



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Division of Fire and Aviation  
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## **Strategic Communication Plan**

# **Wildland Fire Budget and Workforce Realignment – FY2013-2016**

*(Information in response to the March 1, 2013 Sequestration included)*

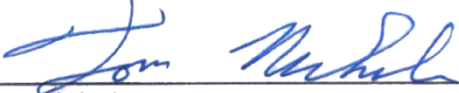
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## Signature Page

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## Table of Contents

[Signature Page](#)

[Executive Summary](#)

[Introduction: Purpose and Intent of the Strategic Communication Plan](#)

[Objectives of the Strategic Communication Plan](#)

[Leadership and Management Commitment](#)

[Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Background:](#)

- [The National Park Service and the Wildland Fire Management Program](#)
- [The Wildland Fire Management Program Budget: History, Budget Structure and Workforce Implications](#)
- [Oversight and Management of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Budget](#)
- [Designing the NPS Wildland Fire Management Organization of the Future](#)

[Communication Strategy and Tactics](#)

- [Strategy](#)
- [Tactics](#)
  - [Key Audiences](#)
  - [Messages: Long Term](#)
  - [Messages: Short term](#)
- [Questions and Answers - Responses to the Why, How, What, When and Where](#)
- [Appendices](#)
  - [Appendix A - Timeline of Communications to Date](#)
  - [Appendix B – Key Messages / Questions and Answers](#)
  - [Appendix C - Information Delivery and Distribution Mechanisms / Outreach and Engagement](#)

Additional information posted at: <http://go.nps.gov/firealignment>

- Funding Updates
- Support Documents and Products [PowerPoints, Briefing Materials, etc.]

## **Executive Summary**

In 2010, the wildland fire management programs within the Department of the Interior (DOI) began to experience budget reductions, principally in Hazard Fuels Reduction (HFR). In the case of the National Park Service, this program was reduced from approximately 33 million dollars in Fiscal Year 2010 to approximately 23 million dollars in Fiscal Year 2013. The DOI Wildland Fire Program budget request for Fiscal Year 2014 would reduce this program to approximately 15 million dollars, if approved in the actual Fiscal Year 2014 appropriation. Based on the current trends in federal budget funding and implementation of the 2011 Budget Control Act, it is anticipated that these downward trends will continue into Fiscal Year 2016.

The previous years' budget reductions have had significant effects on HFR programs and staff within the National Park Service, and various workforce strategies have already been implemented to absorb the reductions. While there is still considerable uncertainty concerning the actual HFR budgets for Fiscal Year 2014 and beyond, it is prudent to continue to develop workforce management strategies in the event that deeper budget reductions do occur and such strategies are needed.

This communication document provides information on the history of the NPS wildland fire budget; workforce management strategies currently being utilized to allocate the reduced HFR budget; the timeline to develop future workforce management strategies; and the role of NPS leadership during this period of budget reduction and uncertainty.

Most importantly, because the budget reductions affect many NPS employees, the document is intended to provide information that can be used to provide a consistent level of information to all employees on the situation

## **Introduction: Purpose and Intent of this Strategic Communication Plan**

The purpose of this *Strategic Communication Plan: Wildland Fire Budget and Workforce Realignment – FY 2013-2016* is to address the communication need associated with this topic. The intent of the plan is to serve as a reference document; provide background to the situation; describe goals and objectives; recognize leadership and management commitment; address roles and responsibilities; and define communication strategies and tactics.

Following a period of rapid growth between 1989 and 2001, the wildland fire management program of the National Park Service has experienced a series of increasingly significant reductions in its budget. Based on the current trends in federal budget funding and implementation of the 2011 Budget Control Act, it is anticipated that these downward trends will continue into Fiscal Year 2016, not only within the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program, but also in other federal programs.

It is critical to have clear, consistent, concise, and continual communications which encourage dialogue and a common understanding of the situation, and our response to it. Collectively, our goal is to address the potential impacts of further budget reductions in a thoughtful and collaborative manner; minimize the impacts on the workforce; and maintain the integrity of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program.

The primary users of this plan are expected to be leaders, managers, supervisors, and employees at the national, regional and local unit levels, and individuals who will serve as credible communicators for the budget and workforce situations. While these individuals are expected to work together to deliver consistent messages, each office has its own unique protocol, information distribution methods, and communication systems.

Effective communication is an on-going process. While it is anticipated that the core elements of this plan will endure, updates will be adapted to meet the situation. Activities, actions, documents, and short-term messages that support this effort will be dynamic; therefore, a page on InsideNPS has been established at <http://go.nps.gov/firealignment> to serve as a central information source to address the changing needs and serve as a repository for memoranda, key communication tools, timelines, and workforce realignment process documents.

## **Objectives of the Strategic Communication Plan**

The primary objective of this plan is to inform key audiences within the National Park Service about the ongoing budget and organizational challenges of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program. This will be achieved by providing:

- 1) Detailed information on the state of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program and budget to the identified audiences;

- 2) Information on organizational planning efforts and potential workforce realignments;
- 3) A platform for consistent and collaborative communications between National Park Service headquarters, regions, and park units.

## **Leadership and Management Commitment**

The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management organization of the future will be created through commitment to the following:

- Leaders at all levels will participate in communication efforts during all phases of the workforce realignment process.
- Process transparency will serve as the “Golden Rule.”
- On-going distribution of information will be aggressive and thorough.
- Opportunities for employee discussion at all levels will occur during all phases of workforce realignment.
- Fulfilling Labor-Management obligations.

Full success of this effort will only be accomplished through the combined efforts of leaders, managers, staff, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

In order to achieve the objectives of this communications plan, individuals within the following workgroups have critical roles and responsibilities:

- **Senior National Park Service Leadership’s role is to:**
  - Understand the issue and the complexity of the changing budget situation and its potential effects on the larger organization.
  - Provide clear strategic organizational leadership and guidance to the future direction of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program.
  - Work with the senior levels of government, such as the Department of the Interior, the Office of Management and Budget, and the U.S. Congress to defend and communicate National Park Service wildland fire priorities and needs.
  - Ensure appropriate senior-level engagement relating to wildland fire objectives throughout the agency.

- Be prepared to fully support realignment efforts through all means necessary with a primary goal of minimizing or eliminating impacts to the permanent workforce.
- **National Park Service Division of Fire and Aviation Management’s role is to:**
  - Oversee the national wildland fire program working in close concert with regions and parks to develop and implement sustainable organizational solutions.
  - Facilitate robust and regular communications between other federal, state, tribal, local, and non-government organizations at the national level.
  - Ensure effective communications by facilitating, coordinating, and overseeing collaborative discussions about the Wildland Fire Management Program.
- **Field Leadership:**
  - Understand the complexities of the issue as it relates to field operations and potential impacts on park-based fire workforce.
  - Work with regional and national leadership to develop viable strategic options that help manage realignment and optimization efforts.
  - Communicate effectively with NPS staff and local partners in how changes may impact local NPS capabilities.
  - Encourage open dialogue and conversation about these circumstances and efforts being taken to address them.
- **Fire Staff**
  - Understand the complexities of the issue as it relates to field operations and potential impacts on park-based fire workforce.
  - Perpetuate an open and honest communication flow that is based on facts.

## **Background**

Background information is provided below on the following topic areas:

- The National Park Service and the Wildland Fire Management Program
- The Wildland Fire Management Program Budget: History, Budget Structure, and Workforce Implications
- Oversight and Management of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Budget

- Designing the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Organization of the Future

*Note to readers: Strategic response to the wildland fire budget and workforce realignment planning began well before Sequestration occurred on March 1, 2013. Sequestration, specifically the five percent cut across the board, is complicated by the fact that the wildland fire budget had been diminishing since Fiscal Year 2010 and is anticipated to continue its downward trend into Fiscal Year 2016. For example, the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program now has approximately 100 permanent vacancies. Based on Fiscal Year 2010, this represents 14.5 % of the total permanent workforce.*

*Because Sequestration is essentially one more factor which wildland fire staff have considered in overall budget management and target projections, it is difficult to separate the effects of Sequestration uniquely from the effects of previous and future budget trends in other budget processes.*

### **The National Park Service and the Wildland Fire Management Program**

The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program is critical to the mission of the Service, protecting visitors, employees, infrastructure, cultural and natural resources, and community values from unwanted fire, as well as using fire to achieve resource management objectives and maintain fire dependent ecosystems and wilderness in an unimpaired state.

In response to the release of the *Leopold Report* in 1963, the National Park Service developed a complex wildland fire management program involving not only fire suppression to protect park assets, neighboring communities, and our ecosystems from unwanted fire, but also the use of fire to restore and maintain ecosystems where fire is essential. The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program has been a leader in the interagency fire community for decades, and the essential components of its success include a scientific foundation, rigorous planning, proficient operations, and effective communication and education.

### **The Wildland Fire Management Program Budget: History, Budget Structure, and Workforce Implications**

#### ***History***

Unlike most of the National Park Service, which is supported by Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) funding, the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program is largely funded through a separate Department of the Interior (DOI) Wildland Fire Management appropriation. This appropriation also supports the fire programs of other DOI bureaus: Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Beginning in 1981 and until 2005, the National Park Service developed and used the FIREPRO budget planning and allocation model. FIREPRO was used to allocate these DOI wildland fire



funds based on the level of fire activity in the park units. The DOI appropriation was intended to be used as a supplement to the ONPS funds already allocated by the agency to support its wildland fire program. It was not intended to fully fund the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program.

Following the 1988 and 2000 fire seasons, significant increases occurred in the DOI wildland fire appropriation. The FIREPRO model was used to allocate these funds as additional permanent and seasonal staffs were added to the program. The use of FIREPRO was discontinued in 2005, and subsequently replaced by the Planning Data System (PDS) in 2009. PDS is a tool that can be used to analyze and depict core staffing needs within budget levels to ensure support for the National Park Service mission. PDS is discussed further in the section titled [\*Oversight and Management of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Budget\*](#).

Beginning with the May 2000 Cerro Grande Fire in Bandelier NM, the year 2000 proved to be a historically significant fire year. In August 2000, President Clinton asked the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to prepare a report to respond to the severe fires, reduce the impacts of wildland fires on rural communities, and ensure sufficient firefighting resources in the future. The Departments responded with *A Report to the President in Response to the Wildfires of 2000* (September 8, 2000), which may be found at <http://clinton5.nara.gov/CEQ/firereport.html>. The key points discussed in the report included:

- Continue to make all necessary firefighting resources available.
- Restore landscapes and rebuild communities.
- Invest in projects to reduce fire risk (*this point addressed expediting and expanding landscape-level fuel treatments*).
- Work directly with communities and expand community participation.
- Be accountable.

This report, combined with the Fiscal Year 2001 wildland fire funding appropriation, became known as the *National Fire Plan* (NFP). The impact of the NFP was exponential due to significant increases in funding and staffing, and the expectations that large influxes of funding and staffing would solve the historic fuels and resulting fire “problem.”

To put the funding increase in perspective, the report recommended nearly \$1.6 billion above the President’s Fiscal Year 2001 budget to both Departments, and included additional funding of about \$340 million for fire preparedness resources, new funding of \$88 million to increase cooperative programs in support of local communities, and approximately \$390 million for fuels treatment and burned area restoration.

The increase also included about \$770 million to replenish and enhance the Departments' fire suppression accounts, which were depleted by the costs of the fires in 2000, along with funds to repay Fiscal Year 2000 emergency transfers from other appropriations accounts.

In the National Park Service, from Fiscal Year 2000 to Fiscal Year 2001, the Preparedness allocation jumped from \$20.5 million to \$30.8 million. During the same time period, the Hazard Fuels Reduction (HFR) allocation went from \$11.4 million to \$34.7 million

Due to the amount of the incoming funds and the direction to staff up quickly, not all funds were dispersed with the use of a FIREPRO analysis, the model used during this period to distribute funds based on historic fire occurrence and prescribed fire activities. FIREPRO lacked the ability to ascertain entirely how the organization would fund a larger program.

### ***Budget Structure***

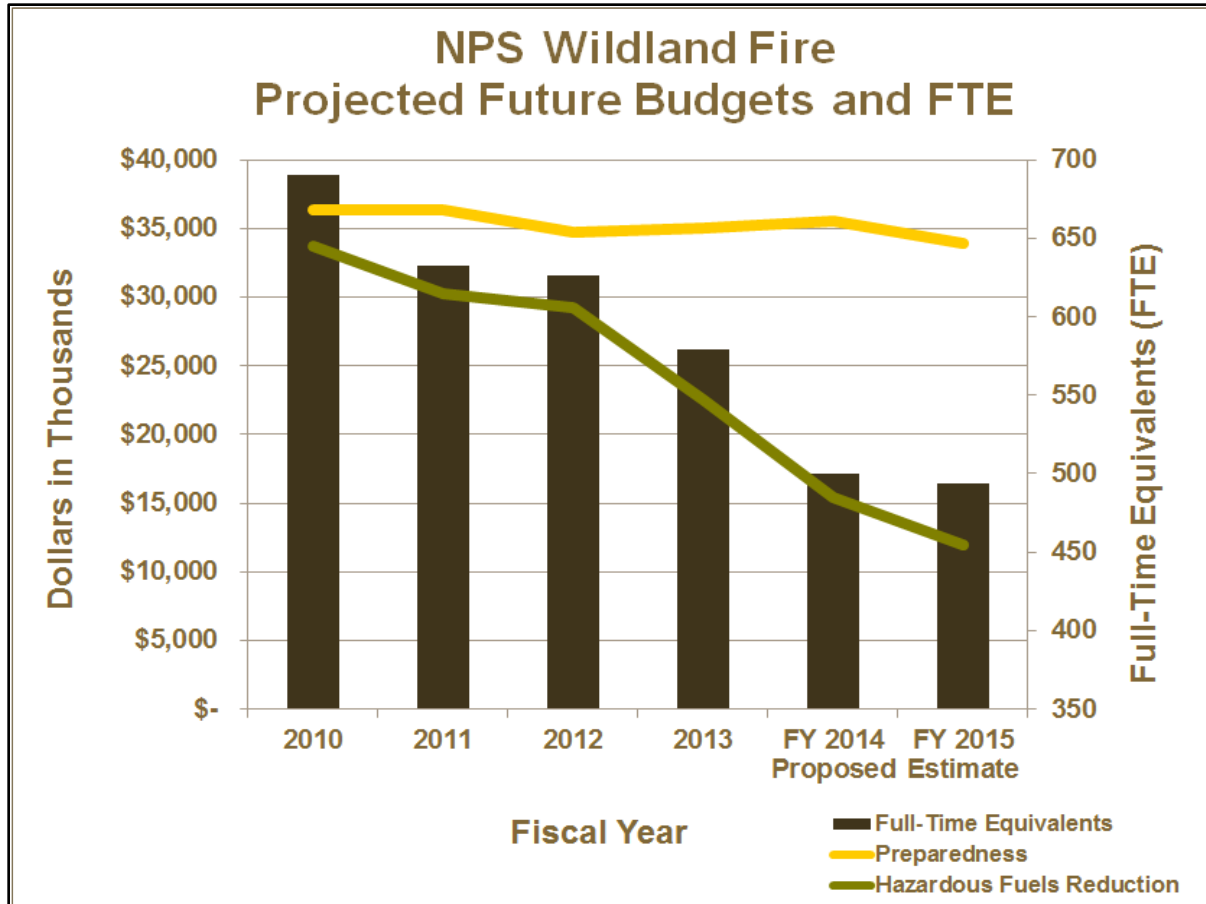
There are three major funding sources within the DOI wildland fire management appropriation: Preparedness, Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Suppression.

- Preparedness funds non-emergency and predictable aspects of the fire management program. Preparing for wildfire response, program planning and oversight, and positions such as fire management officers, engine crews, dispatchers, and more, fit under preparedness funding.
- Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFR) funds staffing and projects focused on lessening the risks of wildfires to communities, park infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, as well as with restoration and maintenance of ecosystems. Prescribed fire staff, fire science and ecology, communications, and GIS positions are often funded via the HFR account.
- Suppression funds the emergency and unpredictable aspects of responding to wildfires, such as travel and overtime. These funds are also used to perform post-wildfire emergency stabilization work, augment wildfire response capabilities through use of severity funding during periods of above normal / high fire conditions, and to support response to nationally declared emergencies.

In addition there are other, smaller, sources of funding, including Fire Facilities, Burned Area Rehabilitation, and the Joint Fire Science Program.

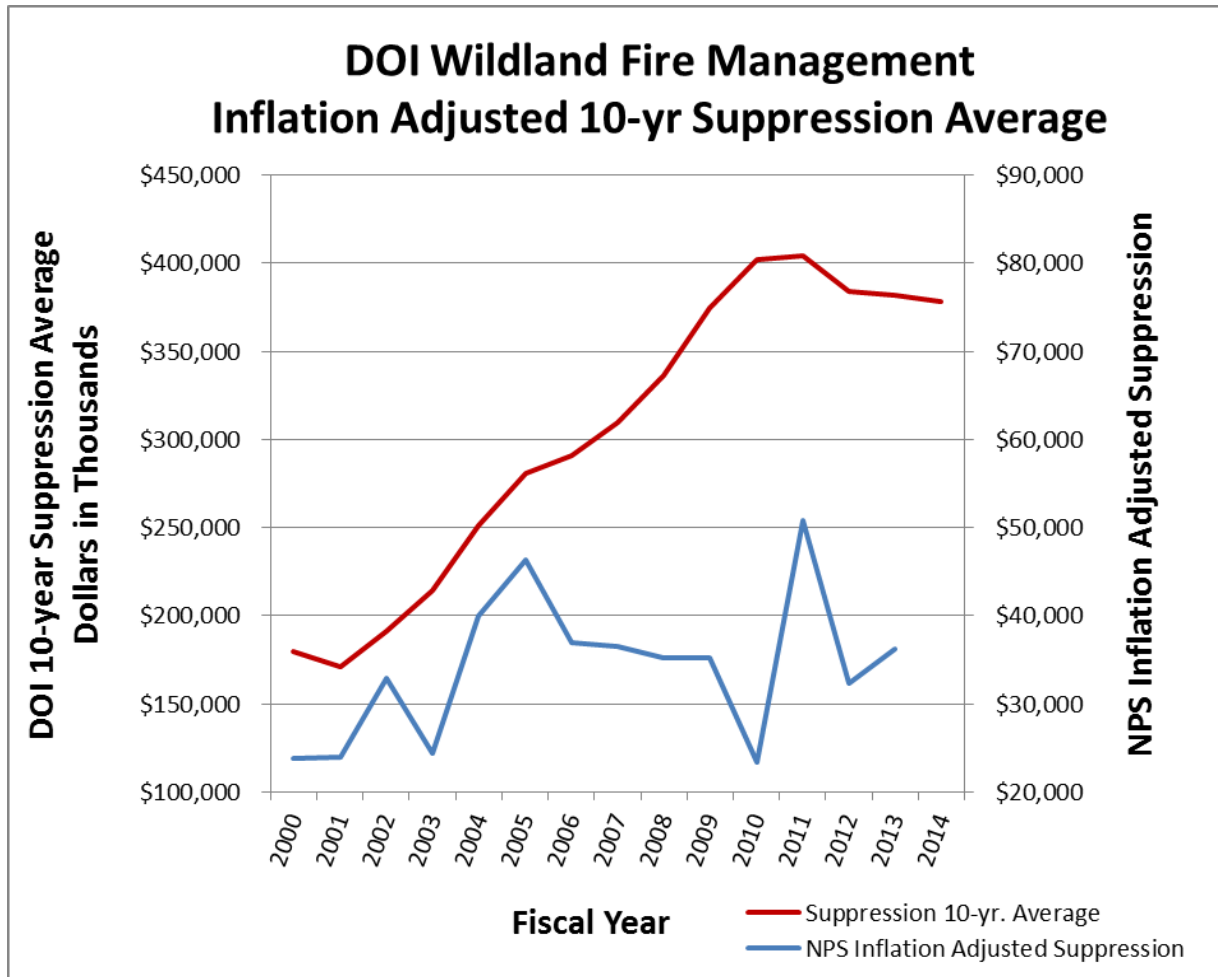
### ***Workforce Implications***

In the National Park Service, while the Preparedness program is relatively stable, the Hazardous Fuels Reduction program has been reduced from \$33 million in Fiscal Year 2010 to \$23 million in Fiscal Year 2013, or about 30 percent. In Fiscal Year 2014, the hazard fuels program is projected to be approximately \$15 million. (Note: this number is subject to change.)



This graphic displays the downward budget trends in National Park Service Wildland Fire, specifically in the Hazardous Fuels Reduction program.

Since Fiscal Year 2010, the suppression program, the account that funds the emergency and unpredictable aspects of responding to wildfires, has grown 10 percent. The requirement to fully fund the rising costs in the suppression account from the preparedness and hazard fuels reduction accounts, along with the reduction in the overall amount of appropriated DOI HFR, has compounded the magnitude of required reductions within the HFR account.



Since Fiscal Year 2010, the ten year suppression average, which is the basis for calculating the annual funding for the suppression account, has grown 10 percent.

A significant percentage of the wildland fire funding is associated with personnel costs. In response to the potential funding reductions, the National Park Service estimates that by Fiscal Year 2016, it may need to reduce the workforce by approximately 25-30 percent as compared to Fiscal Year 2010. This would equate to a reduction of approximately 150-200 full-time equivalents in the wildland fire program from Fiscal Year 2010 to Fiscal Year 2016.

Attrition, retirement, and transfers have created approximately 100 permanent vacancies which already count towards this reduction. It is unlikely that all of the remaining 50-100 full-time equivalents can be absorbed through these methods. The purpose of the workforce realignment process is to identify where the remaining 50-100 full-time equivalents would come from.

However, beyond simply reducing the National Park Service workforce by 150-200 full-time equivalents, there is a need to insure that the highest priority jobs are filled in the highest priority places to best meet the NPS mission. Some positions which are currently vacant may be filled in the future, while other positions may remain vacant as they become unencumbered. Another part

of the workforce realignment process is a long-term, strategic approach that can be used to develop an organization that meets the National Park Service mission as fully as possible given budget constraints.

National Park Service staff is working through a variety of scenarios. Although future funding levels are unknown, leadership is committed to doing everything possible to limit impacts on all HFR-funded positions and the entire National Park Service wildland fire workforce.

Additionally, the agency will do everything possible to minimize impacts on encumbered positions. Working on a variety of options with the Department of the Interior, there may be the potential to reallocate funding within the larger Interior fire allocation, helping to provide the program with more time to manage the realignment efforts.

### **Oversight and Management of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Budget**

The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program is managed collaboratively through the Fire Management Leadership Board (FMLB), which consists of the seven regional fire management officers and leadership from the national fire office in Boise, making recommendations to the Chief, Division of Fire and Aviation Management and approved by the Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection. For the past three years, the FMLB has been addressing the declining fire budget and more recently, the regional directors and deputy regional directors have participated in these discussions.

Along with the development of budget reduction strategies, FMLB identified the core elements needed to maintain the national-level National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program, as well as park and regional-level wildland fire management programs. These include:

- science and ecology work,
- sound planning,
- safe and proficient operational response, and
- an effective fire communication and education program.

All of these components support the National Park Service goals of safe and effective response to wildland fire, community protection, and the enhancement of the health and resiliency of the landscapes we manage. These elements are also essential to the mission of the National Park Service, which the fire program continues to support, regardless of the budget situation.

Recognizing the implications on the workforce, the FMLB has agreed to the following guiding principles:

- Existing organizations may change to accommodate workforce realignment due to budget constraints.

- Future fire management organizations will continue to be based on the work that needs to be accomplished to support the goals of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program.
- While building the fire management organization of the future, position management principles will be followed. The process will be closely coordinated with human resources offices at all levels.
- The workforce realignment process will be openly discussed with all National Park Service staff and with our external partners and cooperators, many of whom are going through similar wildland fire workforce realignments. This includes assuring that our Labor-Management obligations are honored / fulfilled in light of the fact that some wildland fire personnel are covered by a union. We are committed to sharing information with employees and their exclusive union representative.

### **Designing the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Organization of the Future**

Discussing potential staffing reductions is difficult. However, the National Park Service has an opportunity to design and implement a fire program that most effectively supports the Service's mission during a period of declining budgets.

In 2009, the FMLB commissioned the development of a new wildland fire planning tool called Planning Data System (PDS). This tool can be used to analyze and depict core staffing needs within budget levels to ensure support for the National Park Service mission.

Working together, national, regional, and park staffs will be using PDS outputs to aid development of future target organizations. Once approved, transition plans will be created that will identify the required tasks to take the program from current staffing numbers to a more sustainable organization under projected budget levels.

The National Park Service will also ensure that unit fire management budget allocations are better matched with historic patterns of wildfire and prescribed fire activity, which are measured by PDS. While the budget is the current and immediate driver for this realignment, the end result will better align the program to adapt to the future.

While PDS can help identify scenarios which can guide the allocation of the wildland fire budget, the selection of which scenarios to implement will require the involvement of the Fire Management Leadership Board and subject matter experts. PDS is a *tool* that addresses workload in order to suggest staffing to meet the identified need. Active involvement of staff from all disciplines and across regional boundaries is critical in order to develop sustainable scenarios.

Wildland fire leadership at the national and regional levels have engaged, and will continue to engage, National Park Service leadership and staff to participate in the evaluation, selection, and implementation of new wildland fire staffing strategies. These discussions are critical due to the

potential impact to our workforce, changes in traditional organizational structures, and changes in how we collaborate with our bureau and interagency partners and our publics, as well as perceived changes to our primary work responsibilities.

## **Communication Strategy and Tactics**

### **Strategy**

In order to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in this document, the overarching strategy for implementation of this communication plan will be achieved by engaging leadership and management at all levels of the Service in the budget and workforce realignment discussions.

Consistent engagement and messaging, combined with leadership and management's commitment to participate in the communication and outreach efforts, will enable us to thoroughly inform our key audiences.

It is expected that national, regional and park-level officials will utilize their current communication channels and protocols to disseminate workforce realignment information and engage key audiences in the discussions on the effects of this process. Individuals facilitating these discussions will be well versed in the topic and selected by their respective offices, regions and groups according to their specific protocol.

Recognizing the need to engage senior National Park Service officials, significant outreach occurred before the development of this plan. Communications completed to date are found in [Appendix A](#).

### **Tactics**

#### **Key Audiences**

National Park Service employees, and where applicable, their exclusive union representative, are the primary audiences that need to be informed, educated and involved in discussions about the wildland fire budget and status of the workforce realignment. The main concern is continuing open, honest, and ongoing communications internally with employees.

Reaching the primary audiences will be achieved as a result of working with the secondary audiences, which include National Park Service leadership, fire leadership, human resources, and DOI leadership. Individuals within these audience groups will subsequently serve as communicators to their key audiences.

The third tier of audience groups includes interagency partners, city, county and state government leaders, as well as traditional and non-traditional media.

During all phases of the workforce planning and implementation, communication and outreach efforts will be extended to all key audiences. Initial communication and outreach efforts occurred

during the winter 2013 fire management meetings in the regions. The regional fire management officers are the appropriate points of contact (POC) for input and feedback in follow-up to these winter meetings.

### **Messages**

Messages are not intended to be a script, but are to serve as a guide for communicators to focus on the key themes addressed in this plan. Messages are general concepts that can be incorporated into discussions, print materials, and other resources used in communication, education, information and collaborative discussions.

Supporting points provide detail for the messages and enable individuals to further explain the identified topic and reach audiences on a personal level.

Key messages are followed by supporting points. For example:

- Key message.
  - Supporting point.

Below, readers will find the Long Term / Core Messages followed by supporting points. These are also available in [Appendix B](#). A discussion in question and answer format follows, which is fully fleshed out in [Appendix B](#).

#### **Long Term / Core Messages:**

- The National Park Service wildland fire workforce is professional and highly competent.
  - The quality of our workforce, our program, and the National Park Service wildland fire mission is not in question. Previous and projected budgets are driving workforce realignment, and the effort to reduce the workforce is not targeted at any one person or any particular group within the wildland fire program. It is programmatic and Servicewide.
  - The future fire management organization will continue to be based on the work that needs to be accomplished in parks to support the mission and wildland fire goals of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program.
- The 2000 fire season brought national attention to the severity of the fuels conditions and the threats to homes in the Wildland Urban Interface.
  - The National Fire Plan (NFP) was a direct result of the 2000 fire season. The impact of the NFP was exponential due to:
    - Significant increases in funding and staffing.



- The expectations that large influxes of funding and staffing would solve the historic fuels and resulting fire “problem.”
- The amount of the incoming funds and the direction to staff up quickly. This led to not all funds being dispersed with the use of a FIREPRO analysis, the model used during this period to distribute funds based on historic fire occurrence and prescribed fire activities. FIREPRO lacked the ability to ascertain entirely how the organization would fund a larger program.
- Significant lessons learned from the exponential growth of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program include:
  - Target the funds and the staffing to where the historic wildfires and prescribed fires have occurred.
  - Staffing organization must remain flexible in order to accommodate budget fluctuations.
- Safe and effective response, which enhances landscapes and protects communities, is the core emphasis of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Program.
  - The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program focuses on safe and effective response to wildland fire, community protection, and the enhancement of the health and resiliency of the landscapes we manage.
  - Wildland fire is a critical component of the National Park Service’s mission as well as its natural and cultural resource management programs.
    - The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program supports the intent of the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”
- It is a challenging time for the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program.
  - During this sensitive and trying time, our intent is to minimize the impacts to our employees and to take care of our own.
  - Existing organizations may change to accommodate workforce realignment due to previous and projected budget constraints.
- We are developing the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program of the future.

- This realignment allows us to refocus on the National Park Service core mission and engage and collaborate with other National Park Service disciplines to accomplish work.
- While the previous and projected budget is the current and immediate driver for this realignment, the end result will better align the program to match fire staff with park wildfire and prescribed fire workloads.
- The National Park Service has an opportunity to design and implement a fire program that most effectively supports the National Park Service mission during this period of declining budgets and into the future.

**Questions and Answers - Responses to the Why, How, What, When and Where:**

*A discussion in question and answer format follows, responses are fleshed out in [Appendix B](#).*

**The Why:**

- Why are we proceeding with workforce realignment?

**The How:**

- How will workforce realignment be addressed?
- Am I at risk of losing my job?

**The What:**

- What actions have taken place to date?
- What are the impacts to fire staffing as a result of the overall budget situation?
- What is the impact of losing / reducing the hours of seasonal fire staff?
- What did you plan for? What is being eliminated due to the reduced funding?

**The When:**

- When will implementation of the new organization occur?

**The Where:**

- Where will the fire organization structure change?

A note to communicators: be sure to tell the National Park Service wildland fire story. In [Appendix B](#), readers will find samples of stories grouped under the core themes in the Cohesive Strategy: response and preparedness, resiliency, and community collaboration and protection.

### **Messages: Short Term**

Due to the dynamic nature of the budget, short-term messages will be developed during each phase. Topics targeted for discussion under each phase are outlined below:

- **Phase I - Organizational Planning:** This phase involves workforce management planning to describe the future organization based on the *National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Strategic Plan* and workload data analysis.
  - Initial PDS analysis results delivered to regions.
  - Perform unit-level organizational planning.
  - Complete regional coordination and adjustment process.
  - National fire office reviews regional adjustment spreadsheets and makes recommendations to regions regarding proposed organizational plans.
  - Regional directors approve future target organization for Fiscal Year 2016 with implementation transition beginning in Fiscal Year 2014 if necessary.
  - National development and allocation of “base” budgets.
- **Phase II - Transition Planning:** This phase focuses on identifying the necessary actions required to move from our current staffing levels to the future target organization.
  - To be determined.
- **Phase III – Implementation:** This phase implements the required actions identified in the transition plan for full implementation of the future target organization.
  - To be determined.

## Appendix A – Timeline of Communications to Date

- **February 2010 - Present:** Monthly meetings with the FMLB working on organizational planning options.
- **February 2010:** National Park Service Fire and Aviation Workshop - briefed Fire Management Leadership Board (FMLB) and fire management officers on declining budget trends for Fiscal Year 2011.
- **May 2010:** FMLB face to face meeting - discussed budget trends and need for workforce management. FMLB approves budget and workforce strategies document.
- **October 2010:**
  - FMLB approves initial Across the Board (ATB) budget reductions.
  - Interior Fire Executive Committee (IFEC) approves goal that fuels programmatic funding will not exceed 50 percent of the bureaus' fuels allocation by 2014.
- **January 2011:** FMLB task group initiates Strategic Workforce Management Tasking.
- **July 2011:** National Park Service National Ranger Council briefed on budget challenges.
- **October 2011:** FMLB approves initial ATB reductions for Fiscal Year 2012.
- **May 2012:** FMLB discusses workforce management and magnitude of impacts from the Budget Control Act and the HFR priorities of the Department and Office of Management and Budget (OMB). FMLB identifies the need to engage National Park Service leadership.
- **June 2012:**
  - National Park Service deputy regional directors (DRDs) briefed on long-term budget trends for wildland fire and staffing implications.
  - National Park Service regional directors (RDs) briefed on wildland fire budget challenges and workforce management issues.
- **October 2012:** DRDs updated on status of Planning Data System (PDS) development, implementation framework, and timeline for probable 2014 implementation.
- **December 2012:** DRDs updated on data analysis, model outputs, and decision space for RDs/DRDs.
- **January 2013:** DRD updated on PDS and workforce management process.
- **February 2013:** RDs briefed on fire workforce realignment process.
- **March 1, 2013:** Sequestration occurs, impacting workforce realignment communication efforts.
- **April 29, 2013:** Briefed DOI Office of Wildland Fire.
- **May 2013:**
  - May 7: Briefed National Park Service National Leadership Council (NLC).
  - May 9: Briefed DOI staff.
  - May 13: Secretary Jewell visited the National Interagency Fire Center.
- **June 2013:**
  - June 3: Briefed National Park Service Division of Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) staff
  - June 4: Senior FAM staff updated WASO Human Resources.
  - June 18: Webinar update presentation to National Park Service employees.

## Appendix B - Key Messages / Questions and Answers

### Long Term / Core Messages:

- The National Park Service wildland fire workforce is professional and highly competent.
  - The quality of our workforce, our program, and the National Park Service wildland fire mission is not in question. Previous and projected budgets are driving workforce realignment, and the effort to reduce the workforce is not targeted at any one person or any particular group within the wildland fire program. It is programmatic and Servicewide.
  - The future fire management organization will continue to be based on the work that needs to be accomplished in parks to support the mission and wildland fire goals of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program.
- The 2000 fire season brought national attention to the severity of the fuels conditions and the threats to homes in the Wildland Urban Interface.
  - The National Fire Plan (NFP) was a direct result of the 2000 fire season. The impact of the NFP was exponential due to:
    - Significant increases in funding and staffing.
    - The expectations that large influxes of funding and staffing would solve the historic fuels and resulting fire “problem.”
    - The amount of the incoming funds and the direction to staff up quickly. This led to not all funds being dispersed with the use of a FIREPRO analysis, the model used during this period to distribute funds based on historic fire occurrence and prescribed fire activities. FIREPRO lacked the ability to ascertain entirely how the organization would fund a larger program.
  - Significant lessons learned from the exponential growth of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program include:
    - Target the funds and the staffing to where the historic wildfires and prescribed fires have occurred.
    - Staffing organization must remain flexible in order to accommodate budget fluctuations.
- Safe and effective response, which enhances landscapes and protects communities, is the core emphasis of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Program.

- The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program focuses on safe and effective response to wildland fire, community protection, and the enhancement of the health and resiliency of the landscapes we manage.
  - Wildland fire is a critical component of the National Park Service’s mission as well as its natural and cultural resource management programs.
    - The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program supports the intent of the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”
- It is a challenging time for the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program.
- During this sensitive and trying time, our intent is to minimize the impacts to our employees and to take care of our own.
  - Existing organizations may change to accommodate workforce realignment due to previous and projected budget constraints.
- We are developing the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program of the future.
- This realignment allows us to refocus on the National Park Service core mission and engage and collaborate with other National Park Service disciplines to accomplish work.
  - While the previous and projected budget is the current and immediate driver for this realignment, the end result will better align the program to match fire staff with park wildfire and prescribed fire workloads.
  - The National Park Service has an opportunity to design and implement a fire program that most effectively supports the National Park Service mission during this period of declining budgets and into the future.

## **Questions and Answers - Responses to the Why, How, What, When and Where:**

### **The Why:**

#### **Why are we proceeding with workforce realignment?**

- Over the past few years, the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program has experienced a series of significant budget reductions which are projected to continue

well into the future. The realignment is needed to reconcile staffing levels with current and projected budget allocations.

## **The How:**

### **How will workforce realignment be addressed?**

- The Planning Data System (PDS) is a tool that will support the development of future target organizations at the park, regional, and national levels.
  - The future fire management organization will continue to be based on the work that needs to be accomplished while supporting the mission and wildland fire goals of the National Park Service.
  - Position management principles will be followed while building the fire management organization of the future. The process will be closely coordinated with human resources offices at all levels.

### **Am I at risk of losing my job and/or should I be searching for another job in another agency?**

- Our intent is to minimize the impacts to our employees and to carefully design realignment options that can be implemented over time.
  - Despite funding reductions, the National Park Service will continue to have a professional and progressive wildland fire program capable of meeting a variety of mission-related objectives. Changing agencies for fear of losing a job is premature at this point and should be carefully calculated against each employee's career goals and situation. We have already reduced staffing levels significantly through normal attrition.
  - National Park Service leadership is taking a long-term, practical approach in light of the previous and projected budget reductions in order to capitalize on natural attrition, retirements, and career moves to avoid adverse impacts to our employees. We will be working closely with our human resources professionals when developing specific implementation plans/strategies and will communicate more detailed information about various human resources flexibilities that we may use as part of our implementation.
- The workforce realignment process will be openly discussed with all National Park Service staff and our external partners and cooperators, many of whom are going through similar wildland fire workforce realignments.

- National and regional leadership and management are committed to an open communication process and fulfilling our Labor-Management obligations.
- The Planning Data System (PDS) is a tool that addresses workload in order to suggest staffing to meet the identified need. It does not address or target specific positions.
- Active involvement of staff from all disciplines and across regional boundaries is critical in order to develop achievable and sustainable staffing scenarios. Conversations about the budget situation, with communications focused on collaboratively discussing how to implement the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program of the future, will be ongoing during this process.
- The future program will meet National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program goals and objectives; however, to be sustainable under declining budgets, the organizations we employ to meet the mission will be configured differently.

### **The What:**

#### **What actions have taken place to date?**

- Wildland fire leadership at the national and regional levels have been engaged with, and will continue to engage, National Park Service leadership and staff to participate in the evaluation, selection, and implementation of new wildland fire staffing strategies.
- The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program has enacted a hiring freeze on its permanent positions. Critical positions will be evaluated and exemptions will be discussed by the Fire Management Leadership Board.
- These discussions are critical due to the potential impact to our workforce, changes in traditional organizational structures, how we work with our agency and interagency partners, and the public's perceptions of our ability to carry out the primary work responsibilities of the wildland fire program.
- A timeline of discussions that have taken place to date related to workforce realignment may be found in [Appendix A](#) of this communication plan.
- Information releases and timely updates will be critical to keep leadership, management, employees and partners informed of the budget status and progress of the workforce realignment.

#### **What are the impacts to fire staffing as a result of the overall budget situation?**

- The department-wide hiring freeze on all permanent and seasonal positions was a direct result of Sequestration, which began on March 1, 2013. The National Park Service has received an exemption to hire seasonal employees within our 5% reduction target.



- Regarding seasonal hiring, numbers are being rolled up via the regions to the WASO Comptroller's office. Parks and regions will need to cross reference and use the numbers provided by WASO.
- All requests for recruitment of permanent positions funded by the wildland fire program will be evaluated by the Fire Management Leadership Board as part of the workforce realignment effort.
- The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program relies heavily on “the militia,” other fire-qualified permanent and seasonal staff within non-fire divisions in a park, to assist with wildfire response. The availability of militia is impacted by decreased ONPS funding, which will no doubt have an impact on wildland fire's dependence on this supplemental staffing source.

### **What is the impact of losing / reducing the hours of seasonal fire staff?**

- There will be reduced staffing for wildfire response as well as less frequent prevention patrols.
- In some cases, there is a potential that response time will be affected by reduced staffing and multiple requests for response. However, the intent remains to respond as quickly and safely as possible.
- The National Park Service will not enter into any new cooperative agreements that are not essential for preparedness or readiness for the 2013 season. All existing agreements will be reviewed and canceled if considered to no longer be a necessity. This will impact national park neighbors and communities that border parks.
- Fuels projects will be selected based on how it enhances the following, listed in priority order as follows:
  - Fire Response
  - Fire Adapted Communities
  - Fire Resilient Landscapes

Some fuels projects, particularly those that create fire resilient landscapes and enhance ecosystem health, may not occur due to reduced staff and HFR funds.

- Positions funded by the fuels account form a large part of the response to wildfires, especially during peak periods of wildfire activity. Reduced HFR funds, and therefore HFR staff, will decrease the number of firefighters available during periods of high wildfire activity.

- Training: Only critical trainings will be approved.
- Information / education – Seasonal staffing is typically utilized for visitor and community information and education about fire management policies and activities. Hiring fewer seasonals will reduce visitor information and education outreach efforts for wildland fire needs, which are often done in partnership with other divisions within a park.

Additional potential impacts include:

- Response to structural fires may be impacted as the structural fire engine companies in parks may be staffed with wildland fire staff.
- Reduced fire funding for staff impacts the ability to maintain aviation operations such as helitack crews. Many of the parks' search and rescue programs are supported by the fire-funded aviation program and these crews. Resource management is also supported by fire-funded aviation assets. Aviation contracts will require additional ONPS funding as fire funding is reduced, to maintain a consistent level of aviation activities and staff.

#### **What is being cut back eliminated due to the reduced funding?**

- Prescribed fire activities and mechanical treatments will be reduced and some individual projects will be eliminated.
- Cuts to fairshares / interagency programs may occur.
- The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program has enacted a hiring freeze on permanent fire positions. Critical positions will be evaluated and exemptions will be discussed by the Fire Management Leadership Board; exemptions are approved by the Branch Chief of Wildland Fire.

#### **The When:**

##### **When will implementation of the new organization occur?**

- This will be determined by actual budgets received over the next three years; any workforce realignment will be implemented in three phases, as follows:
  - **Phase I - Organizational Planning:** This phase involves workforce management planning using PDS to describe the future organization based on the *Wildland Fire Strategic Plan* and workload data analysis. This is the phase we are currently in.
  - **Phase II - Transition Planning:** This phase focuses on identifying the necessary actions required to move from our current staffing levels to the future target organization.

- **Phase III - Implementation:** This phase implements the required actions identified in the transition plan for full realization of the future target organization.

## **The Where:**

### **Where will the fire organization structure change?**

If required due to future budget allocations, the fire organization structure is anticipated to change at all levels – national, regional, and park levels. These changes will involve the use of the Planning Data System to assist with the strategies and decisions to reach the future target organizations. This strategic approach is needed to create an organization that meets the National Park Service mission. However, beyond simply reducing the National Park Service workforce, there is a need to insure that the highest priority jobs are located in the highest priority places to best meet the NPS mission.

### **Be Sure to Tell the Wildland Fire Story:**

Below you will find samples of stories grouped under the core themes in the Cohesive Strategy: response and preparedness, resiliency, and community collaboration and protection. Communicators are encouraged to share **local** stories about what we do in order to make a connection with the local contacts.

#### **Response and preparedness:**

- Cape Cod National Seashore, Massachusetts: *Partnership Training Builds Community Wildland Fire Preparedness* - <http://1.usa.gov/WG6i9A>
- Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Texas: *Efficient Response to El Capitan Fire* - <http://1.usa.gov/Y7Ts1S>

#### **Resiliency [Prescribed fire / landscape management / health]:**

- Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona: *Successful North Rim Prescribed Fires at Grand Canyon* - <http://1.usa.gov/X3rQGd>
- Acadia National Park, Maine: *State of Maine, National Park Service, and Local Partnerships Provide Community Wildland Fire Protection* - <http://1.usa.gov/Y7UGu8>

#### **Community collaboration and protection [Mutual aid, Partnerships, WUI]:**

- Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, California: *Lodge Prescribed Fire: Continuing Efforts to Keep Grant Grove a Fire-Adapted Human Community* - <http://1.usa.gov/WMAQzW>

- Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Missouri: *Community Wildfire Protection Plan Developed Collaboratively in the Ozarks* - <http://1.usa.gov/13U9lXH>
- Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado: *Local Relationships Limit Woodland Heights Fire Damage* - <http://1.usa.gov/YqeeWC>

## Appendix C - Information Delivery and Distribution Mechanisms / Outreach and Engagement

(Dates are fluid. Updates will be posted at <http://go.nps.gov/firealignment>. The following chart is to be used as a check sheet during the process.)

### Primary Audiences

Audience(s)*	Timeframe	Relevant Products	Distribution Mechanism	Spokesperson(s)	Status
<b>NPS – FAM Employees (FMPC and field staff, all groups)*</b>  <i>*Fire funded employees are listed first, however, informational briefings began with the FMLB in Fiscal Year 2011 and with NATIONAL PARK SERVICE leadership (below) in Fiscal Year 2012.</i>	April 2013 Ongoing	FAM All Employee Update	○ All Employee meeting(s)	Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	Complete Ongoing
	Early 2013	TBD	○ Email ○ InsideNPS ○ Facebook ○ VTC	Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	
	Spring 2013	“What is PDS” paper	○ InsideNPS ○ Facebook		Complete
	Summer 2013	Wildland Fire Strategic Plan	○ InsideNPS ○ NPS.gov/fire		
	TBD	PDS FAQs	○ InsideNPS ○ Facebook		

### Secondary Audiences

Audience(s)*	Timeframe	Relevant Products	Distribution Mechanism	Spokesperson(s)	Status
<b>NPS Leadership</b>	Ongoing	Director briefing paper	○ In person	Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	
	January 2013	Deputy regional directors' briefing	○ Webinar	Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	Complete Ongoing
	February 2013	Regional directors' briefing	○ Webinar	Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	Complete Ongoing
	Spring 2013	Communications Council briefing	○ Webinar	Roberta D'Amico	Complete
	May 2013	Executive (NLC) Council briefing	○ In person	Tom Nichols	Complete
	TBD	Budget Executive Committee briefing	○ Webinar	Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	

**Secondary Audiences, continued...**

<b>Audience(s)*</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Relevant Products</b>	<b>Distribution Mechanism</b>	<b>Spokesperson(s)</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>NPS Leadership</b>	January 2013 Ongoing	Regional budget officers' briefing	○ Webinar	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	Complete Ongoing
<b>NPS Fire Leadership</b>	Ongoing	Regional FMO/FMLB briefing	○ Webinar ○ Conference calls	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	Complete Ongoing
	January 2013 Ongoing	Regional budget analysts' briefing	○ Webinar	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	Complete Ongoing
	January 2013	PWR FMO meeting briefing	○ In person	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	Complete
	January 2013	IMR FMO meeting briefing	○ In person	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	Complete
	February 2013	AKR FMO meeting briefing	○ Webinar	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	Complete
	Spring 2013	MWR FMO meeting briefing	○ In person	Bill Kaage	Complete
	2013	NCR fire staff briefing	○ Webinar	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	
	2013	NER FMO meeting briefing	○ Webinar	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	
	Spring 2013	SER FMO meeting briefing	○ In person	Jeff Scott Bill Kaage	Complete
	TBD	Superintendent Webinars	○ Webinar	Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	
<b>Park Leadership</b>	February 2013	DOI <i>fire</i> budget leads' (Mauney et al) briefing	○ Webinar	Jeff Scott	Complete
<b>DOI Leadership</b>	April 29, 2013	OWF / Thorsen briefing	○ In-person	Cam Sholly Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	Complete
	Week of April 29, 2013	DOI fire directors' briefing	○ Webinar	Tom Nichols Bill Kaage	Complete

**Tertiary Audiences**

Audience(s)*	Timeframe	Relevant Products	Distribution Mechanism	Spokesperson(s)	Status
<b>Interagency Partners</b>	TBD	USFS and NASF fire director's briefing	○ Webinar		
<b>Local, County, State, Tribal and Federal Government Leaders</b>	TBD		○ TBD		

Additional information posted at: <http://go.nps.gov/firealignment>

- Funding Updates
- Support Documents and Products [PowerPoints, Briefing Materials, etc.]

*End of:*

*Strategic Communication Plan - Wildland Fire Budget and Workforce Realignment – FY2013-2016*