

Casper Forum

Group G

Summary of Questions

Question 1: What are the most critical issues that the Cohesive Strategy for Wildland Fire Management must address:

Federal agency confusion, mission drift, diminished capacity

Aggressive suppression is not being stressed now on Forest Service lands

A whole brain strategy is needed that considers the total cost of fires (re:Western FLC doc *The True Cost of Wildfire in the Western US*)

State of forests in unhealthy condition

Preparedness—Coordination between state and local levels, location of IA resources

Cost containment while sustaining a workforce

State and local regulations and requirements

How are we going to interact between levels?

Not just fire adapted ecosystems we will have fire in long-term fire systems – we need to recognize that fire is a value driven needs

All lands approach with emphasis on restoration through integrated resource management

Rising costs of large wildfires

Geographic needs and differences in wildland fire threats, frequency and resource values

Community Assistance supported to the degree the NFP identified

Resistance about federal fire policy at local level of governments, state, county

Communication

Mitigation efforts needs to be enhanced – WUI –

Initial attack efforts need to be strengthened

More transparent boundaries i.e. Wilderness firefighting options are fully understood – that is lacking now

Opportunities for locals to engage not through mandate but self interest—what is the compelling reason a community will engage

Safety needs to be a key part

Engage NRCS – especially for post-fire rehab

Is integrated resource part of fire mgmt OR is fire part of Integrated Resource Mgmt?

Type II teams being stretched thin

How do we respond looking forward across the nation; what is our governance context; How do we integrate fire, climate change, etc. and create fire adapted human communities

Inclusive recognition that wildland fire is the Nation's problem—resulting in shared responsibility for solutions

Recognition of all the different agency missions and authorities; local, state, tribal, fed, partners

Full consideration of the cost of fire suppression vs. cost of treating the land

Monitoring and predicting how climate change will affect fire frequency and intensity

Protecting private property adjacent to federal lands

Cost of suppression

The amount of fed lands that are at risk to catastrophic fire at levels that have the potential to significantly change ecosystems

All lands beyond the lower 48, including territories and US trust lands

Need to treatment to mitigate risk

10 yr plan is working

We need to work on value judgments, cultural forest values, and communities

Increasing mobility of critical resources – especially aviation resources

Increasing initial attack capability

Key decisions need to be kept at local levels

Fuels – need to continue collaboration burning across boundaries – this needs to be expanded.

Keep it simple—back to basics

Funding for prescribed fire and fire use

Too much reliance on huge computer programs to determine funding (FPA)

Too much reliance on WUI \$ to fund a wildlife enhancement mission

The program is too complicated and too many people are worried about liability—take a law enforcement approach on liability issues

Fire is part of land use mgmt – therefore we need to be looking at large landscape scale planning and implementation

Climate Change – how impacts affect fire and how fires contribute to Global Climate Change

Resilience to fire on the landscape

Are we treating the core issue – prevention – fuel treatment has to be part of the solution, fuels is the root cause

Consistent interpretation and implementation by all federal agencies (re: fed fire policy)

Heavy equipment and acceptance of state and local cooperators (by Feds)

Initial attack – use more non-traditional partners in our suppression – Ntl Guard,

Complexity that is growing and getting public understanding of that (public education and outreach)

Wildland fire and Rx fire for multiple benefits—all lands buy-in

Fire severity and effects in relation to insect and disease killed vegetation

More smokejumpers, less air tankers

Landscape condition

Integration of assessments already completed i.e. A&R

How do we respond collectively recognizing different objectives of land mgmt.
Any plan or strategy has to lead to better execution on the ground otherwise the strategy is useless, or worse

Acknowledge or accept that these are fire adapted systems and that this isn't 1911, it is 2011 with the amount of people that are in place
Established realistic targets and prioritization; there are more high risk areas and needs are far beyond the resources that are available
Is restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems our goal or not? Is it even possible in most areas?

Strive to create a seamless and collective response to WUI with Local, state and Feds
Safety training for volunteer fire firefighters so they can play a larger role

With budgets shrinking – federal agencies backing off structure protection and not helping as in the past
Volunteers can leave a job for a few hours but when wildland fire there is a need for several weeks.
Volunteers are being called on more frequently for longer assignments so they're should be job protection legislation similar to that which exists for National Guard callouts for national needs
Better support for Type 3 IMT so they can be more effective at stopping fires that go beyond IA

Communication of fire policy changes within the federal agencies, let alone with partners. This was done poorly last years and we're not even close to everyone having a common understanding
Keep it simple—complicated means it will just sit on a shelf

Integrated resource mgmt and fire needs to be part of that
Solve the real problem overstocked forests
Rehab of lands after the fires – not many funds available – protect those lands
Need buy-in across all government levels

Flexible enough to deal with new science
Social component – acceptance, impacts

Diminished capacity to address drivers (re: *True Costs of Wildfire*) of fire, as well as management actions during the season
Need clear preseason agreements as to how we will collective "manage" fires so there's no surprise
Aligning various missions between agencies and governance levels to identify workable strategies that address the drivers rather than continue to build tension between fed, state, and local partners
Provide a clear understanding of options and approvals
Develop partnerships with non land ownership entities eg. County commissions

Range fires – invasives & woody encroachment

Truly, national one size does not fit all

When not in engaged in fire response – we need proactive efforts, prevention
Implementable and accountable and monitoring

Different interpretations of risk between the different agencies – a certain amount of tension between agencies regarding trust

Single most effective thing the strategy needs is that we need a cohesive vegetation mgmt and ecosystems they need to be managed for the integrated nature of mgmt they are not just fuels
We need environmental assessment process relief for mgmt of fed lands, currently too costly and takes too long

Social license – we have the license to manage the lands – all the polling data shows there is support for managing the lands; the small minority that is deflecting fed land mgmt needs to be required too

Re-enforce that this is integrated natural resource/forest mgmt problem– not just fire

Build capacity to do the prevention–fuels treatment work, CWPP, etc.

Interagency cooperation still needs more work – there is still a lot of turf being fought over

Need to have an industry to turn the biomass into a valued product since we will not have enough appropriate money.

Question 2: What questions should the Cohesive Strategy consider to identify priority values, attributes, and other concerns?

Human values blending with ecological values and how they affect our decision making processes and developing a framework that allows these different values to work in a common direction

Flexibility in recognition of value differences

Public and firefighter safety

Trust—policy won't work at all governance levels without trust

What values should we focus on in communicating with the public, what is going to resonate?

Not just about hazardous fuels – community values

We are writing this for people – what are the community values and why we take the actions we take.

Tension exists between safely fighting the fire and aggressively fighting fire.

Integrated cross-boundary resource management at the landscape scale that uses products to offset costs

Wilderness areas are still about values

Almost all volunteer firefighters have other jobs that pay their bills and feed their families. We need to value and respect their contribution by not overtaxing any individual

Safety value and understanding risk mgmt

Community values in regards to suppression and in land mgmt

Clarify federal responsibility on state and private lands—is there one?

Safety – lives, public and firefighters. Structures will be destroyed by fire and rebuilt by the owners in the same location; no firefighters should lose their life defending a structure

Prevention and public education with associated funding

Tradeoffs between values – we don't articulate that tension and conflict between values resources, life and property and the ability to communicate this. This needs to be the core of this strategy

What is the fed responsibility with state and private land; what should fed govt cover in terms of financial responsibility; how does this vary by size of community? Should we have a different policy discussion about who pays and when?

Values are going to differ regionally, by land ownership, stakeholder, i.e. commodity production is a high value, often adjacent to land where non-commodity values are the focus.

Value of water and water quality

Are we trying to do too much trying to address values at a national level? Life seems to be the only highest value we all agree on.

Different cultures, laws, statutes, need to drive value assessment at the local level—educate law makers!

Social, economic and environmental values – at the national level these are all part of the mix and there are tradeoffs in time and space

What's the commitment to maintain thriving, working forests?

Define a framework for bringing together disparate values which might include:

- Life a unifying value

- Community infrastructure, water systems, roads, utilities, etc

- Special interest values, cultural, historical, can't be replaced

- Private property value whether it is a home, timber, watershed

- We need to be clear in articulating the trade-offs

Trust – key value it must be built on and it doesn't exist adequately at this point

When assessing risk we have to define and incorporate local values and the trade-offs using decision-support systems; especially for Tribal and state trust responsibilities

Managing for multiple objectives on mega-fires and those are based on a variety of values

Issue of early decisions on fires many miles away that come back to impact adjacent landownership

Regional MACC's and national MACC's as resources are allocated to suppression.

Value and role of personal accountability

The value of tax payer expenditures

Should the values applied be placed based?

Are expensive homes valued more than low cost homes or municipal watersheds?

Set a context for values being used in the implementation because it will be different in Maine vs. NM

We need to be very careful in thinking about how this will be used in the political process

How do we talk to people about fire and climate change?

Potential for new markets to provide resources to achieve mutual goals—healthy forests, fire & climate change

Water supply vs structures – eg. Hayman fire tradeoffs

National level of values and Local level values—build on processes to incorporate the values to the decision-making processes

Important to look at the local values a way to help folks at the local level to weigh the trade-offs.

Concerns about building strategies from top down or bottom up; It boils down to personal values, i.e. air quality – prescribed fire, wildfire, etc this needs to be factored in.

Human safety

Ecosystem health, fire as an ecosystem process

Communication across agencies and governance levels

Recognize that one size doesn't fit all; this is the typical federal response

Political realities – if the strategy is to be successful must recognize those – life, safety

Health, safety, the economy are the priorities at the state and local level that drive policy discussions

The strategy needs to provide a framework for working through disparate values. It needs to be a system that helps build trust

Trust--with any value comes responsibility; those that assign value to something should be willing to pay to maintain that value.

What can be implemented given social license and public education?

Statutory level Organic Act, NFMA – Forest Plans congress needs to recognize the plans are a tool for incorporating values;

Question 3: What questions should the Cohesive Strategy consider in order to rate and incorporate risk? (Definition, Weights, Rankings/Priorities?)

Suppression, communities and natural systems all have an element of risk; all are different

What about risk to public support from policies that are difficult to understand or aren't common sense based?

Risks can be prioritized; life, human health, public infrastructure, private property, ecological

What about new risk or additional risk accrued by not taking actions today?

Safety is first priority; a common risk management process that can be applied at the local level

How people perceive risk is what they believe

Why do we risk the lives of firefighters to protect structures that are insured, or not valued enough by their owners to insure them? Accountability for risk starts with the property owner.

Life, safety, property, accountability of land owners

It should be acknowledged we can't eliminate risk; are we willing to accept the natural role of fire on the landscape?

Exposure to firefighters in relations to the values at risk

What are the risk elements?

What's the likelihood of damage?

What's the severity of consequences?

Avoid one size fits all

Make the process clear to everyone

Put some responsibility back on individual landowners depending on where they live

Need to include changes to risk resulting from climate change and population growth/WUI sprawl

Risk needs to address this in a very broad context – using the three domains

Tools to evaluate risk have come a long way but still have more work to be done. Decision support tools are excellent. Improve risk tools to help meaningful communication with the public

What models exist for each of the 3 domains?

Risk in the context of global socio-economic issues

Community – people don't understand risk related discussions

How will this effort link to state/regional risk assessments and processes, eg the westwide risk assessment?

Public and Firefighter safety is #1

Natural resource condition—risk is highly variable

Property and infrastructure values

Economic and community function

Doing nothing is not acceptable

Risk assessments should consider the hazard (fuel loading), the exposure (probability of fire), and the values at risk (physical, social, economic costs)

How risk is framed can dramatically affect the perception of risk

Trust – what puts trust at risk. Communication and lack of understanding trade-offs are critical to developing the trust. The further away from local level the trust declines

Transparency

Competency is vital

Individual risk must be accepted when people make decisions to build homes in risky locations

Question 4: What timeframes should the strategy look at?

5 years minimum, 10 years maximum

5 years, same as Farm Bill

5 years

5 years

Longer than 5 years

10-15 years

10 year detailed, 20 year long term

Look at another 10 years so it will increase the likelihood of surviving changes on administrations
Need to have a monitoring aspect every five years;

Not more than 10 years

10 years

Should not be greater than 10 years

20 years

At least 20 years

We need to look out further than a 20 year horizon; important from a climate change and population growth perspective

RPA program is a tool to look at long term

Whatever is Congressional intent

Question 5: How should it be informed by all those other efforts i.e. Forest Planning, CWPP's, state assessments, climate change strategies, etc.?

Allow the strategy to be a framework and clearly show how different plans tier to each other and thereby build the strategy

Be informed by and recognize the role and value of other plans efforts

The most critical focus is to tie into statewide assessments. These have also been mandated by Congress, contain the most up-to-date information, and take an "all lands" approach

The cohesive strategy should support state assessments

Accountability of landowners in relation to their decisions on defensible space; .i.e. regulations or an understanding that homes w/o adequate defensible space will not receive fire suppression services

CWPPS should be reflected as they represent local vision

How to incorporate state risk assessments in risk definition and prioritization

What's the right tension between prescriptiveness and flexibility that allows the greatest efficiency and effectiveness across highly diverse conditions?

CS should embrace statewide assessments because they are an all-lands approach

If the strategy is built broad enough it will naturally encompass all plans. If you try to incorporate all plans into the strategy, it will never get off the ground—keep it simple

CS should recognize and support state assessments required by the Farm Bill

How do these plans affect each other?

How do special interest groups/stakeholders involve themselves to provide input for components of the CS?

All of the above should be reviewed using representative samples—T&E species listings such as the sage grouse could also change priorities and wildfire response for specific areas.

This is an integrated forest resource management issue: State Assessments & Strategies are a critical tool for a comprehensive effort;

Incorporate this into the new Planning Rule

The Cohesive Strategy should re-enforce and strengthen the state assessments, forest plans and other planning efforts, like CWPP's DOI agencies, etc.

It needs to be sustainable – economic, social and environmental, it has to be balanced

Who is the strategy for; Governments, individuals, other organizations? It needs to be a shared responsibility.

Observation – we have too many plans out there – where do we want to be? Fewer plans more integrated.

Do we need legislative changes?

Question 6: All things considered—what is the single most significant issue that the Cohesive Strategy must address?

Trust among all governance levels responsible for the wildland fire protection

Relationships

Communication

Trust

Continuous learning

Key decisions should be made at the local level

Properly, decisively and with certainty, managing the resource first

Develop trust among all stakeholders that allow for consistent implementation and interpretation of the content at all levels

It's about connecting fire adapted ecosystems with fire-adapted communities

Prevention strategies along with long-term adequate funding

Unity of purpose from the local to the federal

Overall focus on fire policy, what are the objectives and how do we communicate them to all levels both internally and externally

We need to act like one government using the full range of authorities

How to roll the NFP from individual agencies into one overarching plan for all lands? The AK Fire Plan is a start in this direction.

Public and firefighter safety