



Wildland Fire Decision Support Science Partnership

FY 2009 President's Budget

ISSUES

The need and opportunity for wildland fire management and research to converge has never been greater. Investment in improved, science-based wildland fire decision support is needed to provide a framework for adaptation as climate, environmental and social systems change. Decision tools and exchanges, when coupled with reliable and consistent information coming from research on fire behavior and effects, will increase efficiency and enhance safety by helping the wildland fire community be even more effective.

IMPORTANCE

Frequent major fires, lengthening fire seasons, and increasing suppression costs require sound decision making to increase effectiveness and cost efficiency while enhancing safety of communities and fire fighters. The National Fire Plan, Healthy Forests Initiative and Joint Fire Science Program have focused interagency and academic interests on wildland fire management. Ongoing demographic, landscape and climatic changes, as well as other biophysical and societal considerations are affecting the wildland fire decision making environment. Addressing these issues requires a combination of risk assessment and decision support tools that work seamlessly across all ownerships and jurisdictions. Research has met part of this challenge by developing knowledge, tools, and technologies responsive to needs expressed by managers. Mechanisms for delivering improved tools to wildland fire and natural resource managers, agency administrators, and field personnel are needed.

CURRENT RESEARCH AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Leaders of the natural resource colleges at the Universities of Montana and Idaho and the Director of the Rocky Mountain Research Station have agreed to an exciting new approach that



integrates and focuses their collective efforts by forming a Wildland Fire Decision Support - Science Partnership.

Specifically our collective efforts are designed to effectively bridge the gap between wildland fire managers and science, vastly improving wildland fire decision making in the coming years by:

- Fostering effective use of public funding in wildland fire management and suppression operations via the development and use of effective tools and information technologies;
- Enhancing operational effectiveness and firefighter safety via the development and use of new management tools and technologies;
- Providing greater accountability of investments and expenditure through the development of assessment and monitoring systems that can evaluate operational effectiveness in real time.
- Facilitating delivery of science and knowledge to wildland fire managers and providing better information about fire events for the general public and wildland fire managers.

Staff from the National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis (University of Montana), Fire Research and Management Exchange System (FRAMES) program (University of Idaho) and Rocky Mountain Research Station have outlined a multi-year program of work to achieve these goals involving four primary themes:

1. Fire Decision Support for Appropriate Wildland Fire Management Response
2. Programmatic Fire Planning
3. Fuel Management and Ecosystem Restoration
4. Science and Knowledge Delivery