



Coffee Break Training-Community Risk Reduction

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

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Learning Objective: The student will be able to explain why the national cohesive wildland fire management strategy, called the Cohesive Strategy, was initiated; identify the three goals; and briefly describe some wildland fire mitigation activities in which local fire departments can participate.

Background

A rapid escalation of extreme wildfire behavior has marked the past two decades, accompanied by soaring wildfire suppression costs and significant increases in risk to responders, citizens, homes, property, communities, landscapes and other values. In November 2009, President Obama signed into law the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act of 2009, which called for the development of a national cohesive wildland fire management strategy. Recognizing that the challenges in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and wildland fire management require interconnected solutions, the Cohesive Strategy brought together federal, state, tribal and local governments, nongovernmental partners, and public stakeholders to identify, define and address wildland fire problems and opportunities for successful wildland fire management across the United States.



This photo depicts Waldo Canyon Fire, Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 2012. (Firepix: http://www.nifc.gov/wildlandPhotos/wildlandPhotos_main.html)

Cohesive Strategy Development and Goals

The development of the Cohesive Strategy has been accomplished in three phases. In Phase I, three primary factors were identified that present the greatest challenges and opportunities to make a positive difference in wildland fire management across America. These factors, which would become the goals of the Cohesive Strategy, are:

- Restore and maintain landscapes.
- Create Fire-Adapted Communities (FACs).
- Improve wildfire response.

Regional Strategy Committees (RSCs), representing the Northeast, Southeast and West, were brought together in Phase II to identify regional challenges, improve communication among partners, and identify proposed strategies and opportunities for improvement.

During the first part of Phase III, the Cohesive Strategy's National Science and Analysis Team conducted risk analyses for each of the three regions, which were followed by the development of Regional Action Plans by each RSC. A trade-off analysis was conducted at the national level, and the resultant National Strategy describes how the nation can focus future efforts in making strategic investments to reduce the severe effects of wildfire on areas of high risk.

Cohesive Strategy Status

The creation of the National Strategy marks the end of the development stage of the Cohesive Strategy. The final report is awaiting approval, and its release is anticipated for the winter of 2014. Implementation is now underway as stakeholders in each region come together to address the identified actions. At the national level, work has begun on the National Action Plan, which is expected to be released in the spring of 2014.

Opportunities for the Fire Service

There are many areas and activities identified in the Regional Action Plans where local fire departments can partner with their communities and other agencies to address potential local WUI and wildland fire risks. Some of these include conducting community and homeowner risk assessments, providing education and guidance regarding the creation of FACs, being a partner in the creation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and ensuring that personnel with wildfire suppression responsibilities have appropriate training and equipment.

For more information and access to all regional and national reports developed by the Cohesive Strategy effort, please visit www.forestsandrangelands.gov.

U.S. Fire Administration's Link: www.usfa.fema.gov/fireservice/prevention_education/strategies/wildland.

For archived downloads, go to:

www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/coffee-break/