

State of Alaska FY2009 Governor's Operating Budget

Department of Natural Resources Fire Suppression Activity Component Budget Summary

Component: Fire Suppression Activity

Contribution to Department's Mission

The Division of Forestry's contribution to the Department's mission is to manage wildland fires in the safest, most efficient and cost-effective manner possible, meeting statutory requirements to provide wildland fire protection, commensurate with values at risk, to all state, municipal and private lands.

Core Services

The Division's Wildland Fire Management Program consists of two components under its statutory responsibility in AS41.15.010 for wildland fires on all state, municipal and private lands in Alaska. This component funds wildland fire suppression operations and closely related activities.

The Division provides appropriate management response to wildland fires consistent with the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan. Appropriate management response ranges from rapid and aggressive initial attack to surveillance, dependant on values at risk and land manager objectives. In some parts of the state, this will be accomplished through cooperative agreements with federal and local government fire cooperators.

Helicopters, air tankers and light fixed-wing aircraft are contracted and leased from private vendors to provide detection, transportation of initial attack firefighters, and application of fire retardant to wildland fires. This component covers the hourly cost of those resources when engaged in firefighting operations. Village emergency firefighting crews, incidental emergency firefighters, local government and federal cooperator personnel are hired in emergency situations to supplement the Division's firefighters. Other equipment such as bull dozers, water tenders and support vehicles are acquired through Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements to supplement the Divisions equipment fleet during these fire emergencies.

Note: Performance measures for the Statewide Fire Suppression RDU components are included in the Fire Suppression Preparedness Component.

| FY2009 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results | | |
|--|-------------------|---|
| FY2009 Component Budget: \$13,672,900 | Personnel: | |
| | Full time | 0 |
| | Part time | 0 |
| | Total | 0 |

Key Component Challenges

Length of the fire season has increased significantly, impacting staffing, budget and urban/interface risk. Legislation passed in 2006 mandated a change in the designated fire season, moving the start date from May 1st to April 1st and the end date from Sept 30th to August 31st. This change requires the Division of Forestry to be ready to respond to wildland fires a month earlier than historically. State of Alaska Firefighters adhere to national standards for training, safety and fitness. To meet these standards, yearly safety training and work capacity (fitness) testing must be conducted prior to responding to wildland fires. Additional annual refresher training in such things as first aid, hazardous material awareness and blood borne pathogens are also mandated. In order to meet these national requirements prior to the fire season the Division of Forestry must bring its seasonal firefighter workforce on duty prior to the start of the fire season.

Alaska's population continues to move into the forested areas of the state which makes responding to the rising numbers of urban interface wildland fires one of the key issues facing the Division and its cooperators. In recent years, the Division has suppressed numerous serious urban interface wildland fires that directly threatened homes and communities. For the 2007 Fire Season, 230 of 280 fires were in the wildland urban interface areas of the state. In 2004 and 2005 combined, however, of the 744 fires suppressed by the State of Alaska, 589 of them were in the Wildland/Urban Interface. Geographically, the urban interface fire zone continues to increase as new homes and subdivisions are built.

Forestry's ICS trained and experienced personnel are increasingly being used for all-risk incident response both in-state and nationally. These responses range from the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York City and Hurricanes such as Katrina and Rita, to windstorms, floods, and earthquakes. The state is increasingly relying on their availability in planning disaster or terrorism response. However, the majority of these personnel are not budgeted for the duration of the fire season to ensure their availability for fires. The increased all-risk workload is falling to the few fire managers who have full time fire management responsibilities. Additionally the availability of all-risk employment does increase the limited staff months budgeted and can help Forestry retain seasonals. Because of its trained and experienced personnel, Forestry is a good choice for many emergency response situations.

Component costs are increasing due to longer seasons, hazardous fuel accumulations and more urban interface wildland fires. Although 2007 was a relatively light fire season for recent years with 649,410 acres burned, it followed by two years the first and third largest fire seasons in Alaska's history. In 2004, 6.6 million acres of forested lands burned in Alaska, while 4.6 million acres burned in 2005. The Caribou Hills Fire this year along with the Parks Highway Fire in 2006 and three fires in 2004 were declared FEMA disaster fires which meant that they posed "significant risk to constitute a major catastrophe". FEMA declared disaster fires are eligible for reimbursement of 75% of approved fire suppression cost. Higher suppression costs can be attributed to a longer, more intense and lightning prone fire season with the wildland fires threatening human life and structures in the wildland urban interface areas of the state. Approximately 9% of the total number of fires statewide were in limited protection and required no suppression action. However, 88% (269 of this year's 280 fires) of the wildland fires that required suppression action occurred on state responsibility lands resulting in the State of Alaska being required to pay the suppression costs. This year, both of the fires that became costly project fires requiring the assignment of incident management teams were largely the state's fiscal responsibility.

Notable in 2007, the Caribou Hills Fire started in June and threatened the community of Ninilchik as well as many homes, recreational cabins and businesses in the Caribou Hills and along Oilwell Road. An Alaskan Type 2 Incident Management Team was assigned. The Susitna River Fire occurred at the same time and threatened a number of remote homes and cabins near Trapper Lake in the Susitna Valley and required the mobilization of an interagency Incident Management Team. Although the weather in the interior in August and September was not as prone to fires as it has been in recent years, unprecedented fire activity in the western Lower 48 and Canada led to above normal mobilization of Alaskan fire resources to support that activity. For the first time ever, DOF mobilized ten engines for a total of 51 days to fires in the Lower 48. This provided a much needed service to the overworked federal suppression agencies while giving DOF employees' valuable experience and bringing money back to the state. The Anaktuvik River Fire on Alaska's North Slope started in July and continued to burn into late September. This fire grew to over 300,000 acres, with much of the growth occurring in September. This was the largest and latest burning fire ever recorded on the North Slope.

The lengthening fire season and increased fire activity requires the constant rotation of firefighting personnel, including incident management teams and suppression crews. In the past four years in Alaska, there have been 37 requests for Incident Management Teams between 20 different fires and fire complexes. In addition to responding to fires in Alaska, the Division of Forestry has been called on to support fire activity in Canada and the Lower 48 when resources are available. This support ensures that reciprocating resources are available to help in Alaska when needed and gives State of Alaska firefighters invaluable experience. During this same four year time period, the Division of Forestry mobilized approximately 600 individual overhead personnel, fourteen Type 1 or Type 2 20-person crews, and 98 smokejumpers from the lower 48. Additionally, six Air Tankers, ten helicopters, and 1 infrared mapping aircraft were requested by DOF from the Lower 48 and Canada.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2009

No significant changes in results are anticipated at the current funding level.

Major Component Accomplishments in 2007

Fire Program budgeting was previously split in Forest Management and Development and Fire Suppression, and is now in Fire Suppression Activity and Fire Suppression Preparedness.

- Successfully suppressed 94% of the 230 wildland fires in critical protection at 10 acres or less exceeding the goal of 90%. This measure is highly dependent upon conditions including weather, winds, number of simultaneous fires, etc. This trend supports an outcome of decreased wildland/urban interface fires that reach project fire level, thus saving the state suppression costs and protecting public lives and property.
- Successfully suppressed 93% of 236 wildland fires in critical and full protection at 10 acres or less, exceeding the measure of 90%. These urban/ interface fires were suppressed by firefighters in Tok, Fairbanks, Delta Junction, Copper River, McGrath, Anchorage, the Mat-Su Valley, and Soldotna. This trend supports an outcome of successfully suppressing an increasing number of wildland/urban interface fires that require extended and more expensive attack.
- Mobilized 48 (16-person) Type 2 EFF village crews for fires in Alaska and 40 (19-person) Type 2 EFF village crews to the Lower 48. The DOF Type 1 crew was mobilized twice to the Lower 48. Total State payroll for emergency Firefighters was \$4.1 million for CY07. Hiring EFF crews supports an outcome of increased employment for Alaskans in rural areas that have few sources of income as well as cost-effective support of Alaskan fire suppression efforts.
- Provided two Aerial Supervision Modules for a combined total of 51 days to the State of Oregon through the Northwest Compact cooperative agreement. Sharing of resources through participation in the NW Compact provides an outcome of reciprocal assistance when Alaska experiences resource shortages during high levels of fire activity.
- The State provided the Incident Commander, and other key personnel to the Alaska Interagency Incident Management Team, which was assigned to fires in Montana in 2007. Participation on National Type I teams provides outcomes of invaluable experience and reciprocating service to Alaskan firefighters, particularly in wildland-urban interface.
- Provided Alaskan aviation vendors with income from thirteen 90-day and one 45-day aircraft contracts for helicopters, air tankers and fixed wing aircraft used to support wildland and wildland/ urban interface fire suppression. Economic support of Alaskan aviation vendors results in an outcome of a healthier Alaskan aviation sector and increased employment.
- Managed and responded to a total of 280 wildland fires in both wildland and wildland/urban interface areas on 134 million protection acres. A diversified outcome effect results in increased employment, increased economic benefit to vendors, and protection of life and property.
- Provided fire weather forecasting 7 days per week during the fire season, providing critical information to managers making decisions to restrict open burning, position firefighters and aircraft in certain areas, and call in more resources. The outcome allows Forestry to preposition initial attack for quick response during high fire danger and take other actions that result in more efficient fire management. The outcome, which provides more efficient fire management, saves the State money.
- Analyzed daily lightning occurrence data to determine areas where wildland fires are most likely to occur. Provided aircraft detection to areas of multiple strikes and provided rapid response to fire starts in areas with high value natural resources and human improvements. The outcome allows Forestry to preposition crews and send aerial detection to areas of high lightning occurrence for quicker initial attack.
- Payments to 1,000+ vendors who supplied additional aircraft detection, commodities and supplies during fire suppression activities this season. This major economic influx supports an outcome of increased employment and an increased economic stimulus to the state's economy.
- Purchased firefighting capabilities from the federal government saving the state duplication of services and funding. This supports an outcome of more efficient government.

Statutory and Regulatory Authority

Alaska Statutes - Title 41

Section 41.15.010 - 41.15.170

Section 41.15.200 - 41.15.240

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Fire Suppression Activity Component Financial Summary

All dollars shown in thousands

| | FY2007 Actuals | FY2008 Management Plan | FY2009 Governor |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Non-Formula Program: | | | |
| Component Expenditures: | | | |
| 71000 Personal Services | 11,243.8 | 3,152.3 | 3,152.3 |
| 72000 Travel | 943.0 | 150.8 | 150.8 |
| 73000 Services | 11,511.6 | 8,464.8 | 8,464.8 |
| 74000 Commodities | 2,779.8 | 1,905.0 | 1,905.0 |
| 75000 Capital Outlay | 17.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 77000 Grants, Benefits | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 78000 Miscellaneous | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Expenditure Totals | 26,495.6 | 13,672.9 | 13,672.9 |
| Funding Sources: | | | |
| 1002 Federal Receipts | 12,236.8 | 5,460.4 | 5,460.4 |
| 1004 General Fund Receipts | 13,626.5 | 6,712.5 | 6,712.5 |
| 1007 Inter-Agency Receipts | 44.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 1108 Statutory Designated Program Receipts | 588.1 | 1,500.0 | 1,500.0 |
| Funding Totals | 26,495.6 | 13,672.9 | 13,672.9 |

Estimated Revenue Collections

| Description | Master Revenue Account | FY2007 Actuals | FY2008 Management Plan | FY2009 Governor |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Unrestricted Revenues | | | | |
| None. | | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Unrestricted Total | | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Restricted Revenues | | | | |
| Federal Receipts | 51010 | 12,236.8 | 5,460.4 | 5,460.4 |
| Interagency Receipts | 51015 | 44.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Statutory Designated Program Receipts | 51063 | 588.1 | 1,500.0 | 1,500.0 |
| Restricted Total | | 12,869.1 | 6,960.4 | 6,960.4 |
| Total Estimated Revenues | | 12,869.1 | 6,960.4 | 6,960.4 |

**Summary of Component Budget Changes
From FY2008 Management Plan to FY2009 Governor**

All dollars shown in thousands

| | <u>General Funds</u> | <u>Federal Funds</u> | <u>Other Funds</u> | <u>Total Funds</u> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| FY2008 Management Plan | 6,712.5 | 5,460.4 | 1,500.0 | 13,672.9 |
| FY2009 Governor | 6,712.5 | 5,460.4 | 1,500.0 | 13,672.9 |