

Appendix 1 Review of Cohesive Strategy Phases

The Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act of 2009 (FLAME Act) served as a catalyst for bringing fire leadership at all levels together to develop a new approach for managing wildland fire. Wildland fire leaders at all levels recognized the need for a cohesive approach to address the issues raised in the FLAME Act as well as other challenges. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) had suggested the need for tradeoff analyses at the national level. The National Fire Plan had been successful in addressing many wildland fire issues but lacked the “all lands” and cohesive approach needed to address the spectrum of wildland fire issues facing the nation. The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy) was an outgrowth of all these issues pressing leaders at all levels. The Cohesive Strategy is a national effort engaging Federal, state, local and Tribal governments and non-governmental organizations in a collaborative effort to address growing wildfire problems in the United States.

The intent of the Cohesive Strategy is to provide clear guidance on roles and responsibilities for all parties, emphasizing shared responsibility among stakeholders and partners in the wildland fire community. The Cohesive Strategy is defined by three phases:

- **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

The collaborative efforts of Phase I resulted in a vision for the Cohesive Strategy:

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

Three primary areas of challenge and opportunity were identified as goals:

- **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 considers the full spectrum of fire management activities and recognizes the differences in missions among local, state, tribal and Federal agencies. The strategy offers collaboratively developed methodologies to move forward.

Guiding Principles and Core Values emerged from the collaboration to move forward through all phases. These principles and values address risk related issues, community and individual responsibilities, safety concerns, as well as ecological, economic and social issues.

Phase I also established Regional Strategy Committees to identify regional strategies and activities that address social and environmental values, risks and investments and identify barriers to the efficiency and effectiveness of activities. Phase I also committed to comparative risk assessments that inform regional and national strategies, activities, and tradeoff analyses. The Phase I comparative risk analysis described possible approaches and methodologies for analytical processes of Phase II and III.

Phase II

In Phase II, Regional Strategy Committees (RSCs) were brought together to identify regional challenges, improve communication among partners, and identify proposed strategies and opportunities for improvement. Regional and local stakeholders were involved. Representatives of federal, state, local, and tribal governments, non-governmental organizations and other interested parties were brought together to describe unique regional problems and to identify current and future steps that can be taken—together—to meet the goals of the three focus areas of the Cohesive Strategy. As part of the assessments, the RSCs identified regional values and objectives.

Each RSC articulated value statements, adopted the national goals as their own and crafted a suite of objectives and actions to support each goal. Two keys were identified as essential to the Cohesive Strategy's success; first, is the commitment to collaborate and second is the requirement for a comprehensive communication and implementation strategy, which provides information and seeks feedback from all stakeholders throughout the process. During Phases I and II, the collaboration approach resulted in potential solutions for more efficient and effective wildland fire management across the United States in the future. Each region prepared a report that was summarized in a national report.

The National Science and Analysis Team (NSAT) was charged with three primary tasks: 1) Assemble credible scientific information, data, and preexisting models that can be used by all teams working on the Cohesive Strategy; 2) Develop a conceptual framework that describes the relative effectiveness of proposed actions and activities on managing risks associated with wildland fire; and, 3) Construct an analytical system using the products developed in Tasks 1 and 2 to quantitatively analyze regional and national alternatives identified by regional and national strategy committees. Tasks 1 and 2 were summarized in a Phase II science report. Task 3 was a Phase III effort.

A wide range of individual scientists and analysts participated in the NSAT, representing federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, universities, and various non-governmental organizations. During Phase II, the NSAT worked as a series of eight subteams, with each subteam assigned to a specific topical area. The topical areas were chosen not only to span the range of issues and processes involved in wildland fire, but also to take advantage of the special interests and knowledge of NSAT members. The eight topical areas were: 1) landscape resilience, 2) wildfire ignitions and prevention, 3) fuels management, 4) wildfire response, 5) fire adapted communities, 6) firefighter safety, 7) smoke management, and 8) policy effectiveness.

Phase III

During Phase III the Regional Strategy Committees identified specific actions and activities that would best help them achieve regional objectives while retaining maximum flexibility for land managers to determine the most appropriate management activities for the individual properties. Each region established priorities for actions and activities and identified barriers that might prevent them from achieving important goals. The recommended actions span multiple issues, ranging from vegetation management, response coordination and training, community preparedness, wildfire prevention, and other related activities. All recommendations have been vetted in regional forums and are based upon practical understanding of the issues involved. These were summarized in regional reports and action plans.

The NSAT has explored various options for achieving the national goals of the Cohesive Strategy and identified the trade-offs and risks inherent in each option. The purpose of the analysis was to provide a broad strategic overview of the wildland fire issues facing the nation. The conceptual science models that emerged from Phase II were helpful in designing the analytical approach allowing the exploration of policy options. Additionally, over one hundred data layers were assembled for use in the analyses. The combination of data layers and analytical tools has made possible the current report.