



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Inspector General**

Wildland Fire Management Overview

ER-IS-MOA-0010-2009-Wildlands Fire Inspection

May 2009



Photos courtesy of www.nps.gov

Primary Wildland Fire Management Activities

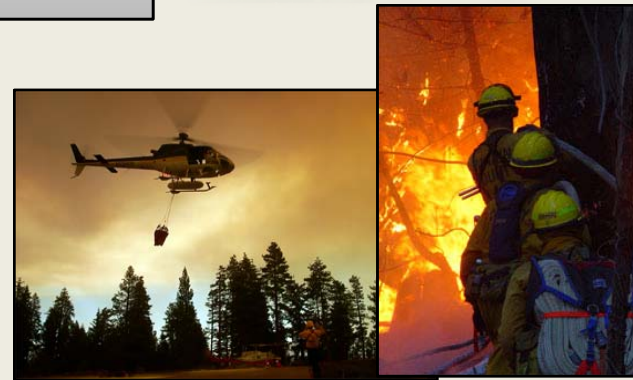
Preparation

Includes hiring and training personnel, deferred maintenance and capital improvements, equipment and supply purchasing, policy oversight and interagency coordination.



Suppression

Includes the total spectrum of management actions taken on wildland fires in a safe and cost-effective manner.



Prevention

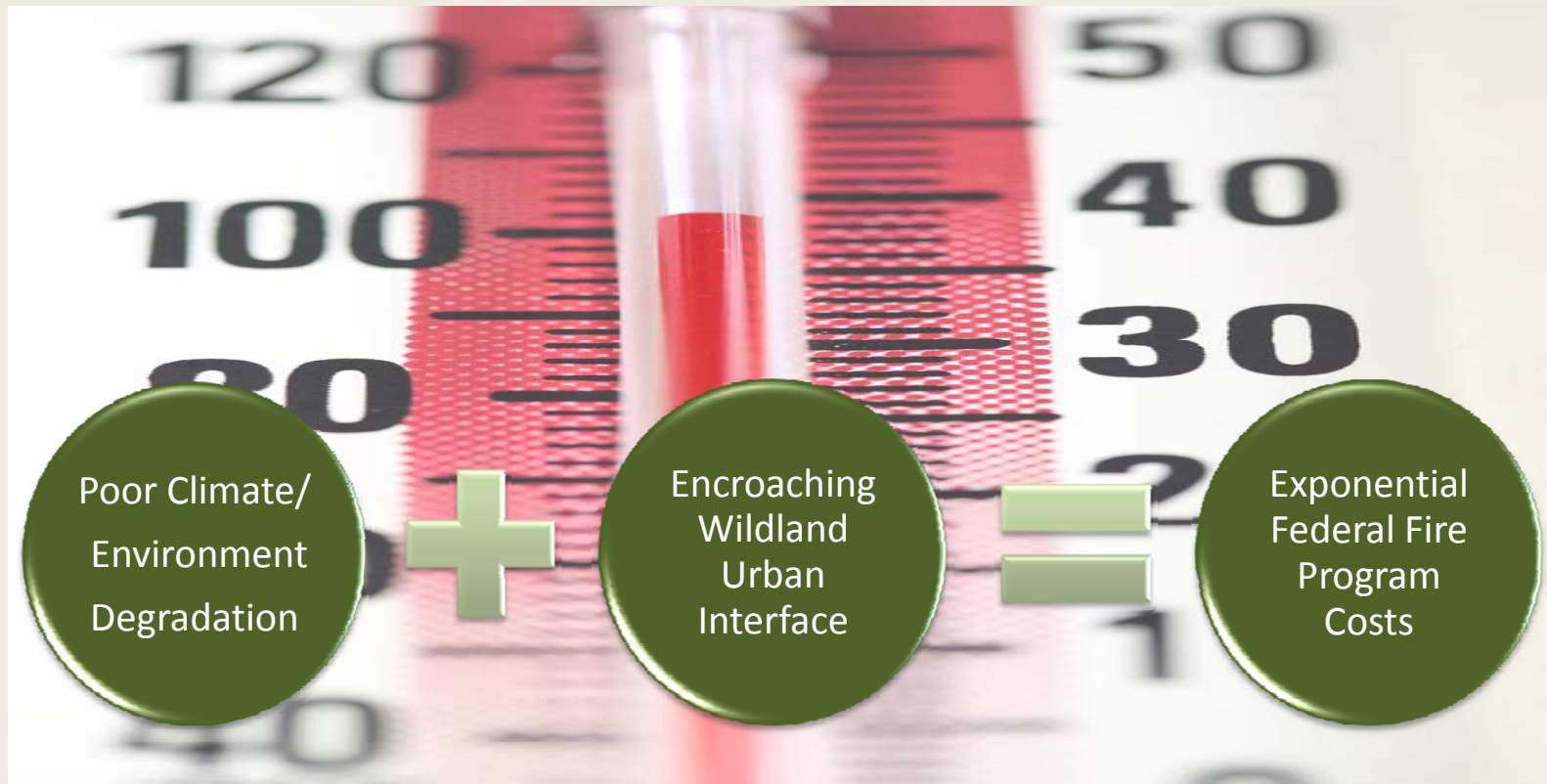
Includes the development and implementation of:

- Hazardous Fuel Reduction
- Wildland Urban Interface protection
- Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation
- Rural Fire Assistance



Photos courtesy of www.nps.gov

Congressional concern over Interior's ability to mitigate the threat of wildfire and its associated cost is at an all time high.



2003 Healthy Forest Restoration Act



Reduce wildfire risks to communities, municipal water supplies through fuel reduction projects



Improve commercial value of forest biomass that otherwise would increase risk of catastrophic fire or disease



Protect watersheds and promote forest and rangeland ecological health



Promote systematic information gathering concerning ecological threats



Improve early stage insect and disease detection



Promote, Restore, and enhance Forest ecosystem components

Interagency Wildland Fire Governance Structure



Why Do Fires Cost So Much?

20th Century human land use/mgmt practices suppressed natural activity

Resulting in abnormally large amounts of fuel (excess vegetation)

This causes fires to spread more rapidly, burn larger areas and burn more intensely

Record droughts have also increased fire risk and effects

With more people moving into the Wildland Urban Interface the fires are:

- Threatening more properties
- Threatening more lives
- Requiring more resources



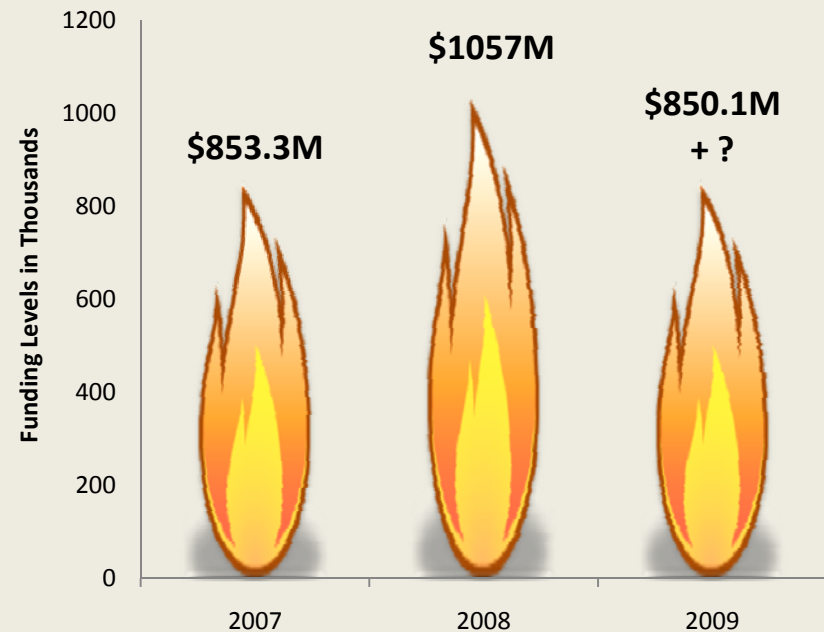
DOI Wildland Fire Funding

Who Manages the Wildland Fire Program Funding?

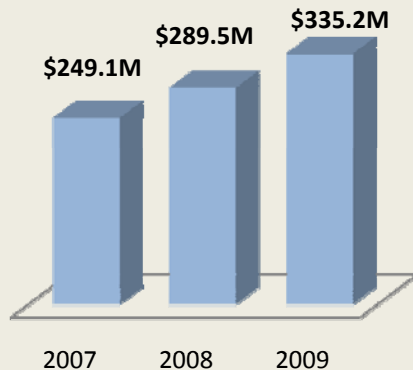
Past: Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

2009: DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC)

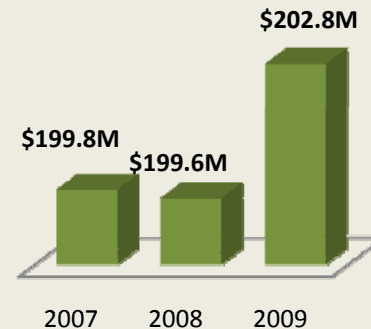
DOI Wildland Fire Budget Changes 2007-2009



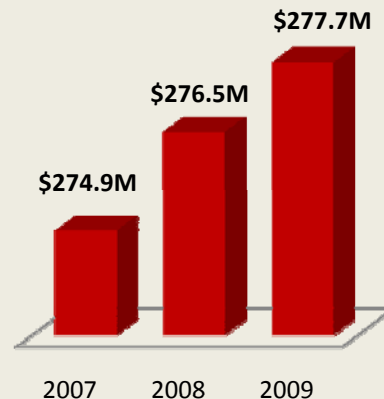
Funding Changes in the Primary Wildland Fire Program Areas



FIRE SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS
39% of Wildland Fire Budget



HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION
24% of Wildland Fire Budget



PREPAREDNESS
36% of Wildland Fire Budget

Federal 10-Year Strategy and Implementation Plan (2006-2012)

Improve Fire Prevention and Suppression

- *Fires not controlled in initial attack*
- *Amount of unwanted human-caused fires*
- *Fires not controlled in initial attack and incur greater than average costs*

Reduce Hazardous Fuels

- *Number of WUI acres treated*
- *Acres treated per million dollars*
- *Percent of high priority acreage treated where fire management objectives were met*

Restore Fire-Adapted Ecosystems

- *Number and percent of acres treated*
- *Percent of natural ignitions allowed to burn and acreage burned*
- *Acreage that is treated and is moved to or maintains fire-adapted ecosystems*
- *Percentage of acreage deemed needing treatment that receives it*
- *Treated acreage that is recovering*

Promote Community Assistance

- *At risk communities actively reducing risk*
- *At risk communities improving suppression capacity*
- *Amount of biomass made from fuel reduction and restoration made available for utilization*

Wildland Fire Program: DOI Performance and Accountability Report versus OMB PART Assessments

DOI PAR:
Targets Met

OMB Rating:
Not Performing

99 % of unplanned and unwanted wildfires
controlled during initial attack

98 % acres treated which achieve fire
management objectives

33% Rating for Program Results/
Accountability

FY 2007 – No Action Taken to improve
measures, hazardous fuels project
criteria, and target funds effectively

DOI does not report on many of the
measures in the 10-year Strategic Plan; and,
it is not clear what their priorities are.

April 1, 2009 GAO Testimony and FLAME Act Provisions

GAO-Agencies lack comprehensive strategies to contain suppression costs and for long-term management

- FLAME Act- Requires implementation of a system to identify most cost effective means for allocating resources
- Flame Act- Within a year of passage, secretaries must submit a report to congress containing a cohesive management strategy

GAO-Improve method of estimating suppression funds (currently using a 10 yr. running average)

- FLAME Act- Suppression costs must be estimated based upon the best available climate and weather data, using models and analytic tools, and the methodology must undergo peer review periodically

GAO-Establish a reserve account to fund emergency wildland firefighting

- Flame Act- Establishes fund that can be used under for individual fires that are declared severe (size, complexity, or threat) or when suppression costs have exhausted appropriated funds

Fire Program Analysis (FPA) Project

Lack of good data for:
Supporting resource
acquisitions
Budget allocation decisions

- In 2001, Congress tells DOI and USDA to design IT system that would allow for accurate budgeting
- DOI and USDA Create the Fire Program Analysis tool

FPA is an IT tool that:

- Provides common interagency framework to analyze assets and develop budget requests
- Analyzes most important fire management activities
- Recognizes presence of non-federal firefighting assets that may be able to respond to fires on Federal Land

How will FPA Improve
Budgeting?

- Provide data to support budget development and implementation.
- FPA will “inform” the budget to improve budget decision making

OIG Report (2006) on Interior's Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program



Department of the Interior Office of Inspector General

**Progress Made
in Planning and
Partnering, but
Improvements
Needed in Key
Program
Performance
Areas**



Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program Department of the Interior

Report No. W-IN-MOA-0002-2005
April 2006

Reducing the Risk of Catastrophic Wildfires

Approximately 100,000 wildfires occur yearly on federal and state lands. Some are catastrophic, such as the 2003 Southern California fires that burned about 750,000 acres, destroyed over 3,600 homes, and killed at least 20 people. In recent years, the need to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires has taken on new urgency, as growing numbers of people choose to live in wildland urban interface areas adjacent to rangelands and forests.

Many of these lands contain a high buildup of vegetation, which presents an immediate fire hazard. Fueled by thick, dried-out brush and trees and often driven by high winds, fires in these areas are difficult to extinguish and can quickly become uncontrollable blazes that threaten lives and property. Federal researchers estimate that hazardous fuels exist on about 190 million acres of federal lands in the contiguous United States and on an unknown number of non-federal lands.



Photo courtesy of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

One of the goals of DOI's HFR Program is to reduce the threat of wildland fires by removing these hazardous fuels. DOI plans about 4,000 HFR treatments annually to reduce hazardous fuels through controlled, or prescribed, burns (wildland fires set under pre-defined conditions to accomplish certain planned objectives); mechanical harvests; chemical treatments; or a combination of these methods. The treatments are conducted or contracted out by BLM, BIA, NPS, and FWS—and by USFS. Funding for DOI's HFR Program totals about \$190 million a year.