

State of Alaska FY2010 Governor's Operating Budget

Department of Natural Resources Fire Suppression Activity Component Budget Summary

Component: Fire Suppression Activity

Contribution to Department's Mission

Manage wildland fires in the safest, most efficient and cost-effective manner possible, commensurate with values at risk, on all state, municipal and private lands.

FY2010 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

FY2010 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 recognized this and 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 (DOF) to be ready to respond to wildland fires a month earlier than historically. State of Alaska Firefighters adheres 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 2008 Fire Season, 221 of 254 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.

Personnel with Incident Command System (ICS) training and experience 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 seasonal employees. 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 2008 was a relatively light fire season for recent years with only 8,528 acres burned, it followed by three 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, 82% (221 of this year's 271 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 2008, the Homestead Fire started near the city of Kenai in June and required a quick and coordinated attack that included engines, helicopters, smokejumpers, crews and air tankers. This fire was surrounded by residential and commercial development and it was only through effective and coordinated action by multiple agencies that it did not become a major disaster. Although the weather in the interior in July, August and September was not as prone to fires as it has been in recent years, unprecedented fire activity in the western Lower 48, particularly in Northern California, led to above normal mobilization of Alaskan fire resources to support that activity. 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 lengthening fire season and increased fire activity requires the constant rotation of firefighting personnel, including incident management teams and suppression crews. In the past five years in Alaska, there have been 39 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 five year time period, the Division of Forestry mobilized approximately 800 individual overhead personnel, fourteen Type 1 or Type 2 IA 20-person crews, and 98 smokejumpers from the lower 48. Additionally, six Air Tankers, ten helicopters, and one infrared mapping aircraft were requested by DOF from the Lower 48 and Canada.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2010

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

Major Component Accomplishments in 2008

- Successfully suppressed 97% of the 177 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 95% of 221 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 7 (16-person) Type 2 EFF village crews for fires in Alaska and 35 (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 about \$3 million for the 2008 fire season. 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 80 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 Type 1 Interagency Incident Management Team, which was assigned to two complex fires in California in 2008. 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 254 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

	FY2008 Actuals	FY2009 Management Plan	FY2010 Governor
Non-Formula Program:			
Component Expenditures:			
71000 Personal Services	10,543.0	3,152.3	3,152.3
72000 Travel	1,118.8	150.8	150.8
73000 Services	6,245.7	8,464.8	8,464.8
74000 Commodities	1,535.9	1,905.0	1,905.0
75000 Capital Outlay	6.0	0.0	0.0
77000 Grants, Benefits	0.0	0.0	0.0
78000 Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0
Expenditure Totals	19,449.4	13,672.9	13,672.9
Funding Sources:			
1002 Federal Receipts	11,538.2	5,460.4	5,460.4
1004 General Fund Receipts	7,759.6	6,712.5	6,712.5
1108 Statutory Designated Program Receipts	151.6	1,500.0	1,500.0
Funding Totals	19,449.4	13,672.9	13,672.9

Estimated Revenue Collections

Description	Master Revenue Account	FY2008 Actuals	FY2009 Management Plan	FY2010 Governor
Unrestricted Revenues				
Other Restricted Revenue	51000	57.0	0.0	0.0
Unrestricted Total		57.0	0.0	0.0
Restricted Revenues				
Federal Receipts	51010	11,538.2	5,460.4	5,460.4
Statutory Designated Program Receipts	51063	151.6	1,500.0	1,500.0
Restricted Total		11,689.8	6,960.4	6,960.4
Total Estimated Revenues		11,746.8	6,960.4	6,960.4

**Summary of Component Budget Changes
From FY2009 Management Plan to FY2010 Governor**

All dollars shown in thousands

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2009 Management Plan	6,712.5	5,460.4	1,500.0	13,672.9
FY2010 Governor	6,712.5	5,460.4	1,500.0	13,672.9