State of Montana

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Fire and Aviation Program

Strategic Action Plan

September 2003

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Department of
Natural Resources and Conservation
Fire and Aviation

Strategic Action Plan

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SECTION I

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) recently expended considerable time and effort in defining its strategic direction, mission, and goals for the Fire and Aviation Program.

In December of 2001, a week long meeting entitled "Fire Odyssey 2001" was held with DNRC employees and cooperators. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the current DNRC Fire and Aviation Program and develop future program recommendations. This meeting produced many ideas that were captured in the resulting documentation. Following Fire Odyssey 2001, a Strategic Action Committee (SAC) was empanelled. The goal of the SAC was to develop this Strategic Action Plan by refining the ideas, concepts and recommendations that arose from Fire Odyssey 2001 to guide the DNRC Fire and Aviation Program through the next several years. This Strategic Action Plan also utilizes residual ideas and input from the 1992 strategic planning effort.

The purpose of this Strategic Action Plan is to identify and communicate our long-range focus, which will provide a foundation for the State Fire and Aviation Programmatic Plan.

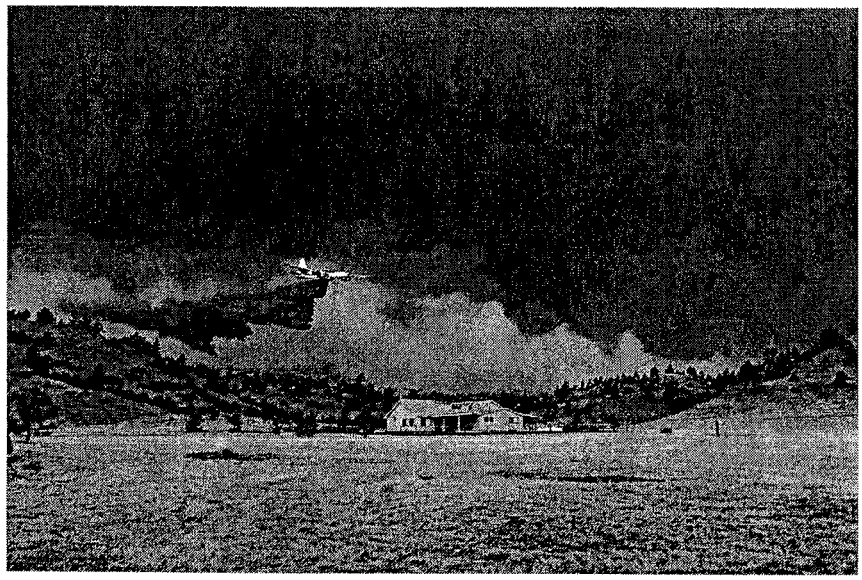
The Strategic Action Plan will be implemented in accordance with state law; department policy, rules, and regulations; DNRC and the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group (NRCG) Standards and Guidelines; and budgetary authority. Budget and work planning efforts will be based on priorities set forth in this plan.

This document contains the following sections, and is to serve as the primary method of illustrating and communicating DNRC's Fire and Aviation Management Program's strategic direction:

- Section I summarizes the Purpose and Background of this Strategic Action Plan.
- Section II contains the DNRC Fire and Aviation Management Program's Mission, Guiding Principles and Vision Statement.
- Section III is the Plan Implementation Schedule.
- Glossary

SECTION II

MISSION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND VISION



The Mission statement expresses our organizational purpose and identifies our customers, our core services, and the major programs we provide.

FIRE AND AVIATION PROGRAM

MISSION STATEMENT

Provide resources, leadership and coordination to Montana's wildfire services, accomplished through wildfire prevention, training, preparedness, and safe, aggressive suppression actions, to protect lives, property and natural resources.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Firefighter and Public Safety is always our primary objective.

- We recognize and value the motivation and creativity of our employees and cooperators.
- We are entrusted by the public and our employees to tell the truth, follow through on commitments, and be consistent in our actions.
- We operate in a fiscally responsible manner.
- We increase the understanding of our mission, improve our efficiency and complete clearly defined goals through partnerships with all of our cooperators.
- We provide extensive training to carry out our mission.
- As directed, DNRC supports cooperators in non-wildfire incidents.

A VISION STATEMENT

Changes have characterized the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) since its inception. These changes continue to come faster and faster, and, if our present culture is an indicator, they will continue to occur even more often during the next decade. The first ten years of the twenty-first century will bring us a mixture of changes, some beneficial, some detrimental and some neutral. As an agency, we must search for and embrace the opportunities afforded by the truly positive changes, while being alert for those that are disguised and marketed as progress, but actually deter us from achieving our objectives.

The Department's objective is to ensure that our wildland fire protection program in Montana is effective in light of- reduced funding, increased responsibility, increasing urban encroachment, a changing timber management industry, and heightened public awareness. The environment in which wildland fires are fought has changed drastically. Fuels, weather and topography remain the basic components in calculating fire danger levels, however, firefighting efficiency and success are, today, equally affected by social and political factors. The disastrous fire seasons occurring in this decade have given rise to national level discussions of wildland fire. It's easy to understand how the fire and fuel management paradigms are changing.

During the last several decades changing land management and fire protection philosophies have resulted in an accumulation of forest fuels that have exceeded predicted historic levels. Additional fuels result from decreased prescribed fire because of air quality concerns, and reduced timber management activities. These added fuels translate into a need for faster, more aggressive initial attack. The need for strengthened initial attack is also the result of a shift in public values. Expanded recreation and forest home sites can increase the occurrence of human-caused fires. These fires place higher values at risk. The Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review Implementation Action Plan has driven state and local fire agencies into greater roles and responsibilities in the wildland urban interface. Given the need for greater initial attack, the issue then becomes, how best to provide it. If there is an effective balance between centralized and decentralized resources, finding and maintaining that balance in today's society will be the challenge.

The future will see intensified interagency cooperation and involvement. This movement began in the 1980s, and support has grown to the degree that retreat to isolationism is neither desirable nor possible. Interagency contractual obligations (exchange of fire protection responsibilities between agencies), interagency fire teams, interagency fire dispatch centers, use of local government fire forces, the expanding role of private contractors, homeland security, and other cooperative ventures will create increased interdependence. This venue brings with it a host of opportunities because of the cooperative mindset, joint

and specific training, and a greater understanding of our fire service partners. The goal is to efficiently work together as agencies for the benefit of our stakeholders.

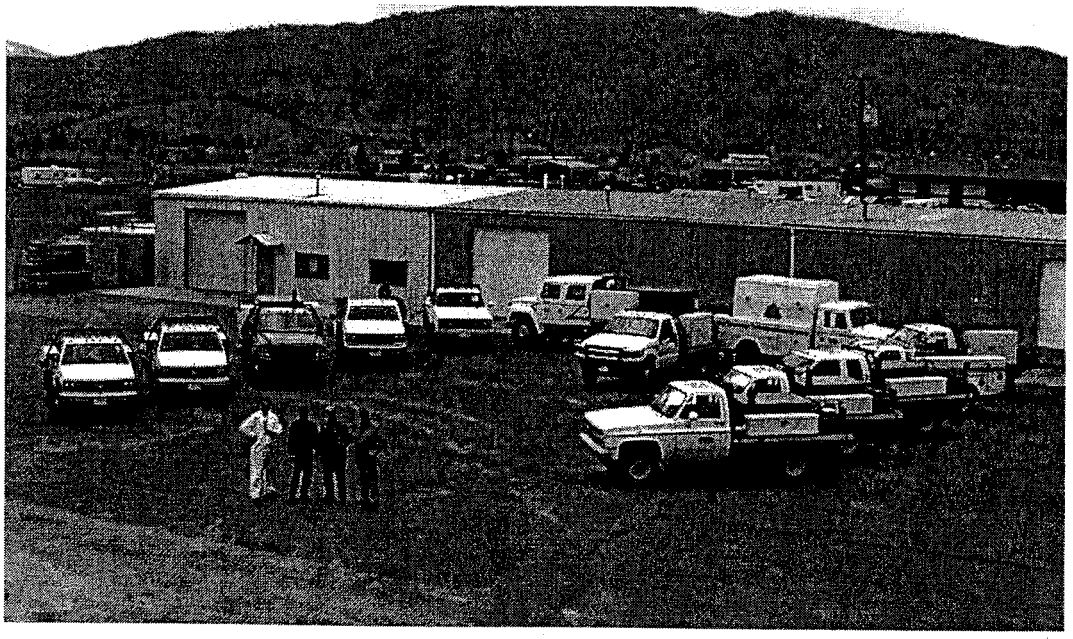
The future will continue to see the development of different philosophies, and sophisticated/expensive technologies that are either directly aimed at advancing the art of firefighting or that were developed by other disciplines and borrowed by the fire services. There will be difficult choices ahead as we intelligently select the most worthwhile. Thorough cost benefit analyses and other studies must be used to counterbalance the urge to move toward high profile programs that appear to be futuristic and innovative but that actually reduce effectiveness by redirecting money from more essential areas. The ongoing struggle is to select our investments judiciously and choose those that provide the best return.

The intent of this plan is to document issues identified by fire service employees and cooperators for a strategic look at the dilemmas of staffing, organization and budget. New concepts, changing areas of emphasis, and a budget that is unpredictable will provide the logic and justification for adjustments to the DNRC fire program. With this plan we have the opportunity to address the current and future organization, recommending change that will improve our service and help the DNRC meet its mission. Growth must be tempered by practical field experience and clearly defined needs. This plan looks at how best to accomplish our mission and provides for a comprehensive evaluation of the DNRC fire program during the next decade; through development of a State Fire and Aviation Programmatic Plan.

When we view the "future us," we will see a different reflection than we do now. Changes in the work force will have significantly altered our appearance and our philosophies. Since each by itself is neither good nor bad, the old must blend with the new to fashion what we want to be. The old contributes experience, tradition and stability. The new adds freshness, change and different perspectives. Protecting worthwhile traditions and useful lessons of experience, while incorporating appropriate changes and new ideas is our charge in the next ten years. The workforce will be more diverse; the old guard will move on and those in key positions will be younger and have less experience than may have been our custom. It is therefore, our responsibility to foster the advocacy of the fire program into the future.

SECTION III

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE



Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

All Risk Goals

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #1 Clearly define through agency policy & procedures DNRC's support role as defined in the DES' State Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Continue to update DNRC policy as National Homeland Security issues evolve. • **Begin by June 30, 2005 and ongoing.** • **Fire and Aviation Management Bureau (F&AM)**								
Goal #2 In light of the changing National Security situation, clearly define DNRC's role in All-Risk incident assignments, regardless of jurisdiction or emergency declaration. • **Begin by May 1, 2003 and ongoing as national situation changes.** • **Forestry Division Administration & F&AM Bureau Chief**								

Funding and Staffing

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #3 Develop a Legislative Proposal to increase the upper limit of assessment fees if appropriate within a newly developed funding model. • **Complete by February 2004 for 2005 Legislative Session.** • **F&AM Bureau**								

Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #4 Research and develop an assessment structure based on values protected and/or costs of suppression. • **F&AM Bureau Chief and Fire Advisory Committee (FAC)** • **Begin in February, 2004**								
Goal #5 DNRC propose a suppression account to pay for suppression costs. • **Complete by February 2004 for 2005 Legislative Session.** • **F&AM Bureau**								
Goal #6 Each Land Office (with direct protection) and the Fire & Aviation Bureau conduct an analysis of the efficiency of the current funding of the direct protection fire program. • **Complete by June 30, 2006** • **F&AM Bureau and each Land Office**								
Goal #7 Conduct an analysis of the State/County Cooperative Fire Management Program (County Co-op) portion of the DNRC Fire Program • **Complete by June 30, 2006** • **Each Land Office with direction from F&AM Bureau**								

Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #8 Restore, through the legislative process, Capital Budgets to the FY 2002 base level (as minimum) and then update to meet capital replacement needs • **February 2006 for 2007 Legislative session and ongoing** • **F&AM Bureau Chief and Forestry Division Administrator**								
Goal #9 Determine the level of funding and staffing (MEL) that is required to effectively meet the F&AM program's entire mission. • **F&AM Bureau assisted by field units** • **Begin by October 31, 2004**								
Goal #10 Implement and review procedures whereby updates to this type of analysis (MEL) are done periodically. • **F&AM Bureau assisted by the field units.** • **After completion of MEL analysis.**								
Goal #11 Develop Executive Planning Process (EPP) Budget Modification to increase funding for the DNRC Prevention Program through retention of fire billing receipts. • **Complete by February 2006** • **F&AM Bureau, Prevention**								

Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

	Fiscal Year							
Goal #12	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Continue to use the recommendations of the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) July 1, 2000, report "Cost Containment of Large Fires", National Association of Public Administrators (NAPA) Report, and May 2003 USFS Cost Containment Analysis document within the DNRC Fire Program. • **Begin June 30, 2003** • **Forestry Division Line Officers**								
Goal #13								
Establish a plan, to include Full Time Equivalent (FTE) authority, to accomplish prescribed fire and slash burning in cooperation with Trust Lands Division and private landowners, from State Special Revenue (SSR) funds to help reduce fuels in the WUI. • **Service Forestry Bureau, DNRC National Fire Plan Coordinator, Forest Improvement Section Supervisor, and Prevention Working Team.** • **February 2008**								

Interagency Relations

	Fiscal Year							
Goal #14	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Maintain a viable State/County Cooperative Fire Management Program throughout Montana. • **Land office Fire Program Managers.** • **June 30, 2006**								

Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #15 Establish guidelines that allow payment to local governments for actions, which are requested by DNRC, within local jurisdictions. Limited to DNRC direct protection areas. Pilot test Missoula, Helena and Kalispell in FY 04 and expand to other units as appropriate once pilot test complete. • **Suppression Section and FAC** • **December 31, 2004**								
Goal #16 Explore the option of hiring/contracting local government resources through the County. • **FAC-Business Working Team** • **December 31, 2004**								
Goal #17 Analyze the feasibility of co-locating wildland fire dispatch centers with 911 dispatch centers in Helena, Missoula and Kalispell. • **FAC commission Ad Hoc Committee** • **June 30, 2007**								
Goal #18 Establish a common communications system in each dispatch center (wildland and 911 centers). • **Communications Working Team of FAC** • **June 30, 2005**								

Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

Goal #19	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Develop Type III IMT capability at all NRCG geographic zones. Use Federal, State and local government people as appropriate. • **F&AM Bureau, Area Fire Program Managers** • **June 30, 2004**								

Goal #20								
Ensure that Units that are providing direct protection are working with cooperators to provide the optimum level of service. • **Area Fire Program Managers and Unit Fire Supervisors** • **June 30, 2004**								

Personnel Issues

Goal #21	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Provide a mechanism whereby employees of the Trust Land Management and Forestry Divisions may forward personnel issues. • **Personnel Issues Working Team(PIWT)** • **Ongoing**								

Public/Stakeholder Expectations

Goal #22	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Improve and increase public understanding, education, and appreciation of DNRC's Fire and Aviation activities. • **F&AM Bureau Chief with training, Prevention Sections and DNRC PIO** • **June 30, 2003 and ongoing**								

Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #23 Develop and implement a Public Communications Plan to ensure interested parties are informed and understand the DNRC Fire Program and have input into it. • **Establish Public Information Working Group** • **June 30, 2008**								

Technology Goals

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #24 Determine and assess the mission of existing Technology Working Groups within the DNRC. Ensure that a Technology Working Team consisting of Central Services, Information Technology Bureau, Trust Lands and Forestry Division exists. FAC will be represented on this Team. • **Forestry and Trust Lands Division Administrators** • **June 30, 2006**								
Goal #25 Assure that the charter governing the Technology Working Team addresses the functions of equipment development, fire prevention, communications, aviation, training, administrative support, dispatch, logistics, and suppressions as received from FAC representative. • **Forestry Division Administrator** • **December 31, 2006**								

Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #26 As new equipment, software and systems are put in place, develop a training plan that assures users are adequately trained within 12 months of installation. • **F&AM Bureau, DNRC Training Officer, Information Technology Bureau, and Field Offices.** • **June 30, 2003 and ongoing**								
Goal #27 Establish an ongoing, rather than issue-specific, FAC Equipment Working Team. • **FAC and Supervisor, Equipment Development and Support Section.** • **December 31, 2003**								
Goal #28 Combine the advantages of location, existing equipment, and planned future equipment to result in one efficient communications system that will benefit each agency within the emergency response network using Homeland Security Funding Sources. • **Forestry Division Administrator, F&AM Bureau Communications Engineer and FAC Communications Working Group** • **December 31, 2006**								

Strategic Goal Implementation Planning Schedule

	Fiscal Year							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Goal #29 Develop a ten (10) year Aircraft Fleet Plan. • **Aviation Section Supervisor** • **June 31, 2004**								
Goal #30 Coordinate the Federal Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS) qualification system with the existing NASF-Incident Qualification System (IQS). • **Forestry Division Administrator through NWCG** • **Start in July of 2003 and ongoing**								
Goal #31 Develop and implement a comprehensive and timely training program for all DNRC employees and appropriate contractors designed to capture the range of current technology. • **Division Administrators, F&AM Bureau Training Section, DNRC Training Officer, and Technology Working Team.** • **December 31, 2003 and on going**								
Goal #32 Develop and support a communications infrastructure that will meet the current needs of the DNRC Fire and Aviation program, will allow for future expansion, will be easily upgradeable to new technologies and will be compatible with the current and planned systems of our cooperators. • **FAC** • **Ongoing**								

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CSD	Central Services Division
DES	Department of Emergency Services
DNRC	Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
ECP	Emergency Coordination Plan
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
EPP	Executive Planning Process
F&AM	Fire & Aviation Management
FAC	Fire Advisory Committee
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HB	House Bill
IA	Initial Attack
IMT	Incident Management Team
IOSWT	Incident Operation Standards Working Team
MBF	Million Board Feet
MCA	Montana Codes Annotated
MEL	Most Efficient Level
MTCARS	Montana Incident Cost Accounting and Reporting System
NAPA	National Association of Public Administrators
NASF	National Association of State Foresters
NFMAS	National Fire Management Analysis System
NFP	National Fire Plan
NFZ	Non-Forested Zone
NRCG	Northern Rockies Coordinating Group
NRTC	Northern Rockies Training Center
NWCG	National Wildfire Coordinating Group
PERS	Public Employees Retirement System
PIO	Public Information Officer
PIWT	Personnel Issues Working Team
ROW	Right-of-Way
SSR	State Special Revenue
UB	Unbudgeted
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface

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Fire and Aviation Management Bureau

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100 copies of this document were published at an estimated cost of $3.45 per copy. The total cost of $395.00 includes $345.00 for printing/binding, and $50.00 for distribution.