

US Forest Service 2011 Fire Season Key Messages

The Forest Service and its federal, state, local, tribal and non-governmental partners have completed the first phase of a National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, which integrates these components to further the cohesive management of wildland fire throughout the United States.

1. Resilient Landscapes

- Millions of acres of forests and grasslands are at risk of extreme wildfire due to overcrowded stands of trees, insect infestations, invasions of non-native plants, and climate change.
- Extreme wildfire risks lives and natural resources people need and value, such as clean, abundant water; clean air; fish and wildlife habitat; open space for recreation; and other forest products and services.
- Many ecosystems evolved with fire. Under the right conditions, we can manage some fire to restore resilience to ecosystems, improve wildlife habitat, and prevent heavy accumulations of flammable fuels, while we actively protect lives, property, and resources.
- Prescribed fire and thinning can help prevent extreme fires with minimal impacts to air quality, while providing biomass for energy production and improving habitat for wildlife.
- Ecosystem restoration and maintenance takes work. Jobs created by forest restoration and maintenance activities, such as thinning and biomass removal, will strengthen rural communities.

2. Fire-Adapted Communities

- Reducing flammable fuels through ecological restoration is key to protecting communities, but it is not enough. Homeowners and communities must prepare private property for wildland fire.
- More people are living near wildlands where fires naturally occur. The Forest Service helps communities learn to live safely with fire and become *fire-adapted communities*.
- Firefighter and public safety are the highest priorities. Regard for human safety and management of risk guide all fire management decisions and actions.
- Wildfire does not stop at property boundaries. The Forest Service cooperates with Tribes and other federal, state, and local governments to keep fire away from communities.
- Most wildfires are caused by people. The Forest Service will continue to fully suppress all human-caused wildfires and actively promote fire prevention.

3. Fire Response

- There are only two types of wildland fire: Prescribed Fire and Wildfire. *Suppression, Fire Use, Long Duration, and Resource Benefit*, for example, are not wildfire types.
- All wildfires will have a suppression strategy to—at a minimum—protect life and property. Some wildfires will also have additional strategies to meet ecological objectives.
- Strategies are based on many factors, including risks to public and firefighter safety; type and condition of fuels; weather; land management plan direction; values to protect; and available firefighting assets. Strategies can change as conditions change.
- The Forest Service will be staffed for vigorous wildfire response with plans for 10,500 firefighters; 1,000 engines; 100 firefighting helicopters; and 19 large airtankers. These numbers may change in accordance with Continuing Resolution provisions and/or passage of a Fiscal Year 2011 budget.
- The Forest Service successfully suppresses almost 98% of wildfires on initial attack.