

DNRC Fire Protection STRATEGIC PLAN



»» 2019-2025

*Positioning Our Program
for Long-Term Success*



The purpose of the strategy embodied in this document is to position the DNRC Fire Protection Program for long-term success in an operating environment undergoing constant, fundamental change. The strategy also prepares us to adapt to both the changing physical environment in which we work as well as the changing needs of Montana's citizens and our agency cooperators. As we implement this strategy, we will continue to produce the responsive and effective results we produce now, while we anticipate and navigate our challenges and set an action oriented strategic course that achieves a desired future. Ultimately, our intent is to:

- Make sure the changes in our operating environment are not getting ahead of us.
- Assure our ability to provide relevant, effective, and efficient organizational results into the future.
- Set a course and provide clear direction so that we make the most of our resources, maximize our organizational effectiveness, and ensure our program's long-term relevance.
- Foster a shared vision for the program, both internally and with our strategic partners.
- Provide and manage a consistent, central focus under which we will develop coherent, focused operating plans.

As we developed our strategy, we strived for a strategic planning effort that was short, intense and focused. Our marching orders were to stick to the big and strategic; stay out of the weeds; establish relatively few goals that, when achieved, would move us far down the playing field; work hard; stay focused; and get it done.

However, we also took a stakeholder approach; striving to involve and seek both the participation and commitment of the persons responsible for executing our strategy and doing our important work.

Our Fire Protection Program strategy conforms to the statutory framework established in Montana statute and the current interpretations of those statutes by the DNRC legal staff. In addition, we operate in a conservative and resource constrained political environment. Accordingly, our Fire Protection Program strategy reflects the political and fiscal climate in which we operate.

It is the responsibility and obligation of the Chief of the Fire Protection Bureau to establish an effective strategy for the program. However, success of the strategy ultimately requires alignment and purposeful implementation from the Department Director to the firefighter on the ground. Most importantly, with this strategy, the DNRC commits to having one, single, statewide fire protection program. We implement our program in two major ways and at multiple locations, but we are one program with one, unified strategy that will guide the Montana DNRC Fire Protection Program into the future.





Mission

We protect lives, property, and natural resources from wildfire by providing safe and effective services to Montana's citizens as well as leadership, coordination and resources to the State's wildfire organizations.

Core Values

Firefighter and public safety is and always will be our highest priority.

A dynamic and diverse workforce forms the foundation of our success; and we invest in the recruitment, training and development of that workforce; creating opportunity for organizational learning, continuous improvement, innovation, advancement, and succession.

We are resilient; having the ability to anticipate, absorb, adapt, and rapidly recover.

We are fiscally responsible; and accountable for our efficiency and effectiveness.

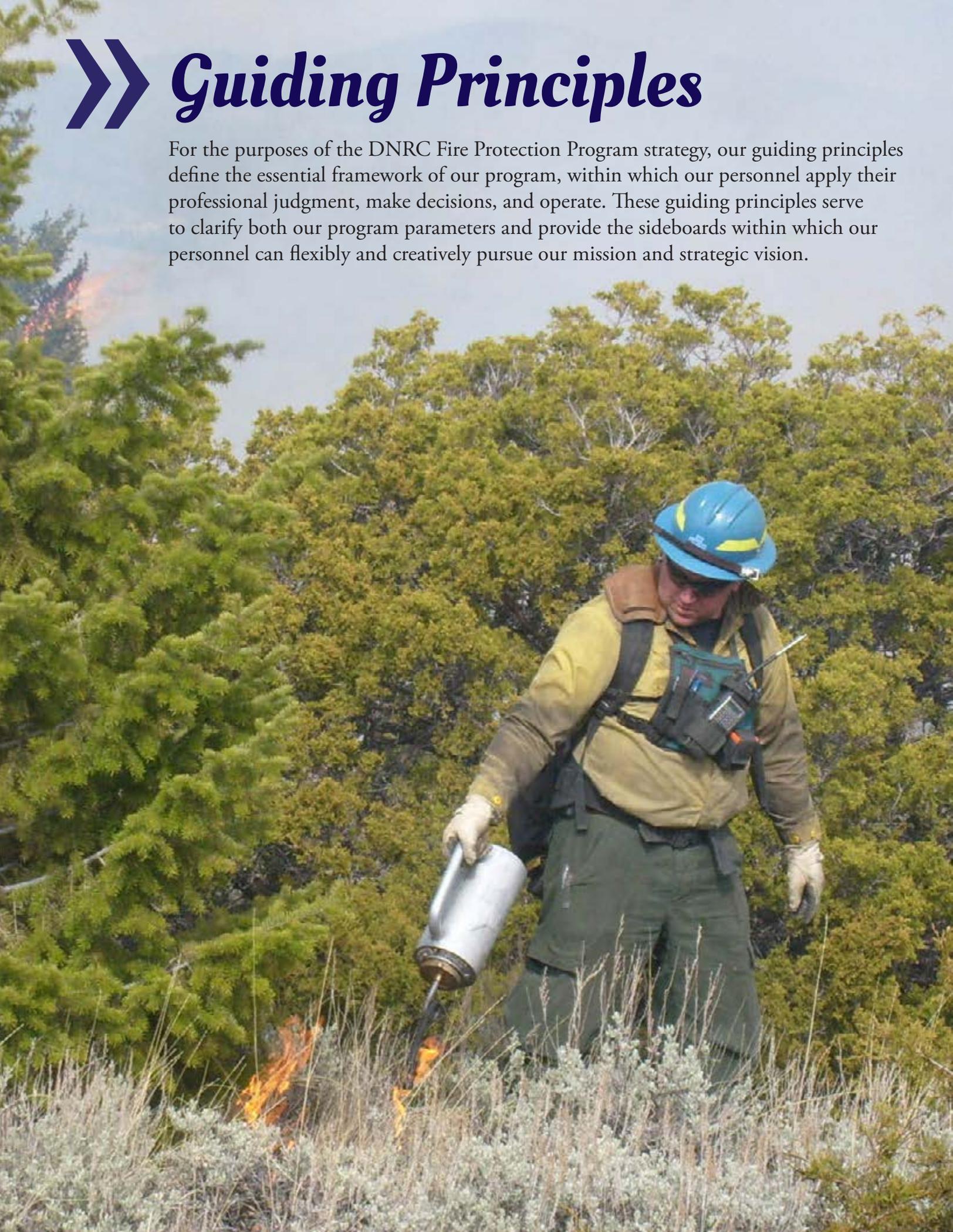
We are entrusted by the public and our employees to tell the truth, follow through on commitments, and act with integrity.

We are professionals and treat one another with civility, dignity, and respect.

Our success depends on healthy relationships, both internal and external.

»» *Guiding Principles*

For the purposes of the DNRC Fire Protection Program strategy, our guiding principles define the essential framework of our program, within which our personnel apply their professional judgment, make decisions, and operate. These guiding principles serve to clarify both our program parameters and provide the sideboards within which our personnel can flexibly and creatively pursue our mission and strategic vision.



Guiding Principles for 2019-2025

We operate a unified, statewide fire protection program. We implement our program in two major ways and at multiple locations, but we are one program guided by a single doctrine.

We work within the parameters of our statutory mandates and legislative intent. However, to the extent that we can, we embrace all three tenets of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy; effective wildfire response, fire adapted communities, and resilient landscapes.

We maintain an exemplary safety record built on a foundation of excellent training, adequate and effective leadership and supervision, quality equipment, and a demonstrated commitment to both learning and continuous improvement.

We accept the inherent risk of responding to wildfires, but use our training, procedures, and experience to minimize risk to our personnel and the public. No risk including risks taken to protect, structures, properties, forests, businesses, or natural resources precludes our core value that firefighter and public safety is and always will be our highest priority. All decisions involving how to engage a fire will be based on maintaining the safety of our personnel and the public we serve, considering the identified values at risk, the probability of success, and the consequences of failure. We are committed to aggressive initial attack, in part, because we want to minimize risk exposure to our personnel and the public by keeping fires as small as possible and their duration as short as possible. However, wildland fire suppression is an inherently risky human undertaking and we will, from time-to-time, fail. Consequently, we leave some margin for human error, and when we fail, we want to fail in the safest way possible. In addition, when we experience unintended consequences of our operations; we do all we can legally, ethically, and financially to take care of our people, their colleagues, and their loved ones.

We entrust our employees to use their knowledge, skills, and abilities to make sound and ethical decisions both, while working with one another, as well as with our local, tribal, and federal cooperators. Truthfulness, personal integrity, and effective communication are key to gaining the trust of Montana's citizens and wildfire services. These values also demonstrate our commitment to each other, our mission, and to others.

We practice adaptive leadership and are ready to anticipate and respond to changes in our operating environment and make organizational changes necessary to remain relevant in that environment. To that end, we use the best available science, as well as a lessons-learned approach to organizational learning, to continuously improve and adapt all aspects and elements of our Fire Protection program.

We value cost-effectiveness and strive to provide efficient, effective services without making unnecessary expenditures. In wildland fire, we often spend money to save money; incurring costs to keep fires as small as possible and their duration as short as possible. Consequently, we trust

Guiding Principles - continued

our personnel, expect them to use their professional judgment, and allow them decision space to determine their resource needs and to fill those needs. In return, we expect our people to make rational, responsible and defensible decisions when expending the taxpayers' money; decisions that they expect to be accountable for.

Our agency provides protection in two principal ways; by direct protection, and indirectly through State/County Cooperative (County Coop) protection.

In areas of DNRC Direct Protection, we respond to fires with agency resources, with the intent of conserving lives, property, and natural resources by controlling fires at initial or extended attack. However, the DNRC also uses direct protection resources as surge capacity in areas of County Coop fire protection, enabling us to better achieve the fundamental purpose of the County Coop fire protection arrangement.

Our fundamental role in County Coop fire protection is to build and maintain the capacity of local governments so that local firefighters routinely succeed on initial attack and avoid the need for large-scale intervention by the DNRC or our federal partners. However, the DNRC also maintains resources in areas of County Coop fire protection that enable us to intervene on the behalf of local government with agency resources to help local government firefighters control fires at initial or extended attack.

Training, education and a commitment to continuous learning and organizational improvement form the foundation of our workforce development efforts and we maintain a robust training program using modern adult learning techniques and technology.

We succeed through partnerships and cooperation; and magnify our own effectiveness and the effectiveness of our partners through interagency effort. We consistently lead and influence those partnerships so that we create and maintain effective working relationships that make us all stronger. While external partnerships and cooperation are essential to our job, we cannot succeed without equally effective internal relationships that are positive, professional, respectful, and based on trust and effective communication.

We periodically re-evaluate the adequacy, allocation, or configuration of our fire program resources in relation to both the current and future operating environment; and deploy our limited resources in the smartest ways possible; reflecting our strategic direction and priorities.

We are professionals, and treat one another with professional courtesy, civility, dignity, and respect.

We value our people; strive for a culture of development, advancement and succession; and recognize the challenges our personnel face related to the stress, fatigue, and both their physical and psychological health due to the challenges of fire protection work.





Strategic Vision

The strategic vision that follows describes the desired future state for the DNRC Fire Protection Program; what we intend to be and how we wish to be perceived in the future.

Fire Protection Program Vision for 2025

The DNRC carries out a unified fire protection program spanning the State of Montana. We implement that program in two major ways and at multiple locations, but we are one program guided by a single doctrine. To the extent that we can, while still fulfilling and following our statutory mandates, we embrace the three tenets of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy; effective wildfire response, fire adapted communities, and resilient landscapes. We are active in fire suppression; fire prevention, community preparedness and homeowner risk reduction; as well as prescribed fire and fuel hazard reduction. We deliberately engage Montana's citizens to prepare themselves, their property and their communities for wildfire. When taken together, these elements describe our Fire Protection Program.

The DNRC understands the inter-relatedness of its Fire Protection, Forestry Assistance, and Trust Lands Management programs and routinely coordinates the activities of those programs to achieve mutually beneficial goals; so, we endeavor to maximize effective collaboration between the Fire Protection Program and the rest of the Department.

We succeed through partnerships and cooperation; and we are both well-respected and highly valued by our local, tribal, and federal partners. We magnify our own effectiveness and the effectiveness of our partners through interagency cooperation. We consistently provide leadership and influence; but we also recognize that we are the net beneficiary of our relationships with both our federal and local government partners. We have engaged with the State's tribal fire programs and have effective working relationships that make us all stronger.

The equipment we develop for our Fire Protection Program incorporates technologies that meet the evolving needs of the Program.

Our workforce is well-trained, dynamic, and cross-functional; made possible through effective recruiting and retention, and a strong commitment to training and employee development; though we employ a relatively small Fire Protection Program workforce. We have put systems and processes in place to assure that we are developing a motivated, productive, diverse, and engaged workforce; guided by well-prepared and adaptable leaders. The resulting workforce is purposefully trending toward longer-term employees with an extensive skill set enabling both our capacity to broaden the scope of the program and maximize the benefit our workforce provides

to the State of Montana and its citizens. We are staffed for the actual length of the evolving fire year and have sufficient personnel available to fill incident management and other program needs without over-burdening individual employees. We have engaged in sufficient planning to fill the gaps we envision developing in our fire protection workforce and have created a culture of development, advancement and succession. We have systems in place to respond to the challenges our personnel face related to stress, fatigue and both their physical and psychological health due to the challenges of fire protection work.

We understand and have defined our wildland fire information technology (WFIT) business needs and have identified how to meet those business needs in a timely and cost-effective manner; enabling us to have adequate data capture, storage and analysis systems to reliably inform financial, strategic and programmatic decision making. We routinely collect, use, share and archive data to enable informed management decisions including, but not limited to, objectively evaluating the adequacy, allocation, or configuration of our fire response resources in relation to both the current and future operating environment. Doing so enables us to deploy our limited resources in the smartest ways possible; not necessarily as we always have, and our resource allocations reflect our strategic direction and priorities. We have developed, maintained and, as necessary, enhanced a voice and data communication infrastructure essential to safe and effective fire operations across Montana; and do so in a timely and cost-effective manner.

We maintain stable, adequate purchasing power in the Fire Protection Program budget and a stable fire suppression account that enables our ability to sustain our program delivery. As part of our financial strategy, we redeem our cost recovery responsibilities and take advantage of cost recovery opportunities that could potentially flow funds into the State's fire suppression account annually.

We have a complete aviation strategy that addresses our use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS); the continued financial health of our aviation program as a internal service proprietary program; our aviation safety management system; and a plan for aircraft replacement. The aviation strategy includes a plan for transitioning from our current aircraft and support infrastructure to our next generation aircraft and support infrastructure over time, enabling us to begin the process of preparing the Montana Legislature for the necessary future capital expenditures to make that transition.

Our approach to the Executive Planning Process (EPP) and our legislative strategy have adequately adapted to a changed and changing legislative landscape. Consequently, we succeed by making EPP requests that enable necessary change and by implementing a legislative strategy aligned with our program strategy. To enhance our legislative effectiveness, we prepare key employees and give them license to deliberately build working relationships with legislators and legislative staff as well as strategically conduct appropriate marketing/outreach efforts with them. Legislative affairs remain the purview of the Governor's and Director's Offices; and DNRC employees will engage in those affairs with full coordination, guidance, and consent.



»» *Goals and Objectives*

Our strategic goals are specific, measurable accomplishments we intend to achieve over time; to simultaneously carry out our mission and realize our strategic vision. For the purposes of this strategy, objectives are the tactics and specific responsibilities we will use to reach and achieve the goals we have established; provide clarification of the goals; and become the basis of work and performance plans. While some goals and objectives of this strategy seemingly rest on legislative success, it is our intent to achieve the goals of this strategy by other means should the Legislature choose not to act.

Goals and Objectives for 2019-2025

» **Goal 1:** By 2025, we will have a well-rounded fire protection program incorporating, as critical components, safe and effective fire response; training, professional development and organizational learning; community preparedness, homeowner risk reduction and fire prevention; as well as prescribed fire and hazardous fuels reduction.

^ **Objective 1.1:** By 2022, complete a sub-strategy to modernize the State/County Cooperative (County Coop) Fire Protection arrangement. Focus on sustained effort to improve the fire protection service that the DNRC provides to eastern Montana. Engage appropriate stakeholders and address resources required to achieve program guidance and performance objectives reflecting strategic priorities.

^ **Objective 1.2:** By 2019, convene an internal collaborative effort to both craft the direction on implementing the National Cohesive Fire Management Strategy and coordinate the activities of Fire Protection, Forestry Assistance, and Trust Lands Management programs to achieve mutually beneficial goals; focusing on internal cohesion. Focus Fire Protection Program efforts on reducing risk to communities/fostering fire adapted communities.

^ **Objective 1.3:** By 2020, develop and implement effective program guidance reflecting the entire range of fire protection program delivery mechanisms and components.

^ **Objective 1.4:** By 2021, develop performance metrics, used to periodically measure program effectiveness against benchmarks and identify specific performance and/or service gaps.

^ **Objective 1.5:** By 2022, establish standards of service (service delivery level/mechanism, resource requirements, resource configuration, etc.) by Land Office and, where necessary by Unit, and objectively evaluate the adequacy, allocation, and/or configuration of our fire program resources in relation to both the current and future operating environment; and deploy our limited resources in the smartest ways possible; reflecting our strategic direction and priorities.

^ **Objective 1.6:** By 2025, complete the process of allocating and deploying fire program resources statewide to meet performance objectives reflecting strategic direction and priorities; having enabled each DNRC Area Office to implement, at scale, all the elements of the Fire Protection Program including aspects of community preparedness, homeowner risk reduction, fire prevention, and hazardous fuels reduction.

^ **Objective 1.7:** By 2020, the equipment we develop for local government firefighters incorporates technologies to support the effectiveness of a smaller and older volunteer workforce, and the training we provide to our local government partners also reflects these realities.

» **Goal 2:** Maintain stable, adequate purchasing power in the Fire Protection Program preparedness budget and a stable fire suppression account that enables our ability to sustain our program delivery.

^ **Objective 2.1:** By 2022, develop an approach to fund our fire protection preparedness budget sustainably and comprehensively with, as needed, a reformed Wildland Fire Protection Fee (assessment) that acknowledges the true nature of the DNRC Fire Protection Program.

^ **Objective 2.2:** Prepare, if necessary, to replace with state appropriated funds approximately 12% of our fire protection preparedness budget currently provided by federal NFC and RFC grant funds.

^ **Objective 2.3:** By 2024, redeem our cost recovery responsibilities related to billable, human-caused fires and take advantages of opportunities to recover costs from responsible parties in a matter that could flow funds into the fire suppression fund annually.



» **Goal 3:** By 2025, we will have the systems and processes in place to recruit, prepare, develop and retain the workforce necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of this strategy. Once implemented, the resulting workforce will be adequate, amply diverse, properly distributed, appropriately trained, and sufficiently cross-functional to meet strategic intent. It will also be organized around a nucleus of longer term employees, with an extensive skill set.

^ **Objective 3.1:** By 2020, complete workforce analysis and plan for workforce configuration at unit, land office, and bureau levels; with eye toward enabling capacity to necessarily align the scope of the program with the strategic vision.

^ **Objective 3.2:** By 2020, develop a recruitment and retention strategy aligned with improved HR policies (temporary details, position/pay matrix, etc.) supporting the workforce development objectives of this goal.

^ **Objective 3.3:** By 2021, create and implement a succession planning process that enables us to make effective transitions as workforce and personnel needs develop.

^ **Objective 3.4:** By 2022, be prepared, using available data, to evaluate success using metrics such as turnover rate, workforce diversity, number of internal applicants, and internal applicant success rate compared to external applicants.

^ **Objective 3.5:** By 2025, staffed for the actual length of the evolving fire year with sufficient personnel available to fill incident management needs without over-burdening individual employees.

^ **Objective 3.6:** By 2025, achieve a workforce guided by well-prepared leaders with understanding of program intent, motivation, teamwork, productivity, and engagement.



» **Goal 4:** By 2019, we will have a complete aviation strategy that includes a plan for transitioning from our current aircraft to our next generation aircraft over time; and have begun the process of preparing the Legislature for the necessary future capital expenditures to make that transition.

^ **Objective 4.1:** By March 1, 2019, establish approved policy for DNRC use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).

^ **Objective 4.2:** By 2019, identify next generation rotor wing aircraft and supporting infrastructure to replace MT-205 and identify next generation fixed wing aircraft to replace current fixed wing aircraft.

» **Goal 5:** For each legislative assembly, our approach to the Executive Planning Process (EPP) and our legislative strategy will adequately adapt to a changed and changing legislative landscape. We will succeed by making EPP requests that enable necessary strategic change by implementing a legislative strategy aligned with both our program strategy and the needs of our stakeholders and strategic partners.

^ **Objective 5.1:** Develop EPP requests that, if successful, will affect change necessary to achieve strategic intent as described by the goals and objectives of this strategy. As appropriate, develop legislative initiatives collaboratively with stakeholders including representatives of local government and other strategic partners.

^ **Objective 5.2:** Strategically conduct appropriate marketing/outreach efforts with key legislators, legislative staff, and key stakeholders and partner personnel as appropriate. Assure stakeholder engagement, particularly of local government and other strategic partners when appropriate, to develop stakeholder support in advance of the legislative assembly.



^ Objective 5.3: With each legislative session, prepare the legislature for the need to transition from our current aircraft to our next generation aircraft over time, and the necessary future capital expenditures to make that transition as part of an ongoing and sustained effort to modernize DNRC operated aircraft.

^ Objective 5.4: By 2021, research legislative needs related to the County Coop Fire Protection arrangement as well as the relationship to both a more comprehensive fire protection preparedness budget and, as needed, a reformed Wildland Fire Protection Fee (assessment) that acknowledges the true nature of the DNRC Fire Protection Program.

» Goal 6: By 2020, working closely with the Department's Office of Information Technology (OIT,) we understand and have defined our wildland fire information technology (WFIT) business needs and have identified how to meet those business needs in a timely and cost-effective manner. Enable us to have adequate data capture, storage, and analysis systems that inform financial, strategic and programmatic decision making. Routinely collect, use, share, and archive data to enable informed management decisions including, but not limited to, objectively evaluating the adequacy, allocation, or configuration of our fire response resources in relation to both the current and future operating environment.

^ Objective 6.1: By 2020, working closely with OIT, understand, define, and describe our WFIT business needs and identify how to meet those business needs in a timely and cost-effective manner.

^ Objective 6.2: Software system(s) that comprehensively address multiple incident business and fire finance functions of an essential/critical nature, including: dispatching and mobilization; fire reporting; grants and agreements management; vendor/interagency invoicing, billing, and payment; financial tracking (cost-to-date, billing status, payment status, etc.); fleet management; and property inventory.

^ Objective 6.3: By 2020, acquire and implement adequate data capture, storage and analysis systems to reliably inform financial, operational decision support (common operating picture,) as well as strategic and programmatic decision making (fire statistics, equipment development and placement history, FPA statistics, strategic goal tracking, etc.) Routinely collect data and use that data to enable informed management decisions.

^ Objective 6.4: By 2021, complete redevelopment of the Fire Protection Assessment system/application.

