

Chattanooga, TN Forum 6/3/10

Participants-23 representing State Forestry/Fire Chiefs (NC, AL, TN, GA), Southern Group of State Foresters, FWS, NPS, BIA, FS, Private Developer, Consultant, Firewise property owner, and Volunteer Fire Department. CSOC members-Dan Smith (NASF) and Clint Cross (FS R8). PMT member/facilitator-Pete Lahm (FS).

General concern with lack of Forums in Eastern US and specifically aimed at Southeast.

Critical Issues (flip chart notes):

WUI Challenges

- Integration of programs
- Changing demographics (urban dwellers now in WUI, renters, 2nd homes, absentee owners, etc.)
- Fire and ecology education lacking (needs, message development)
- Personal and community responsibility
- High risk to firefighters, public, air quality
- Need to communicate messages of fire risk and alternatives to urban dwellers who now use and live in the rural WUI

Fire and Social Sciences Integration

- Educate society and politicians
- Cultural shift towards ecology and role of fire needed

Capacity issues (equipment, workforce, etc.)-Fed, State, Local to Volunteer Fire Departments (VFD)

- Suppression, Prevention, Fuels
- VFD critical to CWPP development and implementation as well as community fire education
- VFD affected by variability in Rural Fire Assistance monies
- Need to empower local communities and landowners
- Message needs to be organic and from within community (CWPP structure is ok tho)
 - Address preparedness and trade-offs of alternatives
- Small tribes really disadvantaged for WUI and fire monies/fuels projects
- Feasible levels of treatments
- SERPAS – Southern Pine restoration effort would double fire use in SE
- Alternatives to Fuels treatments to address fire risk such as good investment proven by FL Prestemon paper showing \$1 invested into Prevention has \$35 ROI in reduced suppression cost (see . <http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/sofew/pdfs/Fire%20Prevention%20Efficacy%20-%20Prestemon.pdf> and [https://www.firescience.gov/projects/09-1-09-2/project/09-1-09-2_Florida-Results\(JFSP-09-1-9-2\).pdf](https://www.firescience.gov/projects/09-1-09-2/project/09-1-09-2_Florida-Results(JFSP-09-1-9-2).pdf)).
 - Few dedicated prevention staff at state level – critically needed

- Loss of 50% of SE dozer capability due to change in industrial land ownership
- Use urban fire prevention model of last 100 years and apply to WUI/wildfire challenge
- Use and add more Prevention Teams(proven concept)

Fire is cyclical, weather and climate variability important

*CS needs to have measureable and accountable programs and progress metrics that show effects of program implementation.

- Create a prevention target like fuels acres treated

Risk and Priority Values (flip chart notes):

Concerns over East-West focus and valuation of risk

Local values need to be considered in determining values at risk and priority

Utilize Southern Risk Assessment (Fed to VFD including tribes)

Use Farm Bill 5 year cycle State Assessments due mid-June (have climate change, endangered species and invasives information)

Concern for firefighter safety from Fed to VFD including adequacy of training, and equipment

- Clarity needed for initial attack if less than full suppression an option,
- Many want to consider less than full suppression.
- Want to utilize human caused ignition (unplanned) to meet resource objectives...arsonists will get their goals met.
- Need to address state and local laws that limit use of unplanned fire with some flexibility especially on private lands where fire may be wanted (smoke a concern though).
- Need greater discussion of trade-off of prescribed fire or use of unplanned ignitions.

Need for better dynamic fire risk determination (not just fire danger which also needs improvements in communication/public messaging)

- SE is subject to rapid fuels and risk changes from ice storms, hurricanes, blowdowns/wind storms, insect and disease outbreaks (mahogany dieback effects unknown fire behavior effects, there are other substantive examples)
- Invasive species
 - Cogan grass changing landscapes like Cheatgrass (even worse) with more frequent fire and intensity. Concern funding for eradication will reduce other fuels efforts.
 - Climate and weather variability effects on fuels and risk.
 - Change in industrial land ownership/land use
- Ethanol production

- Changing land-use patterns rapidly and fuel types/loadings.
- Shift to warm season grass production (requires use of fire) resulting in greater fire risk due to more prescribed fire needed, escapes increase due to less experienced privates burning, adds fire risk to an area/community.

CS Temporal Question:

State assessments on 5yr cycle

Annual operating plans commonly used

Align CS and State 5 yr cycle

How does 4 yr QFR fit into this cycle

Needs to be adaptive (possibly more or less frequent depending on issues and conditions – risk changes substantially then needs to be addressed then).

Guiding Documents in SE Region:

L/RMP, State Master Agreements, TNC agreements, Many Firewise agreements, Southern Area Compact, MOU's State with VFD's (800 VFD in GA, 1400 VFD in NC, 1800 VFD in TX), State Emergency Plans. BIA has many challenges here...signatories to agreements but tribes may not be (generally not). DOD is an outlier with agreements-not that actively involved in MOU's-some.

Closing Comments-Most Significant Issues:

- Address the WUI including public role and responsibility.
- Safety of firefighters and public.
- VFD Training and Tools needs improvement.
- Improve communication and consistency, create goals in the MOU's State and VFD.
- Improve education and awareness at local level...a joint challenge top level and from ground up.
- Improvement of communications and public education more important/effective than fuels in some areas.
- Report/recommendations need to be clear with common dictionary based definitions all can buy into.
- CS needs to have an agreed mutual end state.
- Do not just focus on the West as the SE has a good record of efficient use of funding and fire programs. One Southern Forum does not bode well.
- More local dollars from Federal Government is a desired outcome, but note states are strapped in being able to administer more funding programs.
- Grant dollars may be more effectively used if they were either allowed to be obligated for longer periods (more than 1-2 years) as then a long term (3-5 yr) program could be implemented rather than a "one shot" deal.

- States are capped in hiring in many areas so more dollars there may not be the answer.
- Limits on the size of a community for VFA funding(less than population of 10k). Larger areas need support too.
- Need a national level public service announcement/program on WUI and personal responsibility. Create and utilize educational material of and for local level.
- Education is needed for society, our culture and the political parts of the issues/strategy.
- Integrate social science into the CS, using P301 from Pinchot Institute and prevention ideas of Prestemon.
- Look beyond the traditional view of fire and define all the situations where fire is good and should be utilized.
- Improve prevention efforts as they have great ROI and create targets to show progress/value. Create new prevention teams.
- Embrace “all risk” role as a unifying task across agency boundaries and as a unifying driver.
- Identify the commonalities and respect that different priorities that will exist.
- Care needs to be given that each state is unique and that “national efforts” mask those differences at the detriment of the common goals.
- Ensure the CS is truly implementable.

Partial list of participants (no one had the full invite list).

William R. Sweet	wsweet@charter.net
Marty Bentley	mbentley@fs.fed.us
Ted Dailey	ted.dailey@tn.gov
Riva Duncan	rrduncan@fs.fed.us
Alan Dozier	adozier@gfc.state.ga.us
David Frederick	firerepsgsf@charter.net
Dan Jackson	dan.jackson@forestry.alabama.gov
Jim Prevette	jim.prevette@ncdenr.gov
Jim Dale	james.dale@tn.gov
Peter Bush	petebush@comcast.net
Don Stallions	dstallions@blounttn.org
Nathan Waters	Nathan.waters@tn.gov

Bill Manning	wildbill@centurytel.net
John Kirksey	john.kirksey@tn.gov
Red Anderson	jrandersoncf@gmail.com
Leon Konz	leonkonz@comcast.net
Samuel Larry	Samuel_larry@nps.gov