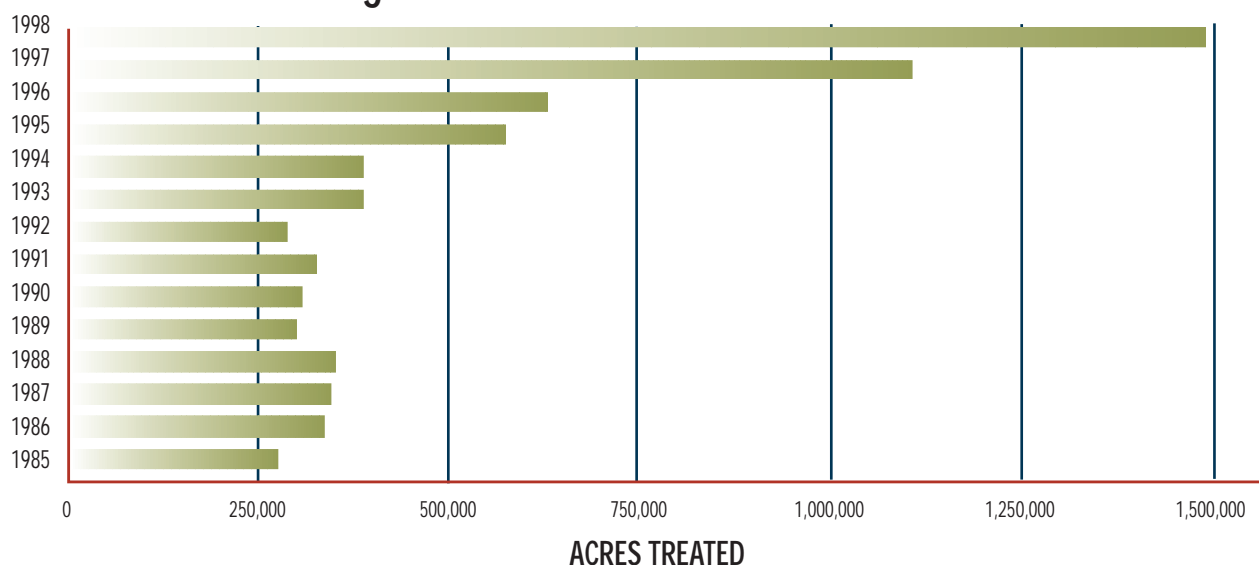


FIGURE 3

ISSUES, IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY

Several programmatic self examinations have been conducted in fire management since 1994, including nationally:

- *Strategic Fire and Aviation Management Goals and Actions in Support of Ecosystem Management, March, 1994.*
- *Strategic Assessment of Fire Management, January, 1995.*
- *Course to the Future - Positioning Fire and Aviation Management, May, 1995.*
- *Final Report of the Interagency Management Review Team, South Canyon Fire, June, 1995.*
- *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review, December 1995.*

The standard approach of conducting a review, finding problem areas, developing recommendations, and implementing action plans does not seem to solve repetitive and recurrent issues. The approach to solving these continuing, repetitive issues has always been the same and the results are also always the same. This led the Forest Service to try a different approach to addressing these chronic issues.

THE SPECIFIC ISSUES

Four common issues raised repeatedly in program reviews seem to transcend fire management such that they require an agency solution, rather than a simple program fix. These common issues, in order of importance to success, are:

1. *Integration of fire management in land management*
2. *Line/Staff relationships for an effectively managed program*
3. *Large fire support and corresponding large fire costs*
4. *Role of other agencies*

Cultural considerations permeate all issues and define the environment in which programs must operate. The design of the existing fire organization is not compatible with today's workforce culture. Managers have little ability to modify the culture but can modify the organization. The underlying systemic problems and issues identified for fire management also significantly affect other Forest Service programs. Culture issues must be recognized and dealt with on an agency basis.

The refinement of the issues follows:

INTEGRATION OF FIRE MANAGEMENT INTO ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Lack of integrated planning results in competing and conflicting direction and objectives. Many times land management decisions are compromised by creating conditions which cannot be sustained in fire dependent ecosystems. Functionalism is promoted when an integrated approach is not used in land management decisions. When professionals are not available to participate in land management decision making, resultant decisions suffer. Functions that are adequately represented will overshadow the missing function, leading to land management decisions of lesser quality. The same problems arise operationally when land management projects are implemented.

Functional budgets and programs promote competition among staff areas, single benefit resource projects, and narrowly focused personnel. This prevents integration, efficient funding and staffing of projects, and inhibits broad based understanding of fire's role in ecosystem management

The Forest Service directives system is not well aligned. Fire management direction is found in many places and is not complementary in many cases. This exacerbates functionalism.

Functionalism results in conflicting and competing agendas for limited agency resources. In some cases, conflicting direction, such as in the management of threatened and endangered species, places fire managers at risk of failure.

Participation in another resource area's activities, such as wildlife personnel helping on fire projects, does not appear to enhance one's career, or professional standing among their peers.

LINE/STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships between line officers and staff managers are strained because of different backgrounds and experiences, differing perspectives about priorities, unclear communications, uncertain direction, and different roles. Many line officers do not actively participate in fire management activities. Some do not actively participate in leadership and management of their own fire programs. When line officers do become involved they are frequently criticized for it by fire managers. Some line officers do not perceive active fire participation as career enhancing. Many fire managers do not actively seek line officer support, involvement, or line officer experience.

Consequently, there is a disconnect in communications and support for each other.

Functional allegiance (both line and staff) creates a chasm. As less time is spent working on common problems, the chasm widens. This environment leads to an appearance of a "club" with initiation rights and membership examinations. These "clubs" are perceived to exist by both line and staff for both line and staff.

It appears that there are disconnects among Forest Service mission and culture, agency priorities and workforce.

Forest Service leadership does not clearly communicate its expectations. This leads to mixed, often ignored messages.

Incident Commanders assume a powerful role in large fire decision making. They select the people for their teams which can amplify the appearance of a "club." Incident commanders can, and sometimes do, supplant line officer decision making when fighting fire. They sometimes do not communicate effectively with the line officer responsible for the fire.

LARGE FIRE SUPPORT

Emergency funding for firefighting lacks the rigor, discipline, and incentives for more efficient decision making. The Forest Service manages emergency firefighting funds as if they are unbudgeted, unlimited, unallocated, and without benchmarks on acceptable spending levels. This environment provides the appearance of no accountability.

While least cost fire suppression strategies and tactics are a required part of wildland fire suppression decision analysis (Wildland Fire Situation Analysis), there are no well defined guidelines or direction that specifically lead to minimum cost strategies and tactics. High cost alternatives for fire suppression can result. In some instances early decisions set the stage for longer term, higher cost outcomes.

Qualifications for large fire support positions require lengthy, extensive training, and practical experience. As an example, it may take as long as 15 years to become fully qualified in a Type I Command and General Staff position. For many reasons, fewer employees are willing to commit to such long term obligations.

There is an increasing shortage of non-fire (a.k.a., the militia) personnel available for extended attack and large fire support in both direct suppression and fire support positions. There are many causes, both real and perceived, as well as personal (life style, economic, family) and organizational (local priorities, career tracks).

ROLE OF OTHER AGENCIES

Forest Service policies and regulations, written and unwritten, can hamper cooperation between the Forest Service and other agencies. Many partners do not understand the variation in policy interpretations. They do not see clear and consistent messages from the agency. Mission differences between the Forest Service and cooperators hamper efficient integration of efforts. Forest Service regulations may be incorrectly interpreted and/or selectively applied, forming a barrier for cooperation. Cooperators see large scale mobilization as inefficient and costly especially when

local resources (Forest Service and cooperators) are not fully utilized in suppression and prescribed burning.

Because of the lack of controls on Forest Service emergency fire suppression funding, cooperators feel that the Forest Service does not adequately assess costs against efficiency. The cost of supply does not seem to affect mobilization decisions. The high costs of airtankers and helicopters are sensitive issues with cooperators.

MOST DESIRABLE FUTURE

In order to meet the charge from the Chief to determine if existing policy, direction, and resources are adequate to meet the future, a desired program was described as follows:

All fire management activities are well integrated in all aspects of land management planning. An integrated fire and fuels management program, with emphasis in treating high priority areas, significantly contributes to healthy ecosystems. Land management decisions include fire's role in ecosystem dynamics. The agency retains sufficient skills and knowledge to manage resources obtained from external sources (contractors, cooperators, partners, and others). Also, there is accountability for fire and fuels with clear, measurable objectives, which promote ecosystem management.

The agency and public are active partners in forest protection with very defined and realistic goals and expectations. The program would realize cost efficiencies through better use of local resources, including partnerships and the use of non-federal resources. The program would share resources internationally.

Perhaps most importantly, fire management would be an accepted mission of the agency by all its employees. Employees would seek out experience in fire management and understand fire's role in land management.

Success of the fire management program would be measured by:

- A world-class safety record with human resources not subjected to unreasonable risk.
- The trend for large fire costs would be significantly lower than the ten-year average.
- Outcomes from the fuels treatment program would have significantly contributed to forest sustainability and healthy ecosystems.

SYSTEMIC NATURE

Where a systemic problem exists, a broader agency solution is necessary. The Team uncovered systemic problems through an analysis of the cause and effect relationships of the detailed problems. The Team defined systemic as:

Understanding the framework of the problem environment and the causal relationships among, and within, the core issues.

The causes were compared to see if cause commonality existed among and between issues. Eleven identified causes had some common elements that were systemic in nature. These eleven are believed to represent the underlying causes that manifest themselves over and over again, as identified in almost every review. The eleven are:

1. *Lack of adequate assessments of costs versus efficiencies*
2. *Large scale mobilization inefficiencies*
3. *Lengthy training cycle to reach Command and General Staff qualifications*
4. *Inability to attract and retain employees*
5. *Incident Commanders supplant line officer decision making*
6. *Divergent views of agency goals*
7. *Different perspectives on roles and responsibilities*
8. *Arrogant decision making (line and staff)*
9. *Absence of fire involvement in planning*
10. *Functionalism*
11. *The environment in which the agency must operate*

Why do systemic issues and problems arise?

Fire managers currently have conflicting allegiances between serving the profession of fire management and serving land to which they are assigned. These allegiances only coincide when emergencies occur on the area to which a fire manager is assigned. If an emergency occurs in another location the fire manager feels a need to assist because it is part of the professional duty to do so. The fire manager's absence from the local area creates a loss in the land management capability on the area to which they are assigned. This compromises the line officer's ability to get the job done.

These allegiances play out in other functions as well, but with much less impact. Most other professions are geographically specific and do not compel emergency service in areas other than those to which a person is assigned. In fact, an allegiance to emergency service, on any type of emergency, generally exists by all those people assigned to the area on which the emergency arises. Most people have no trouble assisting in emergencies that occur on their local area, regardless of profession or type of emergency.

If a large emergency occurs it frequently overwhelms the local line officer's ability to deal with the situation. The line officer and staff sacrifice normal land management activities during these periods. The current system allows for relief through the assignment of an incident management organization which relieves the pressure for the local line officer. This allows some attention to be paid to normal management at a time when a large emergency is underway. Most incident management organizations are comprised of personnel from other geographic areas. These other areas lose their full complement of management capability as they are assigned to the incident. This is a two edged sword, on the one hand a line officer is helped while another (or many others) make sacrifices in their capability by allowing their personnel to serve on incident management teams.

The management of large incidents, and all that it takes to be successful, requires a huge amount of agency commitment. The five year average expenditures for suppression are around \$340 million per year (GAO, 1998). In addition

there are several million dollars spent preparing for these large incidents by providing large fire (and incident) support resource availability and coordination. These activities require a lot of management attention. Currently, this is accomplished by the fire management organization, along with all its other duties.

It takes a large amount of time and effort to develop, train, and maintain a qualified incident management team. Members are away from their normal duties for long periods, both while serving on emergencies and while maintaining qualifications through training or readiness through planning meetings. All of these detract from the local line officer's ability to carry out the land management mission because personnel are absent at critical times.

CURRENT SITUATION TEST

Once the issues were analyzed, the problems identified, and their systemic nature described, the Team tested to see if the current situation was satisfactory. The charge from the Chief was "... to verify that current policy, direction and resources are adequate to manage the fire program into the foreseeable future...." (USDA Forest Service, 1999).

The team developed a list of criteria. The Team noted that adequacy may be considered a judge of resource allocation whereas success would be a judge of policies' integration. In other words the amount of resources allocated to any effort determines adequacy. Policies and direction that guide the utilization of those resources determine success. See Figure 4 on the next page.

The team concluded the current situation was untenable. Policy lacked integrity throughout the Forest Service directives system. Direction was scattered and disjointed. The Government Accounting Office (GAO, 1999) describes the lack of a cohesive approach to integrating fuels management into agency programs. Resource availability is not well documented (with the exception of budget) and capability is not well understood. It became necessary to search for alternative solutions to the problems, alternatives which provided for a comprehensive solution, not simply a band-aid.

FIGURE 4

CRITERIA TO TEST ADEQUACY OF POLICY, DIRECTION, AND RESOURCES

1. *Do policy and direction foster innovation?*
2. *Is integrity found in policies and direction (are multiple policies integrated?)*
3. *Do policies move the organization toward improvement?*
4. *Do Policies and direction provide or restrict agency commitment?*
5. *Do policies and direction provide or restrict resource allocation?*
6. *Policies are aligned with the most desirable future identified by the team.*
7. *Policies are adequate to overcome the constraints identified by the Review.*

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

The team spent time reviewing and discussing other organizations which had been confronted with similar problems, or had developed strategic approaches to similar workforce problems. These organizations ranged from foreign government agencies to American corporations. This exercise gave broader perspective to the solutions the team would develop.

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA FOREST SERVICE

In 1995 the British Columbia Forest Service (BCFS) reorganized their fire protection function by removing it from the traditional, decentralized land management organization (very similar in nature to the USDA Forest Service). Fire protection was established as a separate function with a hierarchal organization of six centers reporting to the

Assistant Deputy Minister for Operations who reports directly to the Minister of Forests. The driving force behind this reorganization was the lack of support provided (only 25-30% of the total resources available) by the broader agency to wildland fire emergencies when support was needed (1994). This mirrors the issue reviewed by this team and acknowledged by the Chief of the USDA Forest Service.

The BCFS has operated under this organization since the 1995 season, and while there has been no rigorous test, the system seems to meet the needs by providing:

1. *Protection services in a timely, professional, and mutually beneficial way with resources committed to emergency management*
2. *Providing planning and management consultation services as requested by the local land managers (line officers)*
3. *Removing the burden of fire protection from the local manager (line officer)*
4. *Improving efficiency by strategically locating resources based upon demand*

Technology has enabled the British Columbia Forest Service to embrace this approach. High tech communications and locating equipment which makes the entire province accessible from the six centralized facilities, is the key to their success. However, the main pitfall of this approach is the removal of fire management expertise from the local land management decision making process. Land management decisions do not include fire management considerations by design, only by choice of the local manager, and then through formal request to the fire protection organization. This is less critical in longer interval fire adapted ecosystems which predominate in British Columbia, but even so, the effects are being felt according to those interviewed (USDA Forest Service, 1998).

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Every four years the Department of Defense conducts a Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) which is designed to set a strategic position for the Department in the near term. The current QDR (Department of Defense, 1997) sets a strategic course which responds to a major shift in perceived threat to our national interests. The new threat focused on regional dangers rather than global warfare as in past QDRs. Small, wildcard scenarios are planned for instead of theater scale war.

The new strategy "fully exploits" current technology in streamlining its operations. It aims for superior organization and speed of deployment, as well as superior resources on the battlefield. A good example of the paradigm change embodied in the QDR is the idea of changing from an Air Force with space responsibility, to a Space Force with some air responsibility. Centralization is needed in this new strategy in order to provide the highest quality training, support, and infrastructure for military resources.

STATE COMPACTS

The team received a briefing on The Northeastern Interstate Forest Fire Protection Compact (PL 81-129) of 1949. The compact was established... to promote effective prevention and control of forest fires... over a multi-state region, and adjacent Canadian provinces, by allowing mutual aid to be provided by members to one another. The compact establishes the basic principals of cooperative fire protection among neighboring government entities. It is similar to forest protection compacts in other parts of the United States. All serve as models for cooperation in the field of fire management, and particularly fire suppression.

IN SEARCH OF STRATEGY

The 40th anniversary issue of the Sloan Management Review (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999) dealt entirely with current schools of thought on setting strategy. This issue, "In Search of Strategy" was read and reviewed by the team members.

Articles ranging from understanding current schools of strategic thinking to identifying robust adaptive strategies were discussed. The team used this exercise to broaden its perspective on what the future might hold and how options might be developed to deal with that future.

A few of the many signposts from the issue are repeated here to give the reader a flavor for the content of the discussion:

"Strategies for tomorrow have a different focus, require a different vocabulary to describe, and have different operating implications."

Derek F. Abell (International Institute for Management Development, Lausanne, Switzerland)

"The best laid efforts of man to intervene in a system, to do it harm, or even to replicate it artificially almost always miss the mark."

Richard T. Pascale (Stanford University - Graduate School of Business)

"Now the central focus of strategy is on understanding the relationship between an environment's turbulence and the company's choice of strategy."

Richard A. D'Aveni (Dartmouth College)

And lastly, one that embodies the essence of this review effort:

"Strategy is pushed along by the sheer creativity of managers, because they explore new ways of doing things."

Henry Mintzberg (McGill University) and Joseph Lampel (University of St. Andrews, Scotland)

PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE

The Team discussed possible solutions for the problems presented in the four issues.

The integration of fire management in land management issue was important enough that no options were developed. The Team believes strongly that the agency simply must integrate the program. There are ongoing agency efforts to accomplish integration.

The Role of Other Agencies issue produced two recommendations which would improve cooperation if resolved. These are discussed beginning on page 23 of this report.

The discussion of line/staff relationships and large fire support generated several solutions for each issue. These were paired based upon the optimum combination of solutions for the issues. The alignment of these combinations illustrated three potential pathways (Figure 4) which could be followed to resolve the issues and support the Most Desirable Future.

The first pathway represents the approach of divorcing the fire management program from the agency and finding alternative ways of providing services. The second pathway explored different incremental improvements on existing agency participation. A third pathway focuses on large

incident management services within the agency while relieving the tensions this activity creates at the local level.

PATHWAY I - TRANSFER OF FIRE FUNCTION

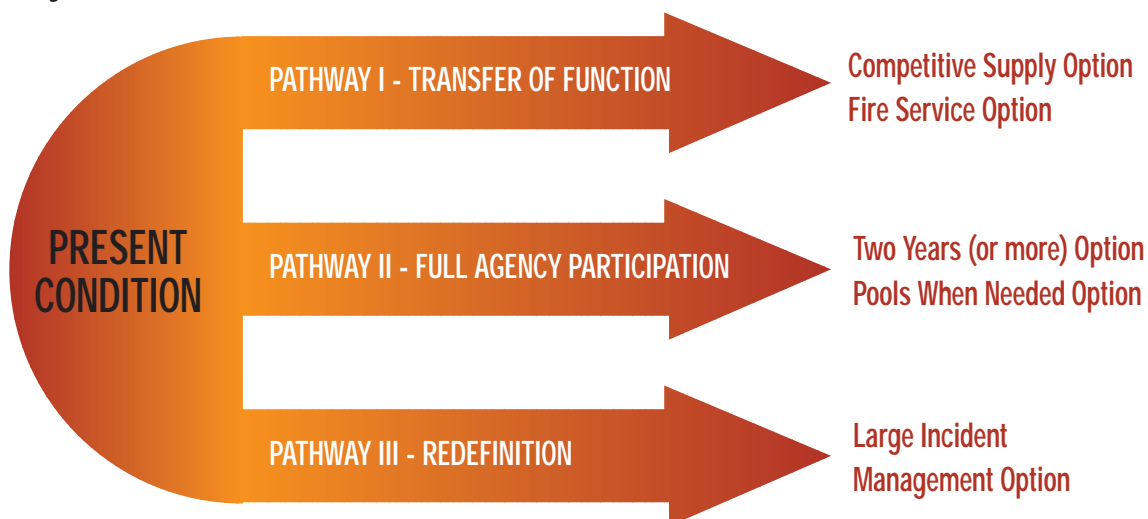
Pathway I assumes the transfer of fire function to organizations that can satisfactorily provide those services, but are not within the Forest Service. Two options were considered, one primarily external to the Federal government, and one primarily internal. The internal option involves the creation of a separate federal fire service with separate domains. One domain would serve forest and land management and another would serve federal fire, and search and rescue. The second variation involves the transfer of fire responsibilities to an outside, competitive fire services organization, either public or private in nature. This option provides oversight through contract and agreement administration.

REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THIS PATHWAY

The need for full time fire professionals exists because of the complexity of the fire problem. The fundamental philosophical change from the exclusion to the inclusion of fire, the limited availability of agency personnel, cost pressures, and risk/liability issues all make this pathway a consideration.

Pathways

FIGURE 5



The technology of fire fighting is advancing at a pace that is changing the way fires are being fought. The advances in protective equipment, fire suppression equipment and agents, the use of satellite technology for detection and dispatch communications, and the increasing demand for international cooperation, all make change necessary. The improving technology assisting decision makers is also rapidly changing.

Impacts of this pathway include the potential loss of experienced personnel at all levels. The Forest Service would be giving up the considerable investment it has made in its workforce.

Since there is increasing recognition of fire management's role in improving and managing ecosystems, the Forest Service may not want to give fire management to another entity.

The fiscal implications of this pathway are unclear.

Competitive Supply Option - Service is provided on a competitive basis by any provider. The line officer becomes the auctioneer (or the arbitrator) of the competitive process and responsible to see the process is undertaken. Competitive bidding would occur on shared services, fuels projects, fire suppression, and fire use projects. The planning function would also be contracted. All fire management functions would be contracted; initial attack, extended attack, large fire suppression, prevention, fuels projects, and fire use projects.

The line officer would provide direction and oversight of the product deliverables (outcomes) through contract administration. The contracts would specify the level of agency control over contract resources and projects. The agency retains professional fire and fuels skills to set direction and provide oversight.

Bidders could include private, state, local, or other agencies, or even other functions within the agency. No suppliers would be discouraged.

The scale of the contract will affect the ability of the contractor to respond. The option will also require the successful bidder to provide adequate, qualified supervision to the

resources assigned to the project at hand. This will require careful administration.

Personnel dedicated to oversight and administration are imperative under this option. Workforce would be reduced as suppliers are found elsewhere. However, necessary skills and knowledge to successfully administer the contracts would have to be retained. The career path will be quite different in fire management than in the past.

Fire Service Option - The Forest Service line/staff relationship is described as separate households with joint custody of the fire program. Finances are separate, planning is shared on fuels, suppression, fire use, and land management projects. Custody agreements exist on the use of resources.

All fire related activities from initial attack through project end would be covered. Integrated resource management would include fuels, fire prevention, fire use, and other projects, and be undertaken by the Fire Service. The Fire Service would have common goals and clear understanding of mission and responsibility.

National Forest System lands would be divided into geographic divisions. Further geographic breakdowns would be called Fire Management Zones. A Battalion Chief (BC) would be in charge of a zone. This concept would be further developed to include a rank structure of Captains and Strike Forces.

Members of the battalions would be available for the entire fire management job, including prevention, suppression, fire planning, fire use, hazardous fuels reduction and prescribed fire. The Fire Service teams would be stationed close to the most likely center of activity. The BC would negotiate with the appropriate line officer for the skill mix needed to participate in integrated resource planning. The Fire Service would provide individuals with the right planning skills where needed.

Once the Fire Service became well established in their jobs, then they could negotiate further opportunities with line officers. The Fire Service would be available to "contract" work on non-fire projects.

PATHWAY II - FULL AGENCY PARTICIPATION

This pathway represents marginal variations of the existing situation relying on large fire support from employees outside the fire organization. It builds on the concept of expanding the fire organization in emergencies with non-fire employees (utilizing the "militia"). It represents an incremental change and retains fire responsibilities integrated throughout the organization. This pathway would require more involvement of the agency workforce during emergency incidents. Two options were considered. The first option would require all new employees to serve for two years (analogous to a military draft) immediately on call to support emergencies. A second option simply pooled resources for a set period of time annually as historic demand dictated.

REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THIS PATHWAY

One ancillary benefit of utilizing all employees for large fire support is the increased understanding employees obtain through experience with fire and its role in resource management. This pathway requires that the agency become more successful than it has in the past in requiring personnel to participate and to be available.

The line/staff relationships are improved in this pathway by job sharing and mandatory limited service in fire which improves understanding and involvement by those employees. Priority setting will continue to be a key to success in meeting fire suppression needs. Line officers will need to look beyond their unit boundaries to help in meeting the overall agency need.

This pathway will ensure necessary fire and fuels skills are available to complete integrated planning by requiring mandatory participation by employees. It provides the opportunity to integrate fire and fuels into ecosystem and forest planning but it will require additional organizational emphasis to achieve this necessary integration.

Cost tradeoffs are reflected in two ways; increased staffing to compensate for dedicated fire availability, or, acceptance of other program short falls. These differences could be

reflected in agency program budgets, either fire or other programs.

This pathway continues the present reliance on full agency participation. The Forest Service has been trying to improve participation with limited success for the last ten years.

Two Years (or More) Option - The agency retains complete control over all resources and initiates a militia that requires an employee to serve a two year commitment in the first ten years of their career. The agency can deploy the militia at any time, anywhere.

As a condition of hire the employee would be required to be available for a two year period to assist in emergencies and fire management projects. This term could occur for any two consecutive years within the first ten years of an employee's tenure. The employee would remain on the home unit, but the employee's first responsibility would be to answer the call to fire management duty, regardless of project. The agency would provide overtime as some moderate additional compensation. Generally, employees will be in the militia earlier in their careers when pay scales are lower, thus overtime will be an incentive for most.

If a career is 30 years then the employee would be available for 2/30 of their career. This would make something around 7% of the agency available (2,300 people) depending on levels of hiring. Currently, there are around 18,000 employees who are carrying red cards but the number available for militia duties is unknown.

This option provides a first hand experience with fire management for every employee and as such, would tend to further understanding of the fire management program.

The line officer/staff relationship remains as it exists today. Line/staff relationships can best be described as from leading, to delegating, to abdicating, depending upon the personal style, experience, and existing relationships of the staff and line officer involved. Personalities range from strong functional advocacy to full team players on both sides of the aisle. The relationship is a function of personalities rather than one founded on mission clarity, common

goals, and mutual respect. This relationship suffers in many areas and tends to stifle effective fire management and frustrates line management in many places.

Pools When Needed Option - The agency retains complete control of the militia. Pools of militia resources would be established for a two month period (or so) depending on the time of year needed (determined through analysis). The pools would be formed and available for action but the employees would remain on the local unit, doing their local job until the call for duty came. People would be dedicated only to the militia effort during the period they were on call. Over-hiring would be possible by the line manager to allow for periods of use. Incentives are a key component of making a successful militia.

The line/staff relationship is improved from today's by both parties obtaining training, experience, and skills in the other's specialty. This is done through a series of job switches and shared experiences. Mentoring is available for all. Line undertakes more details in fire management, seeks opportunities to be involved by shadowing or mentoring other line officers, attends current training, and has coaching available as necessary. The staff officer becomes a full member of the management team, undertakes training in understanding the line officer's role in forest and ecosystem management. The fire professional obtains esteem by seeking professional credentials in their field.

PATHWAY III - REDEFINITION

Rather than relying on incremental, marginal behavioral changes, or on finding sources of supply outside the agency, this pathway structurally redefines the initial and extended attack organization while clearly separating large incident management from the traditional, "militia" dependent, organizational schema. The redefinition of services provided on large incident management is accommodated. This pathway greatly facilitates, and even demands, improved integration of fire into ecosystem management, planning, and decisions. In the short term, many remnants and traditional cultural barriers will require redefinition and clarification.

REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THIS PATHWAY

This pathway improves line-staff relationships by increasing the level of control local line officers have over local resources assigned to them. Large incident management would no longer rely on mandated, unpopular edicts, recognizes cultural influences, and the demographic effects on the delivery of non-local fire suppression. A highly trained, experienced, dedicated, full time workforce would provide a flexible, demand oriented, pro-active service to line officers who are in need of large incident management assistance.

This pathway isolates many of the cultural problems associated with large incident support, and makes that support a function of interest and career choice. This pathway will require mobility and potentially long periods away from home, provide improved grade structure, and greater variety and frequency in assignments. These considerations may offset one another. This pathway creates a choice for employees; those who want to pursue large fire management careers can and others can focus on land management.

This pathway would not create an autonomous organization. To the contrary, this pathway is designed to create an organization whose very success is dependent on local line officer evaluation, their ability to reduce large fire costs, to improve diversity, to improve delivery of flexible "packages" of service to line officers, States and other organizations (such as FEMA or international governments).

This pathway creates closer ties with the local line officer because the local fire manager no longer departs for extended, non-local assignments. Local line officers must still provide an accountable level of fire protection. Regions must manage an allocated amount of suppression funds based on the level of protection provided by appropriations. Single parents, dual careers, and other social amenities are enhanced at the local level by eliminating the stress of non-local assignments.

Large Incident Management Option - This option focuses on the problems of large fire support. The key feature of this option is stronger, independent local control over per-

sonnel and resources associated with initial and extended attack and a separation of those personnel and resources associated with large fire support. Initial attack and extended attack would remain a local responsibility with preparedness funding request made the field level management's most efficient level, as defined by NFMAS. Large incident support would be centralized by the creation of the National Incident Management Organization. The line officer would have help immediately on large fires by dialing the equivalent of 911. Large fire resources would not be located on the local units but would do local fire management projects which enhance experience and training.

This option is predicated on a stronger, well-supported, local initial and extended attack fire program. It is also predicated on planning and implementing a larger, aggressive vegetative management program.

This option allows the line officer to reorganize other fire management functions to be included in ecosystem management organizations. The forests maintain expertise of fire management personnel to better integrate fire management considerations for planning and implementation of local projects and land management activities. It requires performing vegetative and prescribed burning activities to reduce the threat of catastrophic fire. The initial attack through extended attack capability will be maintained and managed, but other fire management functions can be fully integrated. Local fire suppression can be integrated into some other portion of the organization. Local fire organizations are only changed to the extent that local resources stay local to provide effective initial and extended attack, and most importantly, to provide improved land management input and better integration into ecosystem processes and decisions.

Emergency funding is allocated and constrained. Rewards for accomplishment are commensurate with savings. Fewer incident management teams are needed but may have a larger capacity. This option provides a better picture of federal expenditures by improving management of the suppression account through regional allocations, improved gains in reducing large fire costs in the future, through

improved efficiencies in the delivery of services, and improved incentives for minimum costs operations.

Budget restructuring is essential to fund this approach. Agreement with the Appropriations Committee to charge National Shared Forces (only those dedicated to large fire support) and this new organization to the suppression account is key to implementation. Overall, net impact after initial start up costs, is budget neutral.

Those that prefer non-local assignments and large incident assignments are offered fair and open competition for those positions in the new National Incident Management Organization using existing personnel practices.

This option will require significant use of fire management resources from state and local fire agencies, Native American sources and contractors.

It is perceived that greater levels of accountability in large fire cost, diversity, and responsiveness to land management plans and ecosystem principles can be achieved.

Dramatically shortened periods of training to reach Command and General Staff status (from 10 to 15 years to less than five years) are achieved through reduced numbers of teams, increased numbers of assignments, and full time immersion in training and simulation exercises.

Further details on this option can be found in the Appendix.

EVALUATIONS

Options were evaluated based upon criteria developed to represent the Most Desirable Future of fire management. The criteria were used to help define recommendations. The provision for an agency solution and the criterion for solving systemic problems were of more importance than the other three in developing recommendations. The criteria were:

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR OPTIONS

1. Does it leverage resources?
2. Is there a positive multiplier effect?
3. Does the option provide for an agency solution rather than a functional solution?
4. Does the option address the systemic nature of the problem?
5. Does the option outpace the pace of change?

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CHIEF

THE RECOMMENDED PATHWAY

Current policy and direction are not adequate to posture the agency for success in the future. Large incident management activity has grown so big and complex that it requires its own management function to be successful. By redefining how this activity is managed, line officers gain flexibility to deal with emergencies. Therefore, the National Review Team recommends the following:

Recommendation: The agency should adopt Pathway III and implement the Large Incident Management Option to more effectively, efficiently, and successfully posture itself for the future.

In order to move down this pathway it will become necessary for the agency to align its policies, direction and resources. Resources will have to be committed to make this a success.

This Review also identified the least favorable approach to addressing the problems surrounding the issues. The Forest Service should not pursue the establishment of a Forest Service fire management organization. The agency's land management mission is simply too important to divorce fire management (including protection) from its mission. Fire management needs to be directly integrated with land management at all levels of the organization.

Recommendation: The agency should not pursue the establishment of a federal fire management, or fire protection, organization.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation: The agency should establish an Implementation Team comprise of a cross section of interested parties, particularly line officers and interagency partners.

While this review went into sufficient detail in the development of the pathways to understand their implications and estimate their success, the detail of specific implementation was not undertaken. Therefore we recommend the Chief establish an implementation team that would comprise a cross section of the affected parties (fire, aviation, administration, and human resources, and particularly, line officer and interagency partners) to identify:

1. *Organizational and cultural barriers to implementation*
2. *Actions to bridge those barriers and overcome organizational inertia against implementation*
3. *Time line for implementation*

The group should remain together until the task is completed fully. This group is an essential commitment of resources to make the change successful.

It is recommended that Deputy Regional Foresters for State and Private Forestry serve to oversee the Implementation Teams work on the preferred option. They would develop the checkpoints for implementation, prepare an annual report of progress, and make recommendations for course corrections.

CONTINUOUS MONITORING RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation: Establish a continuous monitoring process for implementation with annual reports of accomplishment.

A continuous monitoring process within the agency is necessary to assure that implementation and operations remain valid. This would take the form of an annual overview and report on the success of this major change in the way the agency does business. The normal management review process could be altered to accommodate this monitoring process. The process would have a goal of determining whether the expected outcomes and intent of the change were being accomplished. It would be from the ground up, where the change is mostly directed, and would focus on success of improving ecosystem management, relationships between line and staff, large fire support (and costs), and our relationship and success with our cooperators. The process would basically embody the spirit of the Government Performance and Results Act.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Two specific concerns have been raised by the State Foresters:

1. There is a perception that federal wildland fire use projects detract from the ability to meet emergency demand for resources. This, in turn, puts pressure on state resources to fill the gap created by resources assigned to wildland fire use projects. An inequity in emergency response results, to the disadvantage of state organizations.
2. The change in terminology resulting from the 1995 wildland fire policy review confuses an otherwise well understood and logical policy existing prior to that time. This concern has been heard internally within the Forest Service as well.

Both of these issues are of sufficient importance that they should be addressed by an appropriate group which can resolve the issues.

Recommendation: Assign an appropriate group to resolve the two issues raised by the State Foresters.

CONCLUSION

One of the constant things about this point in time is the increasing rate at which things change. If programs, and particularly the management and leadership of those programs by an entire agency, do not keep pace with change, the programs will not serve their customers. This is happening in fire management today. The program is beginning to dissatisfy the agency (its customer) and the agency needs to change the way it manages the program.



United States
Department
of Agriculture

Forest
Service

Washington Office

14th & Independence SW
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090

File Code: 1410/5100

Date: JUL 2 1999

Subject: National Fire and Aviation Management Review

To: Robert T. Jacobs, Regional Forester, Eastern Region

Due to a series of significant events beginning with the development of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy and subsequent reviews and General Accounting Office reports, there is a need to conduct a strategic national evaluation of Fire and Aviation Management. Based on your interest and willingness, you are designated as team leader for the review. Your objectives are to verify that current policy, direction, and resources are adequate to manage the fire and aviation program into the foreseeable future, or to generate alternative approaches that stage fire and aviation management for success in the future. I expect your team to be frank, objective, and creative. I also expect for mechanisms to be put in place to track implementation for recommended actions following the review.

I have asked that the Brookings Institution, the National Fire Protection Association, and the National Association of State Foresters also participate in this unique review. You should add other team members at your discretion.

The Fire and Aviation Management staff will provide all necessary support for this review. The importance and timeliness of your report is of great value to the entire agency. I would like you to brief me on your findings before October 31, 1999.

If there are questions, please contact the Fire and Aviation Management Director, José Cruz.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Dombeck".

MIKE DOMBECK
Chief

cc:
Regional Foresters
Fire Directors
NASF
NFPA

Charter

Fire and Aviation Management National Review
 May 6, 1999

Review Focus: Using H. Croft's December, 1998 monologue "Fire and Aviation Management - A Status Report" for context and references, examine the F&AM organization to answer the below listed issues and questions. Based on the review and its recommendations, F&AM will develop a strategic, long term direction to better serve the agency and its partners.

REVIEW ISSUES:

1. Organizational effectiveness: Is F&AM organized for success? Can the current structure, at all levels, be maintained given the stresses and problems alluded to in the various reports?
2. Large fire support: There are many costs and personnel availability issues associated with large fire support. Is there a fundamental flaw(s) in our strategies that is related to organization and the desired end results? How can we overcome the availability issue?
3. Other agency support and roles: Some of our partners are not happy with a reduced and or changing FOREST SERVICE presence in initial attack and large fire support. What is the real problem and what can we do to rebuild partner confidence?
4. Integration of fire expertise in ecosystem management decision making. - Decisions are made at all levels of resource management that ultimately are affected by fire. How can F&AM best respond to these issues that are often conflicting, unattainable, and in many instances, compromised before the fire starts.
5. Line Management Relationships - Do line officers provide the necessary attention to fire protection for sustainability of their resource management responsibilities. Are they knowledgeable enough to make critical fire mgt. decisions? Is their level of expertise commensurate with their delegations of authority?

ORGANIZATION OF THE REVIEW:

Team leaders:

Robert T. Jacobs, Regional Forester, Eastern Region (confirmed)

Al West, Past Deputy Chief for S&PF (confirmed)

Team Staffing:

Gordie Schmidt, Brookings Consultant (thru NFPA)

Team Members:

Ronald Stewart, Deputy Chief, Programs and Legislation (confirmed)

National Association of State Foresters, National Fire Protection Association (in process-grant modification)

Line Officers Team Rep(s) (Requested 1-3 reps 5/4/99)

Brookings Institute (In process)

F&AM Staff Liaison:

Harry Croft, Deputy Director

Timetable:

Complete the Review no later than September 30, 1999.

Draft report NL T September 1, 1999. (Timetable may vary due to late start, July 9, 1999.)

Product:

A strategically oriented document with substantive options for the way we will do business for the next 10 years to successfully redeem F&AM roles in the management of the National Forest System. Use "Course to the Future" as the basis for desired future condition.

Reference List

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Team Members

Robert T. Jacobs
Regional Forester
Eastern Region
USDA Forest Service

Allan J. West
Chairman
Watershed Fire Council of Southern California

Dr. Albert C. Hyde
Senior Staff Consultant
The Brookings Institution

Mike Apicello
Public Information Officer
USDA Forest Service

Gary "Stan" Benes
District Ranger
Hebgen Lake R.D.
Gallatin National Forest

Harry Croft
Deputy Director
Fire and Aviation Management
USDA Forest Service

James Smalley
Senior Fire Service Specialist
National Fire Protection Association

J. Hugh Ryan
State Forester
South Carolina Forestry Commission

Jim Peña
Deputy Forest Supervisor
Shasta Trinity National Forest
USDA Forest Service

Lindon Wiebe
Operations Specialist
Fire and Aviation Management
USDA Forest Service

R. Gordon Schmidt
Staff Consultant
The Brookings Institution

Liz Agpaoa
Forest Supervisor
Cibola National Forest
USDA Forest Service

Sue Vap
National Fire Management Officer
National Park Service

George Lundy (Retired)
Eastern Region
USDA Forest Service

Details of the Recommended Option

The recommended option is fully discussed with particular emphasis on intent and the changes that might result in its adoption.

INTENT

This option capitalizes on the existing successes of the agency by preserving initial attack and extended attack success. It also improves the ability of the agency to include fire management expertise in all facets of land management by making fire management professionals more readily available at the local level. This, in turn, will improve line officer relationships as working relationships are developed, allegiance remains to the local level without external competition, and fire managers are always available, just like any other specialist, to meet line officer's needs.

The agency will be relieved of the burden of providing a militia to assist in emergency operations. This removes the requirement that 75% of the employees be trained, qualified, and available to serve on emergencies. The policy requiring all personnel to support large fire is eliminated from agency policy and directives. Control of local resources and of emergency assistance is restored to the line organization at the local level.

Large fire and emergency management efficiencies are increased as a "measured response" is given by a professional organization controlled by the agency.

The option is intended to be budget neutral to the Forest Service with no increased expenditures in wildland fire budget line items.

It is the intent of this option to foster and facilitate inter-agency cooperation. The current level of cooperation is guaranteed. Improvements are expected.

SAFETY

The safety environment of fire management is of critical importance to the agency. A core value of fire management is safety of the workforce. Safety is expected and intended to improve through this option. Local personnel will be dealing with local situations with which they are most familiar. Initial attack and extended attack safety will be enhanced as a result.

Large fire safety, both emergency and project, will also be enhanced. Professional personnel who are directly responsible and accountable for the safety of their workers will prevail. Teams who do the work will be permanent in nature and used to working with one another. Safety will be integral to their entire being. Teams will work closely together, honing their skills and increasing their successes. Further, as the safety environment increases in complexity, the National Incident Management Organization will be available to deal with it in a professional manner.

INITIAL ATTACK

Local line officers will control initial attack and extended attack operations and are responsible and accountable for them. Line officers will set the expectations for local support during initial attack and particularly extended attack. Initial attack will be planned and funded in the same manner as it is now.

Contractors and cooperators can be, and should be, employed where it makes sense to do so. Economies of scale may be secured in this manner.

Except in periods of extreme national emergencies (the Armageddon Scenario) local resources and overhead stay local. There may be times, anticipated to be infrequent, when mobilization may extend to local levels.

Extended attack will be supported at the local level. Local neighbors will help other neighbors. The concept of fighting fire on your own unit will prevail and local line officers will be expected to take care of most fire situations. National shared resources are available to the local unit on a call-when-needed basis.

Incentives, through funding, will be provided for initial attack success and prevention success.

LARGE FIRE SUPPORT

There is no longer a mandate for everyone to fight fire.

The quantity of large fire support is now determined and provided by the National Incident Management Organization which has incentives to take the appropriate and efficient response. The National Incident Management Organization is highly flexible in its organizational delivery. It organizes to meet the mission, not a standard organization regardless of the situation. It is a discerning organization that recommends the appropriate response for success, given the local line officer's objectives. Incentives will provide a motivated desire by the National Incident Management Organization to make these kinds of decisions. Cash awards for fiscal austerity coupled with effectiveness will be provided.

Advance teams will advise line officers on appropriate measures, but decisions still rest with the line officer. Advance teams assist in developing the measured response necessary for the situation at hand.

Natural disasters will come under the purview of the National Incident Management Organization. Civil disobedience and large gatherings will not. The National Incident Management Organization will be equally prepared to deal with long duration wildland fires as they are long duration wildland fire use projects. They will also help in international assignments, but not at the expense of domestic success.

Agreements and contracts for services and resources will be in place before the need arises and will provide resources on a call-when-needed basis.

Increased diversity is expected as National Incident Management Organization personnel are recruited from the widest possible sources through personnel recruitment which will make all federal agencies and state personnel eligible. This will create a full time, dedicated, qualified, and highly committed organization that can practice its

profession through extensive training and simulation exercises.

Training cycle times will be greatly reduced through training immersion. Fully qualified Command and General Staff can be developed in significantly less time than today.

FIRE IN ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

An expanded and more participative role for local fire management is anticipated by implementing this option. Local fire managers will be available to influence and participate in land management decisions, thus bridging the gap between no influence and critical success. Local fire managers will not experience external demands for their time or attention, they can remain focused on the local management situation.

PRESCRIBED FIRES AND WILDLAND FIRE USE PROJECTS

The National Incident Management Organization is available for assignment on long duration projects as negotiated with the local line officer. Normal project activities remain within the responsibility of the local line officer.

INCENTIVES

Presuppression budgets should increase under this option as emergency suppression funds the National Incident Management Organization.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

The federal, state and local agencies will get at least the same level of service they currently receive. However, it is the intent of this option that efficiencies in fire suppression will be gained, and therefore the relationship problems with our cooperators will be reduced, and perhaps improved.

AVIATION MANAGEMENT

The coordination role between the National Incident Management Organization and aviation managers will occur to facilitate safe, efficient, and effective use of aviation resources.

OVERSIGHT

Management oversight for this new organization is yet to be determined, but options include a Board of Directors made up of Deputy Chief level personnel, a line officer team, or some other direct supervisory entity. The National Incident Management Organization will be integrated with the existing Forest Service organization and WILL NOT operate outside of it. Lines of authority are not independent and the National Incident Management Organization will be fully accountable to the agency.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Lower mobilization and fire fighting costs are expected and demanded. Full involvement by local line officers is required. Local target assignments will be established. Increased level of fire management understanding will occur as more people become responsible and involved in the local fire protection and management program.

The National Incident Management Organization will be accountable for large fire costs because reductions from today's levels are anticipated to be great enough to fund the National Incident Management Organization. The National Incident Management Organization will be charged with complete and thorough incident management, all the way through demobilization and fiscal reconciliation. The National Incident Management Organization performance will be measured by line officers responsible for the incident.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES

There are some unresolved issues that would have to be

covered in an implementation plan should this option, or any for that matter, be selected.

It is unknown whether it would be best to centralize the National Incident Management Organization or strategically place the organization around the country. Entering the National Incident Management Organization requires a life choice which has to be facilitated. Job location is an important aspect of that facilitation.

Local fire training will have to be undertaken, as will training for the National Incident Management Organization. It is unknown how, or whether, these levels of training will overlap and how they might be coordinated.

Using local initial attack resources for large fire support is undetermined. Many units have engines and tractor plow units that could be used, but only at the sacrifice of initial attack capability. The local line officer will have final authority.

The effect on the dispatch and coordination organizations and functions is not well understood, but it will undoubtedly be significant.

Extreme national emergencies are not planned for and the worst case scenario would have to be developed.

The current demand for Type II teams is not known nationally and so that demand has not been fully included in the development of the option, with the exception of the flexibility of National Incident Management Organization to handle that duty. The current Type II demand is accommodated by this option and is intended to be covered by the National Incident Management Organization.

Implementation will have to determine how to accommodate this demand.

There was some discussion that the tenure of assignment in the National Incident Management Organization be limited to prevent the development of an elitist organization. It is not clear whether tenure is desirable. Movement between the National Incident Management Organization and the rest of the Forest Service organization is desirable and encouraged.

Questions and Concerns on the Recommended Option

Preface: The Large Incident Management Option is conceptual in nature. The technical requirements for implementation exist far beyond the scope of the National Fire Review Team and will require further detailed analysis. Concessions with current operations will have to be made. An implementation team will submit an implementation plan with time lines.

The option is a significant departure from current operations, but provides for a focused, strong, local initial and extended attack, and a more professional, dedicated large incident organization.

Clarify the militia concept. How will the concept be used for this option?

The militia concept, as it currently exists, is the use of non-Fire Management personnel to fill ICS overhead positions and crews on wildland fire incidents. With the creation of the National Incident Management Organization, the reliance on the militia should disappear.

Is there a need to place a tenure cap on people in the National Incident Management Organization?

Unknown. Implementation will address the desirability of tenure.

An array of experience within the organization would allow for enriching diversity in training and large fire management programs. A tenure cap would defeat this opportunity. On the other hand, a tenure cap would prevent individuals from blocking upward mobility by occupying positions for the long term

Describe why the National Incident Management Organization experience would be career enhancing.

Many F&AM positions rely on large fire management

experience to be successful at managing district, forest, regional, and national fire programs. To be competitive for these positions, National Incident Management Organization experience would be desirable and therefore, career enhancing.

Other staff positions, such as range and forest health protection positions, also rely on personnel with fire experience. As fire management becomes integrated with ecosystem management, holistic and versatile fire experience would also be necessary to compete for these positions. National Incident Management Organization experience would complement other staff positions. The breadth of experience provided in a short period of time enhances manager's skills in all disciplines.

Is it realistic? (E.g. funding, union, politics, policy changes, field opposition)

Funding is provided by an initial investment of WFSU. The investment would yield a greater net return over time because of cost-efficient suppression ICS organizations, cost efficient suppression and incident management strategies, reduced mobilization costs, fuels treatment program returns, and more efficient training. Funding will be available.

Unions can be a tool to help the National Incident Management Organization program. Proper marketing and communication with union representatives is essential. F&AM will closely coordinate with the unions.

Policy changes are necessary by recommendations of the review team. During rewrites of the 5100 manual, incorporation of this pathway will be included.

Field opposition can be expected. Field support can also be expected. Proper marketing will alleviate some concerns.

Relieve the pressure to encourage non-fire personnel to support large fire suppression efforts.

Some employees feel obligated, at personal and financial costs, to participate in large fire suppression efforts

because of letters suggesting so. Consequently, morale is reduced, families become stressed, and individuals become disenchanted with the fire culture. Therefore, with relief from pressure, Forest Service employees will react productively with focus on their staff areas. Relationships should improve between staffs.

How to get acceptance from federal, state and local partners?

The implementation plan will address ways to acquire acceptance from other federal, state, and local partners. The Forest Service's NWCG representative will help facilitate interagency buy-in.

With a monitoring program to test the effectiveness of the National Incident Management Organization, success will be a selling point for partners.

Dispatch needs to re-tool for the National Incident Management Organization implementation.

Dispatch centers at all levels would require direction for implementation of the pathway. Business practices as they exist today will change. No more throwing the world at incidents, no more going across the country for resources. The implementation plan will provide clear direction for dispatchers.

Area command would have more involvement from local agency administrators.

Area command could be included with the National Incident Management Organization. Or it could remain the traditional organization it is today. Should area command be needed, their training and structure would require them to work closely with local agency administrators, as defined by direction in the National Incident Management Organization implementation plan.

Other disciplines involvement in the fuels/restoration program.

All disciplines can, and will be, involved through integration of programs including local fire managers. Fire will also get involved with the other functional staffs.

The W.O. Integrated Response Team (response to the GAO report) is also going to address this.

How is aviation management handled?

The review team did not address aviation management issues. Further review by the implementation team will address aviation management with regards to large fire costs through better management of aircraft.

What will be the effects on other federal agencies?

Overall, all agencies would be effected in some way with the National Incident Management Organization implementation. If all agencies participated in the National Incident Management Organization, benefits would include reduced large fire costs, integrations of fuels management into ecosystem management, improved agency administrator/staff relationships, and improved relationships with cooperators.

Cost, what will it cost?

Annual costs are estimated at \$40-50 million/year. Funding is provided by WFSU. The investment would yield a greater net return in time because of cost-efficient suppression ICS organizations, cost efficient suppression and incident management strategies, reduced mobilization costs, fuels treatment program returns, and more efficient training. Exact cost estimates will be formulated by the implementation team.

How do personnel become part of the National Incident Management Organization?

All positions will be advertised government wide.

Interagency Personnel Agreements with states and others will be established, and there will be detail opportunities. The National Incident Management Organization will support interagency involvement and individual participation.

Perception by the rank and file that this group of elite teams is one step closer to a full time, professional fire fighting agency.

Implementation team will address this. Conflicting perceptions already exist within the fire organization. Consider the argument of who are better firefighters: smokejumpers or hotshots. In the Department of Defense, elite groups exist that have a direct benefit toward recruitment, striving for excellence, and often increased budgets. Similar benefits may occur because of the National Incident Management Organization.

In the political realm of government downsizing, the probability of designing a new professional fire fighting agency is low. Additionally, agencies will be reluctant to allow their high profile fire programs to defect to an independent federal fire department.

Development of constraints that local/regional authority/control is not usurped by "outsiders" (like FBI taking over from local law enforcement).

Implementation will address this. A Code of Conduct will be developed for the National Incident Management Organization.

Line officers are ultimately responsible for activities on the national forests.

Acceptance by forests with many, major fire incidents.

The Implementation Team will design implementation considerations which accommodate forests, and other units, with high fire loads.

Can you get people with line management experience into

the National Incident Management Organization?

Absolutely. A proper balance of diverse experience is critical for the success of the National Incident Management Organization.

What does this option do to prevent a Storm King incident?

Firefighter and public safety is the National Incident Management Organization's and line officer's number one concern. The change in large fire management strategies and tactics, good fire planning, and effective dialog between line and the National Incident Management Organization people will lend themselves to the safest fire fighting environment possible.

Advance teams will assist in developing the appropriate response to incidents. Safety will be of paramount importance. Advance teams will professionally assess the situation and advise the line officer. The National Incident Management Organization will be tracking seasonal events and geographical variations in fire danger to be aware of potential problems as seasons progress.

Concern with capability of local unit to handle multiple fire starts.

The implementation team will address the concern. Fire managers and local line officers need to be cognizant of getting in over their heads. Even with better initial attack resources, fire managers and line shouldn't be afraid to ask for assistance, or be afraid to let one go over the hill.

Concern with use of crews and engines dedicated to Initial Attack in the National Incident Management Organization operations. Can they do both?

Keep initial attack for initial attack. Through the implementation plan, dispatch and resource ordering plans will be developed. For support, there may need to be a greater reliance on contract crews, engines, and non-Forest Service resources.

How will Type II Teams be replaced?

Implementation will address this concern. Type II teams could be replaced. Once a fire escapes the capability of the local unit, the National Incident Management Organization will manage the incident as the situation demands.

Are we ultimately better off?

There will be changes. Trade-offs and concessions will be made. The goal is to make things better.

Does this make fire more elitist?

Local fire management as they integrate with other staff and line, would be less elitist. The National Incident Management Organization, on the other hand, could be perceived as more elitist.

Is there an expected time schedule for implementation?

The next step is to form an implementation team, and have them design a time line for implementation. Generally speaking, this would take three to four years.

What happens to the firefighter retirement system (does it change)?

HRM classification specialists will need to consider this. Common sense suggests it shouldn't change.

Is this option closer, or further away, from our partners (Regarding how they manage fires)?

Ideally, this should align with our partner's needs and similar concerns. Federal, state and local cooperators could benefit.

How can you expect others to help you if you can't help yourself?

Clarification of this question: It implies dysfunctionality with the federal fire organization. State partners may be

reluctant to help because of federal management practices.

The fact that fire management is trying something new and different reflects understanding of the nature of the problem. Others should be more willing to help.

Need to make sure outside contractors are an option, supported by the agency and not left to personal whims of individuals.

The implementation team will address contract concerns.

Must reconcile fire resource allocations to emergencies, prescribed fires and fire use.

Resource allocation plans already exist for various incidents and projects. Nothing should be left in jeopardy. The implementation team will address.

New organization, not separate from the rest of the Forest Service organization.

For clarification, the National Incident Management Organization will be an integral part of the Forest Service, and not isolate themselves from the Forest Service. The communication plan and implementation plan will help facilitate this. The National Incident Management Organization will be an integral part of interagency operations and could be expanded to an interagency organization.

Is this safety enhancing or safety detracting?

The implementation plan should direct safety enhancement in all facets of this option!
