



## Where We Are - Where We Are Going

The Cohesive Strategy is now in Phase III: Implementation Planning. The Regional Strategy Committees (RSCs) are working with the National Science and Analysis Team (NSAT) to assess current and potential strategies that the wildland fire community engages. The results of this interaction will be a characterization of wildfire risk on the landscape, and development of models showing how factors contributing to risk interact with actions within the strategies. Together the RSCs and NSAT are identifying potential opportunities to manage risks more effectively. Regional reports will document the analysis. The Science team will be meeting with the three regions in Denver the first week in September.

During Phase III, RSCs are developing regional action plans. The intent of the regional action plans is to capture actions toward achieving the three national goals of the Cohesive Strategy. Specific actions will likely address process improvements related to successes identified; the barriers and solutions within the region's decision-space; pursuing alternatives in whole or in part; and the feedback

**Action Plans capture actions leading toward achieving the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy: restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes, creating fire adapted communities, and improving our response to**

based on stakeholder involvement throughout Phase III. The action plans will identify who will do what, where, and by when. This will create a mechanism for recording commitments each RSC has made and ensure accountability in completing actions. Actions in the regional action plan document initial efforts in implementing the Cohesive Strategy at regional and local levels in an effort to make a positive difference on the ground.

### Partner Perspective: Chair of the SE Region



When Mike Zupko, of the Southern Governors' Association, was asked where he envisions Cohesive Strategy in the future, Zupko responded, "In one to five years out, I believe we'll be stronger management communities as a result of the Cohesive Strategy, and not just in fire response. Introductions and relationships

resulting from strengthened community networking today will better align all types of common efforts tomorrow."

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To illustrate his point, Zupko described the difference working within a cohesive strategy context. Zupko explains, "Sure we'd collaborate in the past, but conversations stayed within fire organizations, I didn't realize our blinders until Cohesive Strategy challenged us to think outside the realm of the fire community. Now, instead of working fire group to fire group, we've expanded our network to include groups outside the traditional fire circle, including considerations of forest product markets, wildlife interest, water quality interests and more engagement with the private landowner community." Zupko foresees Cohesive Strategy continuing to build upon initial networks created, continuing to transcend fire agencies, a continuation of establishing connections and toward mutual goals.

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## Cohesive Strategy National Update

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (CS) is intended and envisioned “to safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a Nation, live with wildland fire.” From that vision came the three goals of the CS: Restoring and Maintaining Fire Resilient Landscapes, Creating Fire Adapted Communities, and Improving Response to Wildfires. To truly achieve the vision and intent, to improve the safety of our communities and ensure the long term health of our landscapes, the three goals must be pursued simultaneously.

Achieving the CS goals in the very complex environment of our fire prone landscapes and the communities within them is challenging. In the multi-jurisdiction setting, no one entity is likely to have authority to make unilateral decisions. Resources to move ahead will continue to be limited, so the community will have to decide what to allocate toward each of the goals, and how to balance investment in those actions with the best payoff over time, considering near term urgency as well as long term benefits. These decisions require tough choices and broad participation by government fire management and public safety agencies, commercial interests, elected officials, and private landowners. Getting various interests and jurisdictions to work together is the only way to achieve all three goals. One of the foundations of the National CS is collaboration as tool to build the trust and collective community leadership to make those calls. This is the link between the potential for goal integration and a collaborative approach to implementing the Strategy.

### Removing Barriers to Achieve Success in Cohesive Strategy Implementation

Barriers are elements impeding the successful implementation of the CS; likewise, Critical Success Factors are enabling CS implementation. The following are the RSCs highest priorities for implementing the CS:

#### **Barriers:**

**Inefficiencies in the National Qualification Standards** and procedures must be addressed to increase response capabilities.

**Remove Policy Barriers and Process complexities for sharing resources**, not only for wildfire, but for fuels and prescribed fire work. Enforceable state and local ordinances

**Intergovernmental Wildland Fire Governance** is needed to serve the needs of all jurisdictions in wildland fire and all-risk incidents.

#### **Critical Success Factors:**

**Increase Fuels Management on Private land** through incentives for landowners, and integrate federal and state level fuels and fire prevention programs.

**Increase Fuels Management on Federal Land** by revising standardized guidance and direction for fuels treatments to enhance fire adapted communities and landscapes. Landscape scale restoration is often difficult to achieve due to the complex process requirements of federal laws, rules and policies.

**Growth Management, Land Development and Zoning Laws** need to require defensible space and wildland fire risk reduction actions as communities develop.

**Enforceable State/Local Ordinances** need to adequately relate to wildfire prevention.

**FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program** should be enhanced to maximize fuels reduction across the landscape with emphasis on private lands.

**Rate Fire Adapted Communities** using a common system to characterize and rate adaptation.

**Investment in Firefighting Workforce** at the field level. Budget cuts are reducing the number and quality of the on-the-ground firefighting workforce.

**Improve Fire Data** Without accurate data many assumptions and actions based on this data will be compromised.

**Timely approval of Strategy** and actions on the part of interagency leadership.

#### **Cohesive Strategy Websites:**

National: <http://forestsandrangelands.gov>  
National Partner Perspectives: <http://forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/perspectives>  
Northeast Region: <http://sites.nemac.org/northeastcohesivefire/>  
Southeast Region: <http://sites.nemac.org/southeastcohesivefire/>  
Western Region: <http://sites.nemac.org/westcohesivefire/>  
Fire Adapted Communities: <http://www.fireadapted.org>