



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



In Reply Refer To:
FWS/ANRS-NR-FM/024860

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors, Regions 1-7
Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office

From: ^{Acting} Deputy Director *Kenneth Stensell* MAY 2 2 2006

Subject: Wildland Fire Management Program Strategic Plan 2006 - 2010

The Director approved and transmitted the first iteration of the Wildland Fire Management Program Strategic Plan in 2004. In order to keep it current, the Branch of Fire Management initiated an update process with the Regional Fire Management Coordinators in October 2005. Comments from the Regions have been incorporated into a final update attached for distribution to Regions and Field Stations.

This Strategic Plan for the Fire Program brings together into a single document, refuge management goals, the goals of the National Fire Plan, the Ten-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan, the Healthy Forest Initiative, and other on-going wildland fire initiatives. It is recognized that needed periodic updates will be provided every 2 years. Implementation of the plan requires fire program managers at all levels to periodically review the objectives, prioritize for their area, and incorporate appropriate actions into existing work plans or Fire Management Plan appendices.

Please direct any questions about this strategic plan to Brian McManus, Acting Chief, Branch of Fire Management, at 208-387-5583.

Attachment



**U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
National Wildlife Refuge System**

**WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
STRATEGIC PLAN**

Fiscal Years 2006 - 2010



I. Background

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

The Service has long recognized fire as a unique process that shapes wildlife habitat structure and function, and has managed and used fire extensively. Fire is essential to management of many of the Service's 545 national wildlife refuges, 69 national fish hatcheries, and thousands of wetlands and special management areas.

Beginning in 2000 when catastrophic wildfires forced public evacuations and burned homes across parts of the country, political and social interest in the interagency fire program increased markedly. In late summer of that year, then President Clinton asked the Secretaries of Agriculture and of the Interior for a strategy to deal with the problem of uncontrollable wildfires threatening communities and resources. The Departments responded and Congress acted to implement the National Fire Plan (NFP) in FY2001. The NFP significantly increased funding for the interagency wildland fire program, both for initial attack resources and for fuels treatments. The NFP initiated the wildland-urban interface (WUI) fuels treatment program, established specific appropriations for WUI fuels treatments and increased accountability for use of the funds, initiated a Rural Fire Assistance grant program in the Department of the Interior (DOI) and ensured more political oversight and heightened performance expectations.

The DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC), established in late 2001, is part of the new oversight. This office reports to the Assistant Secretary of Policy, Management, and Budget through a Deputy Assistant Secretary. The OWFC has a mission (112 DM 7) "to implement and manage the Department's wildland fire program in a safe, effective, efficient, and seamless manner to provide for coordinated efforts between the wildland fire management bureaus and other federal and non-federal partners." Key OWFC functions are leading DOI fire budget development; representing the DOI fire program with the President's Office of Management and Budget, Congressional committees, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others; establishing and maintaining common reporting systems; and providing information for annual performance reports. The OWFC Director coordinates policy initiatives with the agency Fire Directors; OWFC staff works directly with national agency staff at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC).

Another oversight group, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC), was established by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior in April 2002. The group is comprised of senior executives from the Departments, the Directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service, USFS, and the three other

DOI bureaus with wildland fire programs, as well as state, Tribal, and county representatives. The council's mission is "consistent implementation of the goals, actions, and policies in the NFP and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy."

While new initiatives expand and modify the NFP, it still remains the base concept behind the current interagency wildland fire program. NFP accomplishments and performance measures are included in the President's budget proposals. Several of these program performance measures were developed by task groups formed under auspices of the Western Governors Association. The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior participated in the groups and have adopted the products, the Ten-Year Comprehensive Strategy and the Ten-Year Implementation Plan, as extensions of the NFP. Currently another task group is working to modify and update these formal program performance measures. The increase in program complexity affects the wildland fire program at national, regional, and field levels.

In 2002, President Bush initiated the Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI), emphasizing hazardous fuels in the WUI. This initiative streamlined requirements for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and it included a new departmental categorical exclusion for certain kinds of projects. For the most part, however, the Service has continued to operate under a categorical exclusion approved in 1997, which is broadly defined and is linked to habitat management objectives. The HFI has resulted in proportionately larger increases for fuels treatments within the Service's overall fire program appropriation. It has also resulted in performance measures relating to expending treatments dollars through contracting and other related measures.

In late 2003, the Congress passed the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA), which granted new authorities to the USFS and Bureau of Land Management (BLM), but none to the Fish and Wildlife Service. The HFRA promotes development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for communities at risk from catastrophic fire and provides for some priority for treatments identified in these plans.

Recent studies, proposals, and new business practices such as the Quadrennial Fuels and Fire review, the USFS Pulaski Conference initiatives with doctrine, the National Incident Management Organization, Fire Program Analysis, LANDFIRE, and others potentially can modify the strategies and action items in this plan, although they are not expected to change its framework: the vision, desired outcome, and goals.

II. Keeping Fire on Our Side: A Long-Term Vision for Fire Management

The Service shares the following vision with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), one of our fire management partners:

Wild lands throughout the United States primarily comprise ecosystems that have evolved with fire and depend on fire to sustain healthy biological communities including fish, wildlife and plants. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service manages an extensive and growing network of lands in all 50 states and all U. S. territories representing some of the highest

quality, bio-diverse ecosystems in the country. The Service is committed to working with stakeholders to proactively apply fire and other management tools to restore and maintain landscapes in desired ecological condition. Through regular prescribed burning, wildland fire use, and aggressive fuels reduction in high-priority areas, these partners minimize the threat of wildfire and maximize benefits to both people and biological communities.

In each of its regions, the Service is teaming with TNC chapters on specific projects where we share common goals of restoration or enhancement of fire-adapted ecosystems.



III. Desired Outcomes

1. All Service lands are maintained in ecological conditions that further the mission. Fire management activities contribute to the mission by

- suppressing unwanted wildland fires,
- managing naturally ignited fires for resource benefit when appropriate,
- implementing prescribed fire treatments that approximate the natural, ecological role of fire, and
- implementing fuels treatments that conserve Service trust resources to the greatest extent possible without compromising firefighter and public safety.

2. Threats to communities from wildland fire are mitigated.

3. Fire programs, resources, and personnel are integrated into Service and Refuge programs seamlessly, and vice versa.

4. Post-fire emergency stabilization and rehabilitation needs are minimal because few fires severely damage the landscape.
5. The best available science, as developed through research and monitoring, is applied to fire management planning and practices.
6. Full participation in federal, state, and local interagency partnerships is maintained and expanded as needed.

IV. Program Summary

The Service Wildland Fire Management program is managed by the Branch of Fire Management in the Service's Division of Natural Resources of the NWRs. Program leadership and key staff are based at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), in Boise, Idaho. The branch mission is to "provide effective and strategic wildland fire leadership, guidance, planning and budgetary support, and coordination to the Service while integrating Service goals and objectives with mandated priorities."

Co-located in Boise are the fire directors and key wildland fire management program staff of the USFS and the four DOI bureaus. Formal partnerships such as the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board, the National Multi-Agency Coordination Group and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group frame work issues. Non-federal partners at NIFC include The Nature Conservancy, the National Association of State Foresters, and the U.S. Department of Defense. Regional Fire Management Coordinators (RFMCs) and their staff, which support regional managers, are located throughout the Service's regions as well as its California-Nevada Operations office (CNO). Interagency coordination similar to that of NIFC occurs with regional and state partners. Fire management officers and staff are located at refuges or are shared within complexes or districts across the country, based on workload and funding. Strategic leadership to meet program management challenges is provided through a National Fire Leadership Team consisting of the Chief and Deputy Chief, Branch of Fire Management as well as the RFMCs.

One of the major challenges to managing wildland fire effectively on Service lands is that the proportion of WUI is high relative to total land holdings. This is largely because the refuge system in the contiguous 48 states manages a relatively large number of small, fragmented tracts embedded in privately-owned urban, suburban, and urban commuter areas. In these areas, the open space refuges provide makes nearby land attractive for developers. The WUI expansion, particularly in and near wetland areas, contributes to increases in potential invasive species infestations. This in turn can affect fuel loads, flammability, and character of the vegetation and its value for wildlife. Control of this problem involves multiple agencies at all levels. In Alaska the inverse of WUI expansion near refuge lands is the case: Refuge boundaries were established with traditional aboriginal villages and other settlements already imbedded in the federal lands.

Another challenge is managing a program that has relatively more units and most often a smaller staff than other federal partners. The Service land base of nearly 100 million acres is the third largest of the federal land and fire management agencies, less than the BLM and USFS, but more than the National Park Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The 545 refuges and 69 national fish hatcheries add up to more units than the BLM and USFS manage combined, spread over a wider area than either agency. However, Service program funding and staffing fall well short of what is needed to manage and supervise programs at common interagency standards. We depend a great deal on smart, talented staff to make things work, but often they don't have enough help.

A third challenge is providing fire management assistance to non-refuge units, such as federal fish hatcheries or the National Conservation Training Center, within existing staff capabilities. This is a challenge our federal partners rarely face. Additionally, because the Service provides fire assistance to States, Tribes, private and federal agencies for endangered species and migratory birds and assists with habitat management on non-Service lands, responsibilities of the Service fire program may extend beyond federal land and encompass private lands where grant programs assist neighbors in restoring and maintaining habitat, sometimes by using prescribed fire. At the opposite end of the spectrum, wild refuge lands in Alaska play a role in ensuring the sustainability of subsistence resources for local populations, so there is a keen interest in the potential impacts of large wildland fires.

A final, but not least important, set of technical challenges has always existed. These include the inherent difficulty of restoring altered landscapes to better ecological condition, maintaining natural ecosystems, maintaining re-treatment schedules in areas previously restored, dealing with invasive species, and practicing adaptive management with only a small staff available to monitor treatment effects. This is where the expertise of our staff in working together at the refuge level is so critical to success. Related to these technical challenges, there is little research capability to validate and improve treatment effectiveness.

V. The Strategic Plan

This plan has five strategies. The first three strategies repeat goals one through four of the National Fire Plan's five goals. The NFP's goal five (accountability), largely accomplished by performance measures and report protocols, is not duplicated. Because the Service largely uses fire to achieve dual benefits of fuel reduction and habitat restoration/maintenance from a single action, goals two and three of the NFP have been combined into a single strategy (number two) in this Service plan. The last two strategies of this plan are adapted from a National Wildlife Refuge System initiative, Fulfilling the Promise, which identifies visions for wildlife, habitat, people, and leadership.

The core of the strategic plan is the five strategies, eleven goals, and seventeen objectives that follow. All are consistent with DOI and Service policy and on-going direction by WFLC and other groups. Actions and an organizational level responsible for that action are associated with the objectives. The levels are coded N (National), R (Regional), L (Local), or a combination. The actions are not meant to be a complete list.

VI. Connecting to the Strategic Plan and Keeping it Useful

Periodically, and at least annually, program managers at all levels are asked to develop action plans by reviewing the objectives, prioritizing their significance, and incorporating appropriate actions into existing work plans or Fire Management Plan appendices.

This plan will be reviewed and updated bi-annually through the National Fire Leadership Team to provide on-going program direction at all levels. The program office in Boise will compile national and regional action plans to aid to updating the plan.

Strategy 1: Improve Fire Prevention & Appropriate Management of Wildland Fires

The Service annually prepares to detect wildland fires, and to respond appropriately and effectively. To accomplish this, we hire, train, and qualify firefighters; purchase and maintain supplies and equipment; and contract for services. We also assist other Federal agencies, State and Tribal governments, and local partners in training, suppression, and interagency incident and dispatch support activities.

Long-term Goals:

Eliminate loss of life; reduce injuries to firefighters and the public; and reduce damage to communities and the environment from severe, unplanned, and unwanted wildland fires.

Improve federal, state and local firefighting resources capability and readiness to protect communities and the environment from wildland fires.

Reduce large fire suppression costs.

Reduce suppression activities where they are unnecessary.

Objectives and Actions:

1. Maintain or enhance readiness staffing and resources to contain 95% of unwanted grass fires at less than 300 acres and 95% of unwanted timber fires at less than 100 acres when the initial appropriate management response is full suppression.

- Conduct annual pre-season fire readiness reviews at all units with fire staff and post season reviews as appropriate. (RL)
- Encourage all Service personnel to develop skills and maintain qualifications through fire assignments. (RL)
- Encourage refuge managers to allow co-lateral employees to pursue fire qualifications, especially for non-operations positions. (NR)
- Know staff fire qualifications and match to opportunities for assignments. (L)
- Ensure staffing and competencies are aligned with both fire management and refuge management needs. (L)
- Identify safety deficiencies on type three, four, and five incidents and implement appropriate mitigation measures. (N)
- Ensure fire preparedness resource needs are identified annually through the

- interagency Fire Planning Analysis process at the Fire Planning Unit level. (L)
2. Improve incident leadership.
 - Develop more type three and type four incident commanders. (RL)
 - Develop and complete a workforce analysis for all positions. (NR)
 - Develop more Fire Use Managers. (All)
 - Increase the number of non-fire employees involved in incident leadership. (All)
 3. Improve fire facilities and fire equipment programs.
 - Maintain a standing Service fire equipment work group. (N)
 - Inventory facilities, identify needs, standards, and priorities, and develop options. (RN)
 - Establish a fire management working capital fund. (N)
 4. Improve wildland fire prevention/education capability.
 - Ensure FPA phase II has a staffing analysis to reduce human-caused fires. (N)
 - Collaborate with state, local and other federal partners when possible to maintain consistent messages, particularly regarding fire restrictions and closures. (RL)
 5. Enhance local capabilities to manage extended attack, project, and fire use fires.
 - Increase number of non-fire employees involved in incident management. (L)
 - Ensure pre-attack plans are developed for critical areas. (RL)
 - Increase numbers of fire use managers. (RL)
 - Compile/maintain lists of resources available at remote stations/field camps. (R)
 - Enhance capability to prepare and implement Wildland Fire Situation Analyses and Wildland Fire Implementation Plans, including training and use of collateral staff. (RL)

Strategy 2: Reduce Hazardous Fuels, and Restore, Rehabilitate, and Maintain Fire-Adapted Ecosystems

The Service actively manages fuels and habitats on Service lands where appropriate. Treatments are designed, in collaboration with local partners, to cost-effectively reduce risks from unwanted fires to communities and habitats and to maintain and/or enhance those habitats. The Service has long recognized the many ecological benefits of fire in restoring, maintaining, and enhancing Refuge lands, as reflected in the extensive use of prescribed fire over the past 75 years. The Service cannot accomplish its mission without prescribed fire because good habitat in fire adapted ecosystems is nearly synonymous with effective fuels management. Keeping its prescribed fire capability and increasing its wildland fire use capability is critical to the Service because most Service lands are fire-adapted ecosystems.

Fuels funds target the highest priority fuels management needs. The Service has demonstrated success in meeting National Fire Plan treatment targets; however, these accomplishments are not meeting the full extent of the needs identified within the Service. Because of altered fire regimes and additional WUI area growth, mechanical means to reduce fuels and alter vegetation structure may be needed before fire can be safely and effectively used, especially near communities. The “pre-treatments” to reduce risk often have significant per acre costs. Therefore maintaining improved conditions once they are attained is essential to long-term cost-effective management.

Long-term Goals:

Treat hazardous fuels, using appropriate tools, to reduce the risk of unplanned and unwanted wildland fire to communities and to the environment.

Restore, rehabilitate, and maintain natural vegetation, to promote the goals of refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP) and Habitat Management Plans (HCP).

Maintain natural fire regimes as much as possible by using a “hands off” approach and managing fuels to protect values and risk, while allowing fire to assume its natural role.

Objectives and Actions:

1. Assess risk to communities and resources from wildland fires originating on and near Service lands.

- Expand partners/public collaboration in WUI and non-WUI, as appropriate. (L)
- Provide oversight needed to ensure collaborative processes are effective. (NR)
- Facilitate expanded collaboration with regional and local partners and the public by means of national cooperative agreements with Non-Governmental

Organizations (NGOs). (N)

- Develop collaborative community risk assessments and mitigation plans and identify treatment needs based upon risks. (L)
- Provide/develop templates to assist local units in the above process. (NR)
- Identify and prioritize fuel treatment needs (including projects which cross agency boundaries) in collaboration with state and local partners. (RL)
- Improve fuels mapping and analysis capability in coordination with interagency initiatives such as LANDFIRE and integrate products with Service land use planning activities. (R)
- Develop fire program GIS capability and expertise. (NR)

2. Build and maintain infrastructure to implement cost-effective mitigation treatments compatible with goals and objectives for all Service-managed lands.

- Develop more Type 1 and Type 2 burn bosses. (RL)
- Use contractors for treatments as appropriate. (RL)
- Actively seek and support opportunities to share personnel and equipment with other refuges and/or with partners when this would increase efficiency. (RL)
- Support field needs in Fire Program Analysis (FPA) development and use. (N)
- Adjust FIREBASE to support field needs and minimize conflicts with FPA. (N)
- Develop capability to manage wildland fire use to maintain the natural and desirable process in the ecosystem and reduce hazardous fuels. (All)
- Adjust fuels treatment funding methodology to better incorporate data that identifies treatment need and priority. (N)

3. Improve fire management plans (FMPs).

- Address all landscapes and identify and prioritize rare, declining, or unique species and/or vegetative communities dependent on specific fire regimes, to help in developing FMPs. (L)
- Ensure appropriate fire management concerns, including WUI issues, appropriate use of WFU and cost containment considerations, are incorporated into CCPs and other plans by coordinating with and participating in planning efforts. (RL)

- Develop measurable prescribed fire objectives for annual work plans. (L)
- Amend all fire management plans as needed to comply with federal wildland fire policy through updates or appendices as appropriate. (RL)
- Provide guidance regarding data standards for fire planning and for historic fire/fuels treatments in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). (N)
- Standardize metadata and storage of historic fire and fuels treatment data in GIS. (All)
- Coordinate with refuge system resource and planning staff as needed. (RN)
- Assess Service-wide fuels treatment monitoring program needs, funding, and potential to integrate monitoring into the appropriate planning system. (N)
- Develop and maintain 3-5 year fuel treatment plans and priorities. (L)

4. Implement wildland fire use (WFU) where appropriate.

- Identify where WFU could be an appropriate management response (safe, beneficial to resources, efficient) and develop strategies to update FMPs as needed. (LR)
- Collaborate with adjacent landowners when possible to maximize the size and defensibility of appropriate management response areas for wildland fire use. (L)
- Update FMPs prior to implementing wildland fire use projects. (L)
- Emphasize the need to evaluate potential WFU where appropriate. (N)
- Improve staff and management understanding and acceptance of WFU management and its potential within the Service. (NR)
- Support and promote fire use as a viable management option of choice. (NR)

5. Conduct needed Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation (ES & R) treatments.

- Monitor effectiveness of ES & R treatments. (L)
- Provide guidance for refuges to implement cost-effective ES & R. (N)

Strategy 3: Promote Community Assistance

The Service supports a broad range of collaborative community assistance activities. Many Service units are small parcels with no dedicated wildland fire personnel, making the neighboring rural fire departments (RFDs) a critical resource for initial fire response. Not surprisingly, the Service has working agreements with hundreds of RFDs. Grants available through the DOI Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) grants program help RFDs obtain safety equipment, improve wildland fire skills through training, and become involved in fuel treatments or other wildfire mitigation activities. The RFA grant awards are coordinated with states and other partners.

Community assistance includes Service personnel contributing their expertise to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) and risk assessments. The Service also supports community education and outreach to increase awareness of the role of wildland fire in fire-adapted ecosystems.

Long-term Goals:

Increase capability of communities at risk to prevent losses from wildland fire originating on FWS lands.

Support biomass utilization where possible.

Objectives and Actions:

1. Improve and maintain relationships with RFDs.

- Assist in developing appropriate coordinated local fire response plans. (L)
- Work with RFD and communities to develop CWPPs, or the equivalent. (L)
- Support RFD needs through RFA program grants as appropriate. (RL)
- Encourage grant recipients to communicate with the Congress about RFA. (RL)
- Provide information about Department of Homeland Security grant programs for fire departments as appropriate. (All)

2. Expand outreach to homeowners and communities about fire mitigation.

- Provide expertise regarding defensible space and hazard mitigation. (RL)
- Participate/collaborate in community fire education and CWPPs. (RL)
- Provide community fire education and actively promote local FireSafe, FireWise,

or similar efforts. (RL)

3. Promote local fuels treatment contracting capability.

- Encourage use of assistance agreements as a step to local contracting. (RL)
- Use stewardship projects for appropriate mechanized work and biomass use. (L)

Strategy 4: Improve Human Capital and Work Force Management

Due to limited budgets, more efficient ways of operating are being sought to meet ever-increasing program complexities and expectations. The Service's fire program participates in Service and DOI programs that emphasize leadership and operational skills. The Service has effectively adapted the Incident Command System from wildland fire to manage other incidents, including hurricane responses. A potentially greater need for this expertise and its potential impacts on the workforce suggests a Service-wide need for a broad-based plan with more of the workforce identified as potential responders, as well as expanded training and assignments to gain and demonstrate competence.

Long-term Goal:

Develop and maintain a workforce capable of meeting the highest standards of professional and technical expertise in the implementation of the Service's wildland fire program.

Objectives and Actions:

1. Develop and implement a human capital plan in concert with the Service and DOI.
 - Train, develop, and integrate fire and collateral staff to meet interagency standards and competencies. (RL)
 - Increase recruitment for key positions to expand applicant pools. (All)
 - Train and develop staff in order to improve leadership and management skills and competence. (All)
 - Implement standard DOI position descriptions as they become approved. (All)
 - Continue the Branch of the Fire Management mentoring program and expand regionally and locally. (All)
 - Conduct a needs-analysis to assess whether shortages exist in key fire positions, and develop and implement strategies to ensure future needs are met. (N)
 - Continue support for technical fire management and refine as needed.
 - As appropriate, support educational institutions developing programs to assist employees meet Interagency Fire Program Management standards. (N)
2. Improve fire management knowledge and awareness at regional and field levels.
 - Ensure fire decision-making training such as use of the Wildland Fire Situation

Analysis (WFSAs) is available for agency administrators and fire managers. (NR)

- Identify fire management competencies (including fuels management and safety awareness) needed by line officers and develop and implement strategies to ensure future needs are met. (NR)
- Increase attendance by key managers and project leaders at fire management leadership training to ensure standards in the Service manual are met. (NR)

3. Improve fire and incident management skills in the Service workforce.

- Develop and foster fire expertise and skills among collateral duty and non-NWRS staff. (RL)
- Establish expectations for incident management teams and support, and plan employee development for these activities. (RL)
- Enhance capability to develop quality WFSAs, wildland fire implementation plans, and similar management decision documents. (All)
- Increase the number of fire use managers and long term fire behavior analysts. (All)
- Report fires and collect and report weather data per interagency standards. (L)
- Provide guidance on standards for fire and weather data collection. (NR)
- Increase fire planner knowledge of the National Environmental Policy Act. (R)

Strategy 5: Improve Awareness and Outreach.

Promote the Service as an experienced technical expert in the cost-effective and science-based use and management of wildland fire to restore and maintain healthy ecosystems, serving the interests of both wildlife and people.

Long-term Goals:

Increase the understanding by members of the Congress and their staff, decision makers in DOI and the Office of Management and Budget, NGOs, community partners, and Service managers and employees of the key role fire plays in accomplishing the mission of both the NWRS and the Service.

Increase public awareness and understanding of natural fire processes and fire use practices sufficient to support informed decisions about its appropriate use.

Educate neighbors/communities regarding the challenges in living in fire-prone environments, and their responsibility.

Objectives and Actions:

1. Develop and implement a Service wildland fire communications plan.
 - Develop and deliver key messages about fire's role in managing wildlife habitat and maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health to both internal and external audiences. (All)
 - Use external communication vehicles (website, media contact, etc.) to reinforce messages to all target audiences. (All)
 - Nurture state, NGO, and community partnerships to clarify program needs and benefits, and build support from state and private sectors. (All)
 - Develop a standing national fire outreach team and national NGO partners. (NR)
 - Coordinate with partners to include key messages in interagency outreach. (All)
 - Leverage existing capabilities to increase Service-wide staff awareness of the Service fire program, the NFP and its implementation in the Service. (All)
 - As appropriate, make direct and coordinated contact with OWFC, the Congress, and key officials to inform them of successes of fire and fuels programs and program needs. (All)
 - Support community assistance education needs. (All)