

A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy



Communication Framework

for
A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy



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Web Links

- Wildland Fire Leadership Council (Reference: the Memorandum of Understanding for Wildland Fire Leadership Council)
- Wildland Fire Executive Council (Reference the charter for the Wildland Fire Executive Council)
- Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act of 2009
- A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy
- The Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act of 2009, Report to Congress
- The 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review
- Documents that comprised the National Fire Plan; as noted:
 - A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: A 10-Year Strategy;
 - Quadrennial Fire and Fuel Report (2006)
 - Quadrennial Fire Review (2009)
 - Mutual Expectations for Preparedness and Suppression in the Interface; A Call to Action; Wildland Fire Protection and Response in the United States, The Responsibilities, Authorities; and Roles of Federal, State, Local and Tribal Governments.



Purpose and Intent of this Document

The purpose of this document is to address the Tasking Memorandum (reference Appendix A) for the Cohesive Strategy Communication Workgroup (CS-CW) approved by the Wildland Fire Executive Council (WFEC) on September 2, 2011 which stated that:

In order to effectively implement the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy process (hereafter referred to as the Cohesive Strategy) the development of a unified communication guidance and direction document is critical.

The Communication Framework for A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is targeted for use by individuals, agencies, organizations, governmental bodies, and interested stakeholders to use as a roadmap for effective communication and collaboration activities related to the Cohesive Strategy.

The National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy is an all-lands policy that reaches across jurisdictional lines. Traditionally, organizations involved in wildland and structural fire work together as cohesive and collaborative partners, focused on the objectives at hand regardless of their home unit or organization. This guidance is intended to support, simplify and facilitate communication efforts while recognizing and respecting that each organization has its own unique protocol, information distribution methods and communication systems.

Communications among the many organizations involved in the Cohesive Strategy must be consistent, clear, continual, and encourage discussion and an exchange of ideas. This Communication Framework highlights goals, objectives, core principles, provides overarching messages, suggests a number of actions and products, and concludes with potential methods to evaluate success.

Effective communication is an on-going process. It is anticipated that while the Framework will endure, updates on the messages will be adapted to meet the current situation.

Elements of a National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy



Methodology

The WFEC Tasking designated an interagency communications group, with members from the Department of the Interior, USDA Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters and the International Association of Fire Chiefs to serve as the Cohesive Strategy Communications Workgroup. A WFEC member served as a liaison to the group providing guidance and assistance.

Initial group discussions focused on the best practices and procedures in communications and defined strategic and tactical outcomes. Subsequently, the group researched volumes of background material, reached out to WFEC members and the various committees involved in the Cohesive Strategy simulating mini listening sessions, gleaned lessons learned from documents addressing public perception and from existing national level communication plans which facilitated interagency and intergovernmental communications efforts.

Background information about the Cohesive Strategy is provided in Appendix B.



A National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy discusses the importance of engaging the public.

Goals, Objectives and Principles for the Communication Framework

Goals

As defined in the tasking, the Framework is designed to meet three overarching communication goals: Information, Organizational Communication and Collaboration, and Implementation. The intent of these goals is briefly outlined below.

- **Information:** To keep stakeholders, interested parties, and the public informed of progress in the development of the Cohesive Strategy.
- **Organizational Communication and Collaboration:** Facilitate development and implementation of organizational communication processes that enhance and sustain collaboration among stakeholders toward development and implementation of the Cohesive Strategy.
- **Implementation:** Provide management and oversight options for communication efforts during implementation of the Cohesive Strategy.

Objectives

The strategic communication objectives are focused on:

- Creating a climate where key audiences are thoroughly informed about the basic tenants of the Cohesive Strategy in order to be aware of the benefits and relevance to their program and;
- Providing stakeholders the opportunity to engage in ongoing dialogue in order to be included in the process to the maximum extent possible.

Principles

Such a climate will be created through commitment to the following core principles:

- Leaders at all levels will participate in communications efforts during all phases of the Cohesive Strategy.
- Participating individuals and organizations will utilize recommended best practices for communication and collaboration.
- Process transparency will serve as the “golden rule.”
- Aggressive distribution of information will be on-going.
- Meaningful and timely opportunities for stakeholder involvement will occur during all phases in order to sustain collaboration among individuals and organizations.
- Decision-making will be empowered by active participation of the diverse communities across the landscape of fire management.

Full success of this effort will only be accomplished through the combined efforts of leaders, subject-matter experts, and stakeholders. While the process must respect established roles and responsibilities for decision-making, it is imperative that the entire community of stakeholders be given a voice in the process.

To maintain consistent messaging and to ensure that stakeholders have equal opportunity to participate, communicators will be provided with the core principles of communication, overarching messages and a number of suggested actions and products that can be easily adapted to their unique communication environments. Long-term tactics are discussed under Implementation of the Communication Framework below.



Protecting structures

Roles and Responsibilities

Communication is the responsibility of every employee or individual involved. This responsibility extends beyond senior managers and officials, those designated to serve as official spokespeople, or subject matter experts who have been recognized as effective communicators. By virtue of association with the Cohesive Strategy, individuals will serve as ambassadors for the overall goals.

The following positions have critical roles and responsibilities:

- **WFLC Representatives and / or their designees:** Serve as key contacts for agency leadership, overseeing and coordinating communication, collaboration, and stakeholder activities within their respective agencies. WFLC members also serve as the decision-making body.
- **WFEC Representatives:** Provide advice for coordinated national-level wildland fire leadership, direction, and program oversight in support of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council.
- **Agency or Organization Communication Points of Contact:** Typically, this will be an individual(s) in External Affairs, Public Affairs or a group's Communication Director. It is critical that there be designated point(s) of contact to facilitate organizational specific communications, serve as communication consultants for designated spokespersons for the Cohesive Strategy, and to coordinate with senior level officials within the home organization about progress in the communications and collaboration arena. (For example: tracking presentations and delivery to key audiences.) Organizational Point of Contacts, in accordance with their specific guidelines will assist and facilitate designated spokesperson along with informing key audiences, including media and elected officials as appropriate.
- **Designated spokesperson(s):** Credible spokespersons will be chosen by respective agencies, organizations, and groups and these individuals should be well versed in the Cohesive Strategy, the principles of wildland and structural fire, communication strategies and techniques, and the overriding need for safety for firefighters, communities and the public at large.
- **Participants in the Cohesive Strategy Process:** Regardless of their individual or group role, all participants in the CS process are established leaders known for their expertise and commitment to the CS. As such, participants are requested to assist in the cohesive communications effort by recognizing and supporting that communications is the responsibility of all individuals locally, regionally and nationally.

As the Cohesive Strategy continues to evolve it is anticipated that the will become a part of our daily conversations.

Messages

The cornerstone of any communication effort is a set of consistent, compelling messages for use in all proactive and reactive communication. Following are the overarching messages for the Cohesive Strategy. These messages are designed to meet the following criteria:

- **Coincide with and not contradict agency, interagency, intergovernmental, or organization’s messages.** It is critical that the communities involved in the Cohesive Strategy speak with one voice. The CS messages are designed to complement existing messages.
- **Allow for customization.** These messages are a guide, not a script. Users are encouraged to provide additional, local detail to ensure the messages touch audiences in a relevant, credible way.

Messages are not intended to be a script, but are to serve as a guide for communicators to focus on the key themes of the Cohesive Strategy. Messages are general concepts that can be incorporated into discussions, print materials, and other resources used in communication, education, information and collaborative discussions.

Supporting points provide detail for the messages and enable individuals to further explain the identified topic and reach audiences on a personal level.

- **Include a call to action.** In addition to educating, messages should motivate the audiences to act on what they have learned.
- **Answer the questions what, why, and how.** Categorizing messages in this way will help users recall the messages during appropriate situations. The messages below are presented in the traditional format of a Key Message followed by Supporting Points.

- o Spokespeople are reminded to use clear text and language and to explain the Cohesive Strategy using the “five w’s and the h” of journalism (who, what, when, where, why and how), with particular emphasis on the “why” and the “how” for this project. Tell the story of the Cohesive Strategy, of what’s happening. We do not need to define everything that is going on.



Firefighters talk to a home owner in the wildland urban interface on a fire in Idaho. Credit: Kari Greer, NIFC.

Messages for the National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy

What is the Cohesive Strategy?

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is an ongoing effort by federal, tribal, state and local governments and non-government organizations to address growing wildfire challenges in the United States.



Firefighters ignite a prescribed fire near homes near the Petit Manann National Wildlife Refuge in Maine. Credit: FWS.

Wildfire is a dynamic process.

Fire seasons, in general, are becoming longer, with larger wildfires that are more difficult to put out. The Cohesive Strategy represents the kind of creative thinking and cooperation that will be needed to meet the challenges of a new kind of fire season. The Strategy promotes safely and effectively extinguishing fire, when needed; using fire where allowable; managing natural resources; and as a nation, living with wildland fire. Wildland fire must be managed across appropriate fire landscapes, which are often fragmented into many land ownerships and political jurisdictions. An “all-lands” approach is needed and the Cohesive Strategy addresses wildland fire challenges by restoring fire-resilient landscapes.

The Cohesive Strategy is about more than fire suppression.

Wildfire is more than a fire management and operations problem, it is a larger land management and societal issue. To achieve workable solutions, a cohesive strategy must ensure the human dimension is accorded equal weight with the physical and ecological science dimensions of wildfire. The Cohesive Strategy emphasizes restoring resilient landscapes and promoting fire-adapted communities and encourages private landowners and communities to assume responsibilities for making their properties fire-resistant.

No one strategy can solve all the problems faced by the nation's fire community.

The Cohesive Strategy will provide a common basis for thoughtfully approaching the complexities of wildland fire in the United States and determining the best course of action. A key to a cohesive strategy is its inclusiveness – its ability to accommodate the wide diversity of the United States, recognizing a 'one-size-fits-all' approach does not work across the Nation. It is better to have one cohesive strategy developed with the participation of state and local fire organizations, tribes and the federal fire agencies rather than different strategies from different organizations. The Cohesive Strategy will build on past efforts to direct wildland fire management in the United States.

The Cohesive Strategy relies on people working together.

A workable strategy must include and define the varying roles and responsibilities of fire managers at all levels and determine how those levels blend and work together. Wildland fighting agencies need to cooperate and be respectful of each others' process to work collaboratively for the good of all. A national Cohesive Strategy must recognize the differences and tensions that exist among partners and stakeholders and why those differences exist. Success depends on stronger relationships. An effective cohesive strategy must guide all organizations to recognize and accept each others' management differences and promote a cohesive response to the wildfire management challenges across all jurisdictions.

The Cohesive Strategy seeks to reflect the values and concerns of the public and all governments.

The problems created by wildland fires affect all lands and all levels of government. Therefore, the solutions must be a collective, shared and strategic. The Cohesive Strategy must engage the public, a 'from-the-ground-up' effort. Wildland fire management officials, the public and all levels of government will be actively involved. Solutions will come from all stakeholders, including the legislative branch of the United States government. The strategy is designed to better align national level decision-making with regional and local interests.

Effective communication is an on-going process. It is anticipated that as Phase II and Phase III unfold the Communication Framework is expected to adapt and expand to accommodate new or revised messages, themes and tactics.

Audiences

The overriding need for safety—for firefighters, communities and the public at large—results in a vast potential stakeholder audience. With regard to this project, the traditional breakdown between internal and external audiences is marginal.

The internal audiences (as defined by the respective groups) are critical, as the internal participants will serve as primary messengers. Most stakeholders for this project consist of organizations, whether they are non-government or representing local, state, tribal, or federal government agencies. These internal stakeholders often have widely different organizational focus and individual professional roles and responsibilities. The size of this stakeholder population means that the intensity of participation will vary considerably based on roles in their respective formal organizations.

While media and elected officials may rightly be considered external audiences, members of the public are identified as important stakeholders. Consequently, interested citizens or citizen groups will be provided an appropriate opportunity to participate. Participating agencies and organizations are encouraged to manage media contacts and to inform elected officials in accordance with individual agency protocol and procedures.

Audiences are those people, groups, organizations, agencies or other levels of government who affect, are affected by, or have a relationship to the issue at hand. Knowing and understanding that relationship will help in customizing messages and strategies for reaching each audience.



Information Officers and Fire managers conduct a community information session. Credit: NIFC, Kari Greer.

This initiative considers both internal and external audiences, as well as the people who influence those audiences. Audiences for the Cohesive Strategy are defined as follows:

- Local, state, tribal, and federal government agencies.

Examples: Other cabinet agencies, State and municipal governments

- Nongovernmental organizations and constituent groups.

Examples: Associations, conservation groups, professional forestry and natural resources organizations, landowner organizations and news media (national, state, local, trade, etc)

- Elected officials.

Examples: Congressional, State and Municipal

- Citizens from communities across the nation.

- Academia

Examples: Resource Centers, Universities and Colleges



For the partners involved in the crafting of the Cohesive Strategy it is critical that messaging to their members and employees is direct and effective because to have consistent communication with external audiences, those involved in the Cohesive Strategy must be sure to communicate effectively with the internal audiences. At the same time it must be recognized that several of the internal groups have peers that are external and should not be overlooked – the external distribution of information should not be limited to the elective officials and the citizens but to others we work with.

Lighting a prescribed burn at dusk, Wind Cave National Monument. Credit: NPS, Mike Johnson.

Collaboration Tips and Resources

Collaborative participation must be as inclusive and equitable as possible. In addition to resources from the participating agencies, organizations and groups, there are multiple resources about effectively collaborating with partners.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, <http://www.iap2.org/> see practitioner tools) offers a wealth of suggestions for effective collaboration with stakeholders. One way to view collaboration may be to view the following participatory steps:

- **Inform:** Receives objective information to assist in understanding the problem and alternatives.
- **Consult:** Contributes ideas and comments.
- **Involve:** Participates at key times throughout the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently heard and understood.
- **Collaborate:** Participation in every aspect of the process, including development of alternatives and identification of the preferred alternative.
- **Empower:** Participation in the final decision



The steps noted above are further defined as “Spectrum of Public Participation” and is a suggested method to organize a strategy to accommodate the diverse stakeholders interested in this project.

“Branding” the Cohesive Strategy

The Cohesive Strategy will benefit from communications efforts that exhibit a unifying set of messages, symbols, and overall “look and feel.” This will allow the diverse Cohesive Strategy messengers and stakeholders (particularly agencies and organizations) to speak with a unified voice, supported by consistent products and materials (templates, logo, color scheme, slogan, etc.) The Cohesive Strategy is a concept and as such it is suggested that graphic branding be considered and samples provided in a communications toolbox.

Tactical Tools

Recognizing and respecting that each organization has its own unique protocol and information distribution methods, the Communication Framework can serve as a model for integrating Cohesive Strategy messages and priorities within existing communications systems

The following tactical tools are recommended for any communications professional, public affairs officer, organizations as a whole or any appropriate messenger to use when communicating about wildland fire in their daily work. They are divided into “internal” and “external” categories, but many of the tools may be appropriate for both. While some items are merely recommended tactics, a number of these items will be produced and compiled into a Cohesive Strategy Communications Toolkit to offer template materials and tools that are easy to use and customize while providing a consistent national messaging platform.

INTERNAL AUDIENCES

Resources and Collaterals

- Briefing papers
- Fact sheets
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Key messages and Message Map
- Key congressional contacts
- “Elevator speech”
- PowerPoint presentation template/slides
- Detailed list of stakeholders by organization
- Sample tweets (Twitter)
- Sample Facebook posts

Outreach

- E-mail blasts
- Podcasts
- Webcast for communicators to introduce collateral tools
- Legislative Outreach
- Local elected official outreach
- Chief’s Chat – Forest Service Chief video
- Establish a “My Fire Community Cohesive Strategy” working group neighborhood.
- Articles & reports submitted to agency publications (internal/external; federal, state, tribal, local)
- Articles/blurbs written for field-level awareness published in applicable publications and electronic mediums.

EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

Media Relations, Resources and Events

- Webcast press conference
- Face-to-face briefings of key officials
- News releases
- Podcasts
- One-pager on key points of Cohesive Strategy
- Presentations based on template

Social Media and Public Relations

- Regular (weekly) Twitter/Facebook posts around stakeholder channels
- Coordination with wildfire prevention/awareness weeks/months throughout calendar year



Smoke billows on the horizon. Credit:
USDA FS, Manti LaSalle.

Implementation Strategy

For sustainability of the Cohesive Strategy over time, current communication operating procedures in place within all agencies and organizations will be utilized to provide information to employees and members. Federal and state agencies and other collaborators are expected to create and implement their own communication plans to disseminate Cohesive Strategy information (see Roles and Responsibilities section). To the extent possible, communication with stakeholders will be through established stakeholder organizations' sources and channels.

Appendix E offers a list of identified communications contacts at various agencies and organizations that are in a position to effectively broadcast meaningful Cohesive Strategy conversations. While this list is not exhaustive, it is meant to serve as a foundational network of messengers that can reach out through various groups and channels, creating a ripple effect and extending the reach of this framework.

A more formal group of communication professionals (from a cross-section of appropriate agencies, organizations and groups) is needed to work on communications during Phase II and Phase III of the Cohesive Strategy. Key messages from Phase II and Phase III products will need to be developed and disseminated. The group will support and facilitate communication originated by stakeholders with communication tools, information, and technical assistance. It will work with the three regional

committees who will be responsible for their own outreach to their stakeholders within their regions. This level of technical assistance will be important to support stakeholder organization communication efforts.



Healthy landscapes can decrease the fire risk to communities. Credit: NIFC, Kari Greer.

Conclusion

The Cohesive Strategy Communication Workgroup was created by the Wildland Fire Executive Council (WFEC) on September 2, 2011. The purpose of the workgroup is expressed by the following quotation from the tasking memorandum:

In order to effectively implement the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy process (hereafter referred to as the Cohesive Strategy) the development of a unified communication guidance and direction document is critical.

With that direction this framework was created to support the Cohesive Strategy process with a focus on the conclusion of Phase II and the implementation of Phase III. The framework acts as a guide, to support three overarching communication outcomes: Information dissemination, Organizational Communication and Collaboration, and Implementation. The guiding principle of the communication framework approach is that different stakeholder groups can best communicate about the Cohesive Strategy to their own constituents using their own established communication systems. Leveraging this is key to successfully communicating the Cohesive Strategy to the impacted stakeholders, both external and internal.

Communications and the directions set by this document is a critical part of the Cohesive Strategy efforts – without it there will not be an understanding or buy in by the people who fund these efforts, support these efforts, implement these efforts or are the ultimate customer of these efforts, the citizens of the United State of America.



Fire managers and personnel collaborate to discuss the best strategies. Credit: NIFC

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Wildland Fire Executive Council Tasking Memorandum dated September 2, 2011, reference Cohesive Strategy Communication Workgroup

Appendix B: Background on A National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy

Appendix C: Message Map

Appendix D: Using the Message Map

Appendix E: Points of Contact

Appendix A: Tasking Memorandum - Cohesive Strategy Communication Working Group



TASKING MEMORANDUM

September 2, 2011

Subject: Cohesive Strategy Communication Workgroup (CS-CW)

Background:

In order to effectively implement the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy process (hereafter referred to as the Cohesive Strategy) the development of a unified communication guidance and direction document is critical.

On July 15, 2011 the Wildland Fire Executive Council (WFEC) recognized this need and accepted a proposal to develop a cohesive communication document which will complement the overall Cohesive Strategy process. The Lead Coordinator and group members are listed below.

Tasking:

The WFEC is requesting that an interagency communications group, with members from the Department of the Interior, US Forest Service, and state and local government serve as the Cohesive Strategy Communications Workgroup. The group comes together and functions as a group of peers.

Cohesive Strategy Communication Workgroup (CS-CW) Members:

- Roberta D'Amico, Lead Coordinator, Department of the Interior (NPS)
- Judith Downing, US Forest Service (FS)
- Sarah McCreary, National Association of State Foresters (NASF)
- Shawn Stokes, International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- WFEC Liaison: Mary Jacobs, Assistant City Manager, Sierra Vista, AZ National League of Cities.

Outcome / Deliverable:

The group is tasked with developing a communication framework which will serve as communication guidance and direction for agencies, organizations, individuals and interested stakeholders involved in the Cohesive Strategy communications effort. The document will address three critical communication goals.

1. Keeping stakeholders, interested parties, and the public informed of progress in the development of the Cohesive Strategy. (Information)
2. Developing and implementing organizational communication processes that enhance and sustain collaboration among stakeholders toward development and implementation of the Cohesive Strategy. (Organizational Communication and Collaboration)

3. Future Implementation, management and oversight options for communication efforts. (Implementation)

Information

- Establish the overarching message/themes for collective use.
- Determine various audiences, prioritize information needs for identified audiences, and establish a minimum level of success for outreach and engagement activities for each audience while seeking maximum contact.
- Provide various methods and mediums to effectively communicate the messages.
- Develop practices, policies and other key procedural aspects of the unified Cohesive Strategy communication effort.
- Identify a specific time table indicating milestones, due dates and action items and present to WFEC no later than 4 weeks after the initial meeting of the CS-CW.
- Recommend documentation and evaluation methods for all users.

Organizational Communication and Collaboration

- Create and maintain an active exchange of ideas and information among stakeholders leading to shared ideas and understandings contributing to the Cohesive Strategy.
- Disseminate the results of collaborative efforts back to stakeholders and other interested parties. For example, disseminate the themes resulting from content analysis of the focus groups and related processes used in Phase 2.
- Listen to stakeholder ideas through continuation of the focus groups used in Phase 2 or other improved processes as appropriate. Inform Cohesive Strategy Framers of the emerging ideas and issues identified by these processes.
- Encourage energetic and constructive conversations and exchanges about the Cohesive Strategy among stakeholders and improve the capacity of communication networks linking stakeholder groups and other interested parties. This will involve establishing bridges and liaisons between different stakeholder networks and motivating exchanges across boundaries among stakeholder groups and interests.

Implementation

- Recommend to the WFEC future implementation, management and oversight options for the final communications strategy for the duration of the plan, up to and including the initial five years following adoption of Phase 3 of the Cohesive Strategy to ensure continued input, involvement and relevance nationwide.
- Establish designated point of contacts that will facilitate knowledge and implementation practices established in the of the communication framework, i.e. guidance and direction.

Operating, Meeting and Reporting Procedures for the CS-CW

- The committee reports directly to WFEC and the Lead Coordinator will organize and facilitate response to WFEC.
- The Lead Coordinator or a designated member will represent the committee and provide a progress report at the bi-weekly WFEC meetings until the task is completed.
- The CS-CW shall meet as necessary to conduct business.

- Reports will be submitted to WFEC and will be public documents available to the public.

Roles and Responsibilities:

CS-CW Lead Coordinator:

- Ensures interagency and collaborative process.
- Ensures committee completes task on established timeline.
- Communicate progress and status to WFEC on a regular basis.
- Identify and troubleshoot emerging issues.
- Develop and implement interim methods of communicating with various committees and subcommittees in order to keep groups positively engaged in the process.

Team Members:

- Address tasking using their expertise and professional judgment.
- Participate in CS-CW telephonic meetings at a 90% participation rate.
- Complete or facilitate tasks as assigned.
- Communicate progress and status to Lead Coordinator on a regular basis.

Participants in the Cohesive Strategy Process:

- Regardless of their individual or group role, all participants in the CS process are established leaders known for their expertise and commitment to the CS process. As such, participants are requested to assist in the cohesive communications effort by recognizing and supporting that communications is the responsibility of all individuals locally, regionally and nationally.
- Recognize and respect diverse organizational missions, cultures, and opinions.
- Facilitate effective working relationships within and outside of the CS-CW in order to meet the defined task.

Timeline:

- Status reports will be provided to WFEC at their bi-weekly meetings.
- Final draft document will be shared with WFEC members prior to the presentation of the final document. A working draft will be ready for review and at the full WFLC meeting in November 2011, requiring a draft to WFEC at the October 2011 meeting.
- Final document is due on December 9, 2011.

Approval:

This tasking is in effect on the date of approval (noted above) by the Designated Federal Official. This task shall sunset by January 6, 2012.

Contact Information:

- Roberta D'Amico, Email: roberta_damico@nps.gov
- Judith Downing, Email: jldowning@fs.fed.us
- Sarah McCreary, Email: smccreary@stateforesters.org
- Shawn Stokes, Email: sstokes@iafc.org
- Mary Jacobs, Email: mary.jacobs@sierravistaaz.gov

Appendix B: Background on A National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy

In recognition of the variety of backgrounds and knowledge levels by the readers of this Framework, this section is intended to provide a basic overview of the Cohesive Strategy. Readers are encouraged to cross-reference the foundational documents listed via the Appendixes and web-based links referenced throughout this document along with supplemental materials and current project information prior to embarking on activities intended to reach a broader audience.

The Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement (FLAME) Act was passed on October 29, 2009. It required the Secretaries of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to submit to Congress a report that contains a “cohesive wildfire management strategy” consistent with the recommendations described in recent reports of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) by November of 2010.

Several principles guided development of the Cohesive Strategy.

- The National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy will be based on the best available science and identify different ways to ensure resilient landscapes, promote fire-adapted communities, and more effectively respond to wildfires.
- Development of the National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy will build on existing analyses, strategies, and reports as well as incorporate new scientific information and perspectives.
- Representatives of local, state, regional, federal, and tribal governments with roles and responsibilities in wildfire management will work together to develop the Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy through the Wildland Fire Leadership Council. To succeed, the Cohesive Strategy must be a united, coordinated effort.

The Cohesive Strategy is defined by three Phases. This phased approach allows stakeholders to both systematically and thoroughly develop a dynamic approach to planning for, responding to, and recovering from a wildland fire incident. The three phases include:

Phase I: National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

Phase II: Development of Regional Strategies and Assessments

Phase III: National Trade-Off Analysis and Execution

Phase I: National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

In response to the request from Congress, two separate complimentary documents were developed collaboratively in 2010. Together, these two reports respond to Phase I and were completed in 2010.

A National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy presents a collaborative approach to a national strategy and provides a foundation from which to build a local and regional actions and direction. This report outlines a path toward development of a national cohesive wildland fire management strategy that will provide a foundation from which to build local and regional actions and direction. Additionally, it notes that addressing wildfire is not simply a fire management, fire operations or wildland-urban interface problem — it is a larger, more complex land management and societal issue. The Strategy presents a vision for the next century, which is to:

Safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a nation, live with wildland fire.

The Federal Land Assistance, Management Act of 2009 Report to Congress, the companion document addresses the seven specific elements requested by Congress in the FLAME Act. The seven areas that were addressed are:

4. Identification of the most cost-effective means for allocating fire management budget resources
5. Reinvestment in non-fire programs by the two Secretaries
6. Employing appropriate management response to wildfires
7. Assessing the level of risk to communities
8. Allocation of hazardous fuels reduction funds
9. Assessing the impacts of climate change on the frequency and severity of wildfire, and,
10. Studying the effects of invasive species on wildfire risk

Both reports identify three primary factors which present the greatest challenges and opportunities for making a positive difference in addressing the wildland fire problems to achieve the vision noted above. They are:

Restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes. The strategy must recognize the current lack of ecosystem health and variability of this issue from geographic area to geographic area. Because landscape conditions and needs vary depending on local climate and fuel conditions, among other elements, the strategy will address landscapes on a regional and sub-regional scale.

Creating fire-adapted communities. The strategy will offer options and opportunities to engage communities and work with them to become more resistant to wildfire threats.

Responding to Wildfires. This element will consider the full spectrum of fire management activities and will recognize the differences in missions among local, state, tribal and federal agencies. The strategy will offer collaboratively developed methodologies to move forward.

Phase II: Development of Regional Strategies and Assessments

Regional strategies will be developed and analyzed using a collaborative process that cycle between analysis and engagement with stakeholders. The process will include the following steps:

- a. WFEC identifies the national science/analysis team;
- b. WFEC adopts guidance for Regional Strategy Committees;
- c. Regional Strategy Committees are identified and will develop an understanding of the governance/oversight roles.
- d. Each Regional Strategy Committee will include representatives identified and selected by WFEC;
- e. Regional analytical teams are identified.
- f. Timeframes for the following four steps will be determined by the Regional Strategy Committees:
 - i. Define the analysis process. This will include identifying the information available; the analytical tools that can be employed; and who is available to engage in the analysis.
 - ii. Define and analyze initial alternatives. This will involve describing an initial set of broad alternatives, including understanding the goals of each alternative, the components that are needed for the analysis of each alternative and the bounds of the analysis and problem to be addressed. Analysis of these alternatives will help test the analytical methods, and ultimately provide information that will be needed by the regional technical and stakeholder groups to help refine specific regional alternatives.
 - iii. Collaboratively identify the regional alternatives. Relying on local and regional knowledge and insights, describe a small set of regional alternatives. This exercise draws from the understanding gained from analysis of the initial alternatives. These alternatives would be shared with and shaped by regional stakeholders.
 - iv. Analyze the regional alternatives and share the results with stakeholders. Update content based on regional feedback.
- g. Submit results of the regional analyses for national analysis.

Phase III: National Trade-Off Analysis and Execution

During Phase III, the following steps will occur:

1. Conduct the national analysis. Develop a draft national summary of the regional alternatives. The summary will include a description of the decision space available, a description of the activities and priorities associated with the regional alternatives, and a description of the tradeoffs associated among the alternatives.
2. Share the results of the national results and summarization with stakeholders.
3. Update and conclude the analysis based on feedback from the stakeholders.
4. Establish a five-year review cycle to provide updates to Congress.

Overall Governance of the Cohesive Strategy

The Secretaries of USDA and DOI of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) ultimately govern the development and implementation of the Cohesive Strategy; Congress exercises oversight. The Secretaries delegated the responsibility of overseeing development of the Cohesive Strategy to the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC). WFLC is an intergovernmental council of federal, state, tribal, county, local and municipal government officials convened by the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture and Homeland Security to ensure consistent implementation of wildland fire policies, goals and management activities. WFLC will remain as the body with oversight and decision-making authority through all phases of the cohesive strategy process.

NATIONAL COHESIVE WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

THE COHESIVE STRATEGY REFLECTS THE VALUES AND CONCERNS OF THE PUBLIC AND ALL GOVERNMENTS.

The problems created by wildland fire affect all lands and all levels of government.

An effective strategy must be a “ground-up” effort, with wildland fire management personnel, the public and all levels of government actively involved.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. A national strategy provides a common basis for determining the best course of action.

The Cohesive Strategy is designed to better align national level decision-making with regional and local interests.

THE COHESIVE STRATEGY RELIES ON PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER.

Wildland firefighting agencies need to cooperate and be respectful of each others’ process to work collaboratively for the good of all.

A national strategy must recognize the differences and tensions that exist among partners and stakeholders and why those differences exist.

An effective strategy guides all organizations to recognize and accept each others’ management differences and promote a cohesive response across all jurisdictions.



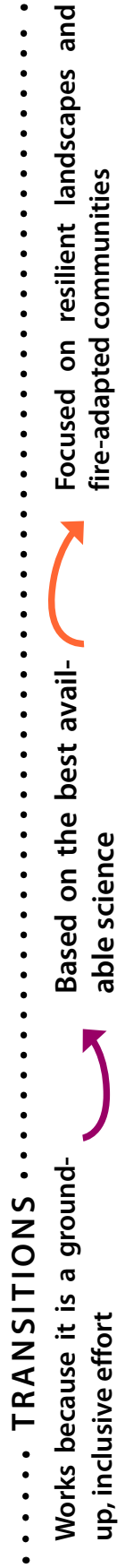
THE COHESIVE STRATEGY IS ABOUT MORE THAN FIRE SUPPRESSION.

WILDFIRE IS A DYNAMIC PROCESS.

Today’s longer fire seasons produce larger wildfires that are more difficult to put out. The Cohesive Strategy represents the creative thinking and cooperation needed to meet the challenges of a new kind of fire season.

Fire-adapted landscapes can become out of balance and vulnerable to fire, insects, and climate change. The Cohesive Strategy addresses these challenges by restoring fire-resilient landscapes.

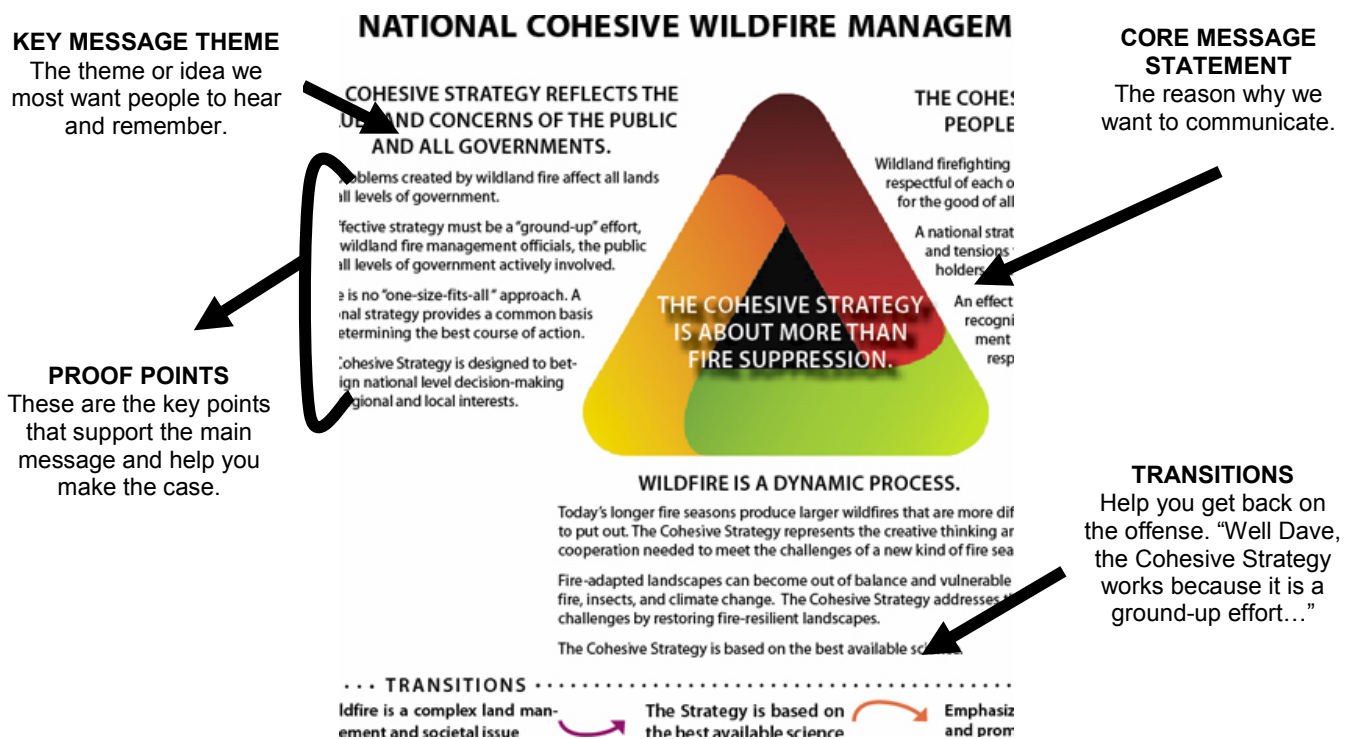
The Cohesive Strategy is based on the best available science.



Using the Message Map

The most important part of any communications project is making sure every party to it is saying the same thing. With so many stakeholders and potential messengers in the wildland fire community, common messages are critical. The MESSAGE MAP is a message-structuring tool that recognizes the complexity of communication in our crowded communications environment. Rather than a one-sentence “message” that leaves you sounding and feeling like a broken record, a triangle sets up three consistent key message themes—lenses that focus attention on specific themes—and provides supporting points to build your case. Transitions bridge the themes and provide a quick way to get back on message when needed.

The three parts of the triangle essentially follow a progression; a description of our core message statement in the center, with a directed progression of the key message themes and their proof points. The map does not include every single statement that every single messenger is ever going to say. It does provide an exclusive list of the key message themes that every messenger needs to be using, and the key support points s/he needs to make on the themes’ behalf. Finally, along the bottom are transition lines. These can help you get back on message when you get off track or when it is hard to get people’s attention in the first place.



Not every situation or question requires equal use of all the sides of the triangle, but it is important that you know and understand them all, and that as communicators we are saying the same messages with enough clarity and frequency. While some re-enforcing points of the message will change from audience to audience—based on the level of public policy knowledge, for example—the general themes and message points will stay the same, no matter what.

When you have a message opportunity—whether a speech, dinner party, or media interview—you need to decide on your communication goal and anticipate the best pro-active message and which proof points will best help establish the validity of your message.

Using the Message Map

Here are three important steps:

- (1) Identify your audience** – Consider what message they are likely to respond best to and what they might have questions about or take issue with.
- (2) Identify your purpose** – Think of why you are communicating in the first place. What do you want people to leave the room thinking or ready to do?
- (3) Identify your Message** – Think of which statements on the map will be most persuasive to your audience.

Then anticipate some tough or tricky questions that might get you off track. Practice using transitions to help you steer the conversation back to your message backed up by the proof points.

This advance preparation with the map is even more necessary if you are going to appear on a broadcast medium like radio or television. In a format where the final edited version of what you say could be less than 30 seconds you must keep it simple and make a few key points over and over again. Even a 10-minute phone interview with a newspaper reporter might result in one quote showing up in print. We must fight the urge to cover the whole map in one sitting because the time available to make the point is so limited and targeting the message to the audience is so important.

Appendix E: Points of Contact

Wildland Fire Leadership Council Organization	Wildland Fire Executive Council (Connect to WFLC organization)	Point of Contact(s), Email and Phone Number
USDA: Undersecretary and Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment	USDA FS Director, Fire and Aviation Management	TBD
Chief, USFS	USDA FS Director, Fire and Aviation Management	TBD
DOI: Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget	Director, DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination	TBD
DOI Bureau Director, BIA	Director, DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination	TBD
DOI Bureau Director, BLM	Director, DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination	TBD
DOI Bureau Director, FWS	Director, DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination	TBD
DOI Bureau Director, NPS	Director, DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination	TBD
DOI Bureau Director, USGS	Director, DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination	TBD
DHS – Administrator of the US Fire Administration	US Fire Administration	TBD
National Governors’ Association	National Governors’ Association	TBD
Western Governors’ Association	National Governors’ Association	TBD
Intertribal Timber Council	Intertribal Timber Council	TBD
National Association of Counties	National Association of Counties	TBD
National League of Cities	National League of Cities	TBD
I-Chiefs Wildland Fire Policy Committee	IAFC Liaison to the Wildland Fire Policy Committee	TBD
NASF Fire committee	NASF Forest Fire Protection Committee	TBD
	National Wildfire Coordinating Group	TBD

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