



Western Forestry Leadership Coalition Issue Brief: The Quadrennial Fire and Fuels Report December 21, 2005

Summary:

The Quadrennial Fire and Fuels Report (QFFR) is a comprehensive portrait of fire mitigation planning across five federal agencies. Intended to synthesize the mission, strategies, and capabilities of the nation's wildland fire community, the QFFR was produced by an inter-agency team and invited stakeholders. The report reviews successes and challenges of the past, and then takes a long-term view toward the future. The three objectives for the report are: (1) to establish baseline data for ongoing monitoring and to assist with a synthesis of lessons learned; (2) to serve as an integrated strategic vision; and (3) to develop a plan for the future that is in line with budget realities. **Fire planners and political leaders will use the analysis in this report to help guide future budgeting and strategic planning of wildfire management. Foresters might find it useful to be familiar with the report, as it offers support for many of the fire programs currently in need of funding.**

Background:

Modeled after the Department of Defense's Quadrennial department-wide review process, the Quadrennial Fire & Fuels Review (Review) began in the summer of 2004 with a series of panels conducted around the country. State Foresters, Regional Foresters, and other stakeholders participated in those panels and in the subsequent, more formal "working panels" organized around specific topics of interest. The Review was characterized as both "top down" and "bottom up", seeking to capture fire expertise from all levels of government and across agencies. The Brookings Institute facilitated the process.

Report Highlights

The report is organized into sections. It is quite long overall, but does include a 3-page executive summary. Main points:

- I. Introduction: Wildland Fire in the 21st Century
This section describes the methodology of the report, offers an assessment of the recent past and an overview of emerging threats, and lists 'driving forces' for change.
 - An overview of policy includes the National Fire Plan and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act;
 - A synthesis of research on fire issues includes analyses done by federal agencies, scientists, and the environmental community;
 - Forces for future change are listed: fuel conditions, drought and climate variation, demographics and the growing Wildland-Urban Interface, and public expectations for fire protection.
- II. Mission Strategies: Threats and Risks
Here the report lists strategies, threats, risks, capabilities, roles, responsibilities, resources, and investments. Throughout, it offers an assessment of the current situation and outlines needs for the future.
 - **The "cornerstone" mission strategy is identified as "allowing fire to play its natural role in ecosystem sustainability within the given social, economic, and political environments";**

- Supporting mission strategies are the promotion of fire-adapted human communities, and a re-examination of agencies' emergency response capability;
 - Core capabilities needed are identified as: integrating planning, enhancing decision making, ensuring seamless and integrated fuel programs, establishing monitoring for adaptive management, broadening the ability to respond, strengthening community relationships, expanding community education, and providing training and technical assistance. These capabilities are also aligned with the above three mission strategies in a summary table.
- III. Force Structure and Infrastructure
Comprehensive data on the size and capacity of the current force structure and infrastructure then moves into an assessment of strategic needs.
- Current force structure is broken down by personnel categories and agency;
 - Hazardous fuel treatment acres are similarly broken down by location, agency, and method of treatment;
 - For each of the core capabilities listed above (II, 3rd bullet), this section describes the objectives of the effort and then discusses actions needed to realize those goals.
- IV. Workforce Preparedness and Development
The need for improved workforce capacities and skills is described.
- A summary of current Incident Qualifications Carded personnel is offered by state, agency, and geographic area;
 - Building workforce capacity is necessary to achieve all three of the mission strategies listed above (II, 1st & 2nd bullet), and will require the creation of new skill sets.
- V. Operations, Resources and Technologies
Summarizing current assets and needs, this section looks to the future and emphasizes the need for improved technology to guide operations.
- Existing capital assets are tallied here, with a summary chart of fire equipment resources by agency;
 - Strategic sourcing is discussed, and contracting is “viewed as a tool that could be used to implement any of the strategy options”;
 - The need for decision support and prioritization is emphasized, and an overview of emerging technology is provided.

Next Steps:

Since another wrap-up of this scale isn't expected for another four years, it is anticipated the report will be used in development of outyear budgets and strategic planning for the federal agencies.

For More Information:

The report is available on line at: www.nafri.gov/Assets/QFFR_Final_Report_July_19_2005.pdf
Report authors welcome feedback and comments: qffrcomment@brookings.edu

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