



2008 National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group Long-Term Implementation Strategy

Created: July 2008

Karyn Wood

 Karyn Wood
 US Forest Service
 Assistant Director of Operations, NIFC

John A. Glenn

 John Glenn
 Bureau of Land Management
 Fire Operations, NIFC

Brian McManus

 Brian McManus
 US Fish & Wildlife Service
 Fire Director, NIFC

Tom Nichols

 Tom Nichols
 National Park Service
 Acting Fire Director, NIFC

for Dan Smith
Vicki Christensen

 Dan Smith
 National Association of State Foresters
 Fire Director, NIFC

Lyle Cerliffe

 Lyle Cerliffe, Chair – National MAC Group
 Bureau of Indian Affairs
 Fire Director, NIFC

Mike Dougherty

 Mike Dougherty
 US Fire Administration
 Wildland Fire Program Manager

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 2
Current Situation 3
Outlook 3
Seasonal Analysis..... 5
Resource Management..... 7
Military and International Assistance..... 9
Summary10

The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group Long Term Implementation Strategy was created in July 2008 and tiers off the NMAC Preparedness Strategy for 2008. The strategy is situationally driven and will be updated as the season progresses to reflect the current situation, and as warranted by wildland fire activity and events tied to the National Response Framework. Strategy updates will be numbered and dated as they are added to this document.

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of unprecedented fire activity in California and extended fire activity throughout the South, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating (NMAC) Group is searching for ways to address short-term and long-term future challenges in wildland fire management; specifically the increasing competition for resources and escalating internal and external political pressures.

Despite the best efforts of NMAC, large fires continue to drain the finite pool of national resources. Uncharacteristically severe wildfire seasons have rigorously tested organizational capacity, lending more credence and importance to the role of a National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group. This strategy will assist in facing the challenges that lie ahead over the next 90 days, and will provide information and considerations to help NMAC effectively address and evaluate current and future conditions and provide considerations to sustain adequate staffing levels and response capability.

CURRENT SITUATION

Fire activity has been high in Northern California, Southern California, Southern Area and the Southwest. Currently, the greatest number of uncontained fires is in Northern California, and it is reasonable to assume the average containment times and resource demands for those fires may be longer than normal due to extremely dry fuels and prolonged drought.

Once other geographic areas become more active later this summer, resource demands and competition will increase. Strategically allocating sufficient initial attack resources in the Northern Rockies, Northwest and Eastern Great Basin to handle any new fire starts should be a high priority to avoid large fire emergence in these areas since their containment times are known to be longer than in some other geographic areas.



Figure 1: CA FSPro - for a larger view, see Appendix A

OUTLOOK

Late July, Early August

Northern and Southern California and the Pacific Northwest will have the need for the majority of national resources. While current large fires in Southern California should be contained by the end of July, higher- than- normal potential due to dry fuels and periods of dry weather conditions is expected in the Sierra Foothills which could potentially support large fire activity. Some large fires from the late June lightning events in Northern California will remain uncontained. The need for national resources in these two geographic areas should not diminish as prolonged hot and dry conditions add to already record-setting Energy Release Component (ERC) values. High potential for periods of dry thunderstorms remains in Northern California and portions of Southern California through the period with continued drying

Historic Federal Agency Fire Occurrence July 21 – July 31 (from 2000 – 2006)

Average Number and Acres burned by Geographic Area

Geo Area	Average # of Fires	Average # of Lg Fires (> 1000 acres)	Average Acres Burned	Most Acres/Year Burned	Least Acres/Year Burned
EGB	246	9	56,696	480,715	15,160
NR	194	8	114,016	548,163	939
WGB	113	6	71,213	354,557	531
NW	216	7	71,333	290,635	13,389
S. CA	114	5	81,704	275,912	3,188
N. CA	145	3	26,504	136,782	58
RM	285	4	27,035	54,601	6,764
AVG Total	1313	42	448,501	2,141,355	40,029

of fuels at higher elevations increasing the potential for new large uncontained fires. With large uncontained fires remaining in parts of California, the California Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (CALMAC) needs to develop a long term strategy to handle ongoing large fires with fewer resources.

Abundant grass fuels and below-average rainfall may increase the fire potential in Wyoming and South Dakota during this period. Cured fuels across the Southern Plains and Hill Country of Texas and some of eastern New Mexico could also lead to above average fire potential in these areas.

In addition to resource demand for wildfires, there could be a significant demand for resources as a result of a predicted normal to above-normal hurricane season (see figure 2). The current projection is for 12-16 named storms with six (6) to nine (9) hurricanes and two (2) to five (5) major hurricanes. The highest activity is expected in August.

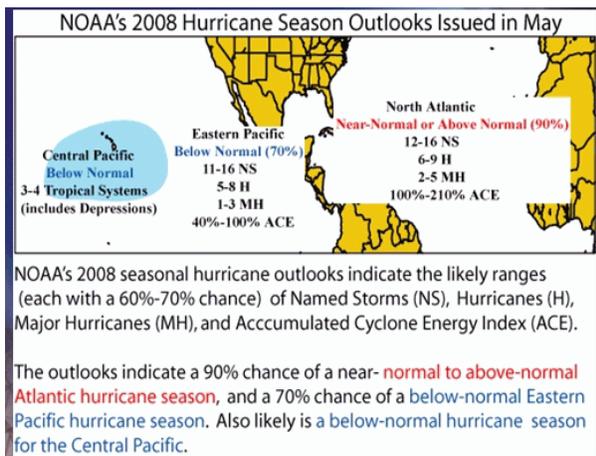
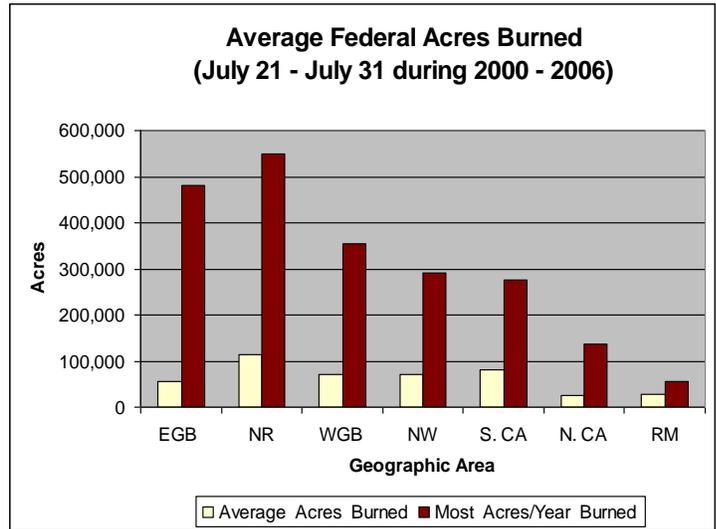


Figure 2: NOAA's Hurricane Outlook

Standard procedure is to evaluate what resources (teams, cache vans, and radios) are available for use by the Department of Homeland Security in the event that an all-hazard event occurs. This varies depending on wildfire activity, but can potentially impact availability of resources.

Competition for IMTs, T1 crews and aircraft should be high in Northern and Southern California. Texas and Eastern New Mexico will mostly compete for aircraft with some needs for IMTs and only minor support with out-of-area crews expected.

Late August, Early September

High fire potential in Northern California and portions of Southern California will persist into the period. While some potential in the desert areas of Southern California will diminish during August through October, fire activity and demand for resources will remain high due to prolonged hot and dry weather and drying of fuels at higher elevations. Typically, the fire season in the Northern Rockies and the Northern half of the Eastern Great Basin should begin to impact national resources at this time. Most of the activity this year is expected east of the Cascades and in mid to lower elevations

elsewhere. Large fires can be expected and could place nominal demands on national resources for this time of the year. Western Texas and Eastern New Mexico will continue to be hot and dry and have significant potential for fire activity.

Demand for national resources should follow the same general pattern as in July and August. Increased potential for fire activity, fatigue from a prolonged season in Northern California, portions of Southern California, and Texas combined with an active hurricane season could put more strain on already scarce resources.

Late September, October

Fire potential remains high in Northern California with the possibility of increased activity in portions of Southern California due to persistent drought and seasonal Santa Ana wind events. Potential resource relief could come from an early end to fire season in the Northwest due to higher humidity, stable atmospheric conditions, and lower threat of lightning, however this should not be counted on. Activity in the Northern Rockies should increase with warm and abnormally dry conditions increasing the potential for large grass fires in eastern portions of the area. These fires normally do not place large demands on national resources. Extended drought in portions of the Southern Area could result in an active late summer-early fall fire season.

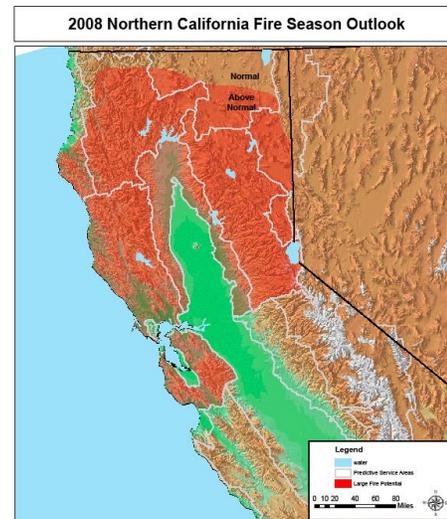


Figure 3: CA Fire Season Outlook

Resource allocation decisions made earlier in the season could have significant impacts on capability during this period. The effectiveness of utilization and conservation of resources throughout a prolonged active fire season could significantly affect resource fatigue and availability. Resource shortages are compounded by the normal decrease in availability during this period. An active hurricane season could also place large demands on national resources at this time.

SEASONAL ANALYSIS

The number of days it takes to contain a fire varies primarily by fire size and fuel type. An analysis to determine the average days to containment by geographic area (see *Figure 4*) was completed to better understand the impacts of large fire occurrence on resource demands.

The graph illustrates that for fires greater than 100 acres, there is a considerable difference in average containment times between the western geographic areas. Large fires that occur in the Northern Rockies can take over 50 days on average to contain as compared to the Eastern Great Basin, Northwest or Northern California where large fires generally take 25-28 days to contain. Western Great Basin, Southern California

and the Rocky Mountain Areas generally have the shortest large fire containment times, due to the predominance of grass and brush fuels in those areas. Currently, the greatest number of uncontained fires is in Northern California, and it is reasonable to assume the average containment times and resource demands this year for those fires may be longer and greater than normal due to extremely dry fuels. Once other geographic areas become more active later this summer, resource demands and competition will increase. Strategically allocating sufficient initial attack resources in the Northern Rockies, Northwest and Eastern Great Basin to handle any new fire starts should be a high priority to avoid large fire emergence in these areas since their containment times are known to be longer than in some other geographic areas.

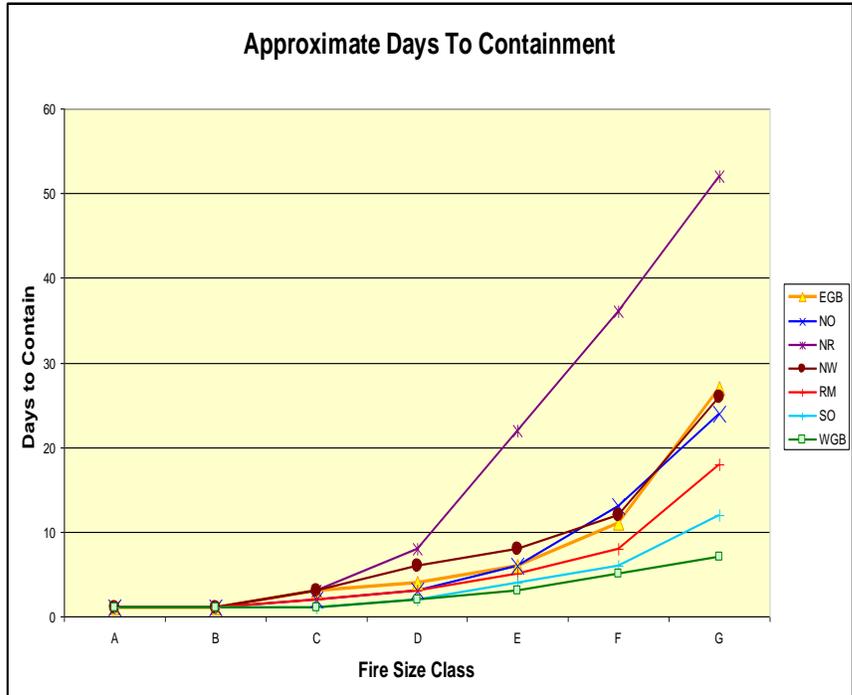


Figure 4: Fire Size Class vs. Days to Containment

The 2008 Predictive Service Potential map (figure 5), combined with fire regime condition class imaging from Land Fire data for California, shows the extent of the area forecast to have above normal fire potential in California, condition class 2&3.

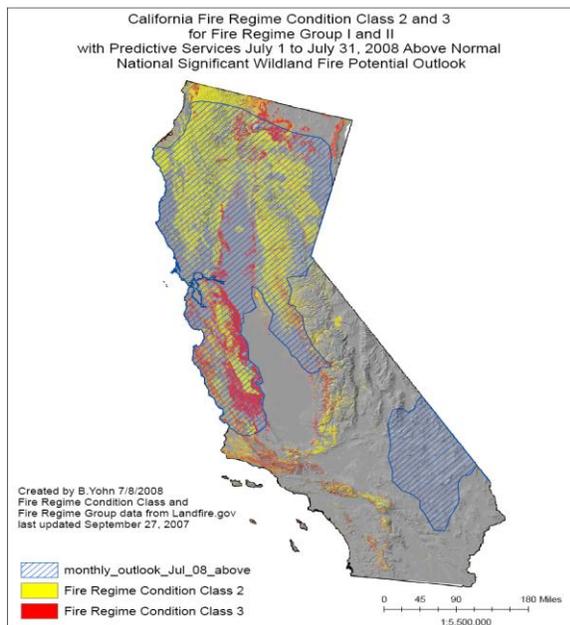


Figure 5: CA Potential vs. Condition Class

As the season progresses, these abnormal fuel loads will increase the possibility for higher intensity and longer duration fires; likely for the remainder of the summer and fall. The most severe areas indicated by the data, will remain in northern and central California.

Close monitoring of the situation, and determination of fire growth potential will be imperative to ensure that long-term fires don't become a resource sink throughout the year.

The table below shows an overview of the historic likelihood that fires will continue to be a problem in various geographic areas by

certain dates. Red highlighted cells are those having a >70% chance; cells highlighted in orange have between 36%-69% chance; white cells have 15%-35% and green cells have less than 15% chance of environmental conditions remaining sufficiently dry to support large fire growth.

**Average Geographic Area Likelihood
For Fire Season to Continue**
(based on 1990-2007 data)

Area	Sept. 1	Sept. 15	October 1	October 15
Northern California	96%	89%	71%	46%
Southern California	92%	82%	64%	42%
Pacific Northwest	90%	73%	36%	07%
Rocky Mountains (WY, SD, & W.CO only)	75%	54%	29%	09%
Great Basin (ID & N. NV only)	74%	50%	24%	11%
Northern Rockies	73%	54%	29%	12%

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Effective utilization of resources will be critical to meet needs for the rest of the 2008 season. While the majority of the current activity is located in portions of three geographical areas and not as widespread as in recent fire seasons, the anticipated length of time to containment and the volume of resource needs is expected to stress firefighting capability to critical levels. Decisions on resource utilization should be made with full utilization of predictive services tools such as Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) to evaluate potential values at risk and predict the chance of success. Centralized management and control of some or all critical resources should be implemented.

The following considerations should guide decisions and actions on the allocation and utilization of national resources:

- Firefighter and public safety will not be compromised.
- Expect fire support at PL5 levels to continue through the rest of the summer. Therefore competition for all resources will continue to be very high. The 5 federal wildland fire agencies, National Association of State Foresters (NASF), and U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) have all sent letters from top management to the field, asking line officers to ensure their employees support fire operations to the extent of their training and qualifications. This need is expected to last the duration of the fire season.

- Units with fires need to be strategic and develop plans to manage their fires based on protection of life and property, natural resources, scarcity of resources nationwide and plan strategy and tactics that utilize the full spectrum of tactical options where possible. Decisions must reflect the goal of using available firefighting resources to manage the fire situation for the most effective, most efficient and safest means available over the long duration. Areas with multiple fires must consider the development of strategies that optimize success over time.
- Along with protection of life and property, initial attack (IA) remains our top priority and units need to utilize drawdown plans developed commensurate with meeting their needs for IA.
- When Geographic areas experience multiple incidents, command structures should be developed to provide a strategic management framework to analyze priorities and allocate critical resources between several incidents. This is especially important for aviation resources and Type 1 Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHCs). Plans should include daily priorities for tactics and the commensurate resources needed to implement the key priority actions. Active monitoring for success and adjusting resources as indicated is required.
- GACC support groups should be considered to enhance aviation desks or support units. It is considerably more cost effective to add staff to support aviation to insure effective and efficient operations, than to under-utilize expensive and available aircraft.
- Geographic areas need to be prepared through contingency planning to provide resources for national priorities occurring elsewhere. It is imperative that MAC groups, area commands, and incident management teams develop and maintain plans to ensure that resource extraction is carried out in a thoughtful manner to minimize disruption of ongoing operations.
- Maximize opportunities to organize resources in a grouping or module concept with the goal of mission accomplishment on multiple fires, rather than single resource, long-duration assignments on a single fire. An example would be to mobilize groupings of T1 crews used in an Area Command or Theater setting to accomplish the needs of many fires during a two week assignment, rather than sending one crew that struggles to meet the objectives of one fire over the same period.
- Effective fatigue management will increase our opportunity for success. As such, rest and rotation plans need to be developed and implemented bearing in mind the next 90 days. Employees should prepare for multiple fire assignments throughout the remainder of the western fire season.

- Incident management teams should prepare to rotate through assignments at longer intervals than the routine 14 day assignment.
- Incident management teams should prepare to deploy in configurations that meet the needs of the situation at hand which may be nonstandard. Flexibility is required.
- Incident management teams should prepare to manage multiple fires over extensive land bases.
- Area command teams should prepare to manage multiple fires over extensive land bases and prepare to build organizations commensurate with the task assigned.
- State and Federal agencies should continue to reach out to local cooperators for resource needs. Agencies should work closely with district, zone, and local dispatch centers to identify resources available and facilitate mobilization.
- Prevention messages should be developed in a coordinated effort with partners on fire restrictions and closures.

MILITARY & INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

During critical periods of fire activity, considerations in balancing federal, state and local wildland fire resources and supplementing those resources with the activation of military assets and international resources should be done strategically.

The existing assessment criteria should be used in addition to some decision support factors to help strategically determine the appropriate time(s) to execute an order.

- Use military and international assistance to relieve firefighting forces – not as additional forces. The activation of these resources takes an extended period of time, so monitoring the time remaining on critical resources assigned to ongoing incidents will allow for timely replacement.
- Commitment with military and international forces is for a minimum period of 30 days. Bringing in assistance with less than 30 days of expected on-going activity is not reasonable.
- The uses of military and international resources are costly propositions; consider the use of non-wildland fire partners (APHIS, Local Fire, etc.) Type 3 organizations which would be a more efficient and less costly alternative.

SUMMARY

Significant season-long demand for national resources will occur in California, West and Central Texas/Eastern New Mexico and portions of the Southern Area due to prolonged high fire activity. Shorter periods of high demand may occur in the Northwest, Great Basin, Rocky Mountains and Northern Rockies but these are not expected to be persistent.

An early end to fire season may be seen in the Northwest but because of a prolonged active season in California fatigue and resource availability may severely strain capability of meeting needs for national resources late in the season. In addition, demands on all wildland fire resources for hurricane and natural disaster response under the authority of the National Response Framework (NRF) should be anticipated.