Prototype Fire Planning Units

The FPA Team recruited a small group of Fire Planning Units (FPUs) to provide feedback during system development. Each of these FPUs have existing cooperative wildland fire management programs in place and represent the various ecosystems and fire regimes throughout the United States. These "Prototype FPUs" test and validate models and provide field-user input. The seven Prototype FPUs are:

Alaska. Alaska is the largest FPU, incorporating the entire state. Remote area access requires work to be done by aircraft making their fire management program unique. The state includes a wide range of vegetation; from coastal rainforests and boreal forests, to tundra. Interagency partners include: Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service and the National Park Service; the State of Alaska is an active partner but was not part of the prototype analysis.

Central Florida. Central Florida has a diverse ecosystem incorporating southern pines, marsh, grasslands and southern rough. This FPU has a large fuels treatment program and, in many cases, adjoins wildland urban interface areas. The FPU partners include Forest Service, National Park Service, and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Central Oregon. The Central Oregon FPU has three distinct vegetation bands: high elevation alpine plant communities with mountain hemlock; mid-elevation mixed conifer forest with juniper and ponderosa and lodgepole pines; and lower elevation grasslands with sagebrush and bitterbrush. Interagency partners participating in the FPU are the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Park Service and various Tribal representatives.

Color Country (Southern Utah). This FPU has drier Great Basin-type vegetation with grasslands, sagebrush steppe, and mixed conifer forests of Douglas-fir, pinion and ponderosa pine, and juniper. Color Country is a LANDFIRE prototype area and is using LANDFIRE vegetation data in the FPA analysis. Interagency partners include Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and National Park Service.

New Jersey. This FPU represents the eastern area of the country and other small FPUs nationally. It has a high concentration of values at risk with many wildland urban interface areas. Vegetation includes oak-beech forests, grasslands and old fields, Forested and scrub wetlands and upland forests. Interagency partners include the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Parks and Forestry.

Northwest Montana. The Northwest Montana FPU has a significant annual wildfire workload. The mixed-conifer forest includes ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and larch. They are part of the 2006 LANDFIRE rapid assessment modeling and mapping zone. Interagency partners include Forest Service, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

Southern Sierra. This FPU has an active fuels management program and a sizeable wildland fire workload. Three zones characterize the vegetation in this FPU: low elevation grasses and foothills oak; mid-elevation mixed conifer forests with sequoia, Shasta fir, incense cedar and sugar, Jeffery and lodgepole pines; and high elevation zones with foxtail pine. Interagency partners include Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and National Park Service.

Prototype FPU Selection Criteria
The chief selection requirements for the prototype FPUs were on-going interagency fire planning activities and line officers willing to participate. The project wanted representation from the diverse geographic areas across the United States. Chosen FPUs also met a range of the following criteria:

- Ecological diversity from one FPU to another
- Multiple agency representation
- Proven spatial analysis capabilities
- At least a moderate level of fuels management activities such as Wildland Urban Interface and ecosystem restoration
- At least a moderate level of extended attack and large fire workload
- At least a moderate level of fire prevention workload
- At least a moderate level of wildland fire occurrence
- Ties to LANDFIRE's prototype areas

The FPA Team's Expectations of the Prototype FPUs
The overall expectation for each prototype FPU was to test the developing FPA modules and provide feedback. Specific expectations were:

- Develop strong interagency planning partnerships.
- Develop or refine resource management objectives relative to fire management and develop a full range of fire management objectives, constraints, and restrictions for all aspects of the fire management workload such as fuels, and prevention.
- Develop and refine the required data inputs for the various modules.
- Test and provide feedback on interim and final products.
- Provide validation for model outputs; costs, fire resource, and rules and thresholds.
- Work closely with the FPA Team and the design and build contractor.
- Participate as subject matter experts.
- Travel periodically.
- Assist in presenting training materials and coaching initial implementation.