

DOCTRINE DIALOGUE

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What's Happening With Doctrine?

The purpose and need for the Forest Service in earlier days was clearly stated: To work with states to protect the reserves and provide benefits to the American public. Over time the mission, physical, and political environments changed and increased in complexity, but there was little effort to validate and modify the foundational principles (our doctrine) to keep pace.

The layering of prescriptive policy, checklists, and a variety of "dos" and "don'ts" have done little to validate the doctrine that guided Forest Service fire suppression management, while leaving it more vulnerable to outside scrutiny and challenge. Doctrine is found in any number of guides, manuals, and handbooks. Ask any firefighter, fire program leader, or line officer what the doctrinal principles are that guide fire suppression activities, and one will get as many answers as people asked.

Principles of wildland fire suppression should be based on well defined values of the agency, and turn assumptions of what those agency values are into facts. From the principles will come the strategies and tactics, the tools and techniques for executing them, and define the behaviors that we expect. When we move to sound, well-understood Doctrinal concepts, then our decisions will be defensible by professional judgment; "*How did you use doctrine to arrive at your decision?*", and "*How was your decision consistent with the leader's expressed intent?*"

So, what are we doing to facilitate the transition to doctrinal principles as the foundation of leadership and decision making?

- **Review of Fire Policy Documents:** A contract has been awarded to Fire Management Solutions, Inc. that launched the review of nearly 2200 pages of interagency fire policy documents. This effort has interagency support and involvement in comparing and contrasting individual agency doctrine to find the overlap... which then forms the basis for true interagency operating doctrine.
- **Policy Revision:** The strategy is to locate doctrine appropriately among the various key documents, streamline existing policy, reduce or eliminate redundant materials, and move operational directives to handbooks and guides.
- **Futuring :** An AD-Hoc steering group is facilitating the review and contractor oversight for the transition strategy development. This strategy will be available for application by January 2007 and the interagency transition to Doctrine will be fully underway.
- **Training Development:** We have initiated an effort to develop a comprehensive training strategy that reaches every firefighter from the ground up and every fire manager from the top down. As a result Forest Service FAM and our interagency partners will become a more coherent organization guided by well stated doctrinal principles, which represent the reality of the work, the environment, and the mission.
- **Peer Review:** A streamlined process to investigate and gather lessons learned; the subject of our next Doctrine Dialogue.

An organization focused on accomplishing a worthy mission within clearly articulated doctrine and principles is agile, effective, and enduring. Max Weber, Sociologist

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