

Improving WFDSS Incident Objectives & Incident Requirements and Relaying Leader's Intent

The intent of this white paper is to aid WFDSS Incident Owners, Editors, and Approvers in crafting Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements that are more specific and meaningful for Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) implementation, and improve wildfire management. It will also assist Incident Management Teams (IMTs) in providing feedback to line officers and engaging in dialogue to clarify leader's intent and the priorities in managing the wildfire. Improved clarity will assist IMTs in prioritizing WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements to ensure focus on limiting firefighter exposure while protecting the most Highly Valued Resources and Assets (HVRAs).

Writing Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements in WFDSS that are relevant to the incident and relay leader's intent are fundamental to successful wildfire management. They set the purpose for actions and intended outcomes. Examination of wildfire Incident Decisions revealed that most WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements are written general enough that they could apply to any fire in the country. This makes them of little use to Incident Management Teams in developing strategies and tactics to achieve an Agency Administrator's intent for managing a specific fire. It also makes it difficult for Agency Administrators seeking to clarify what they want accomplished. Similarly, WFDSS Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements, established from Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs), are the basis for WFDSS Incident Objectives but are rarely written with wildfire specificity. This decreases the likelihood that NEPA-based management direction is adequately implemented on a wildfire or as intended and increases the likelihood that additional risk, of marginal benefit to either firefighters or Agency Administrators, is assumed by fire personnel. This document:

- Explains why it is important to write clear, concise WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements,
- Explains how they are related to Course(s) of Action, Rationale, and the WFDSS decision making process,
- Provides suggestions for improving understanding of clear leader's intent.

A systematic evaluation of 23 wildfire Incident Decisions was undertaken during the 2014 fire season, to better understand the situation and recommend solutions including interviews of Agency Administrators, incident commanders and WFDSS Authors. An analysis of all Incident Objectives in the WFDSS database as of May 2014 was also conducted. This paper is based on the findings from those efforts. Improving communication of leader's intent by development of sound WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements and implementation by the IMT requires focusing on these key points:

1. *Avoid restating broad policy, including general Agency Administrator requirements regarding IMT behavior, reflecting core values and doctrine, or making general resource protection or restoration statements. If needed this should be attached to the Delegation of Authority in the leader's intent.*
2. *Limit the number of Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements so priorities are clear.*
3. *Use pre-season planning and scenarios to streamline the development of typical Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, and Course(s) of Action for areas which will reduce stress during the onset of an incident.*
4. *Implement Spatial Fire Planning (beyond fire management units) to improve: rapid, site-specific and prioritized Incident Objectives. This includes firefighter exposure from local known hazards and values at risk.*

Summary of Information

The table below provides a summary of the information within the document. Utilize the links to navigate to the sections of most interest.

Table 1 Summary information including Background and links to Additional Information

Summary Information	
Background:	Additional Information
<u>Writing Clear, Specific Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements is Important.</u>	
<p>The lack of specificity of objectives makes it challenging to understand the relative importance of one objective to another. This leads to potential mismanagement of resources based on unclear priorities, jeopardizing a sound risk management process that may expose firefighters to hazards needlessly.</p> <p>Objectives are statements of direction related to desired future conditions. They reflect the intent of desired outcomes or explain undesired consequences to set the overall fire strategy, priorities, and management constraints.</p> <p>When suppression assets are limited, AAs and IMTs must choose which objectives they have capacity to achieve. Beyond protecting life (civilian and FF) everything else is second priority and by virtue of all those "second priorities" being such, they sometimes get lumped into an incoherent mass. (Keeping the fire out of the Ft Collins municipal watershed likely is more important than protecting a pine plantation on the Arapaho-Roosevelt NF, yet they may be listed as though they have equal importance.)</p>	<p><u>Why is it important to write WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements that are specific and meaningful?</u></p> <p><u>Who is responsible for crafting WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?</u></p> <p><u>How do meaningful WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements assist with setting priorities on an incident?</u></p> <p><u>How do meaningful WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements help with managing risk?</u></p> <p><u>What do clear, specific Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements look like?</u></p> <p><u>Where do I start when it's time to craft WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?</u></p> <p><u>Why should I limit the number of WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?</u></p> <p><u>The WFDSS Management Requirements for a resource on my unit are somewhat generic; how can I craft a specific, useful WFDSS Incident Objective?</u></p>

Summary Information	
Background:	Additional Information
<u>Within a WFDSS Decision, the tie between Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action and Rationale is important.</u>	
<p>There is a need to improve the linkages between incident objectives, incident requirements, course of action and rationale. Incident objectives and incident requirements must be tiered to LRMPs. The Course of Action must be devised to meet the incident objectives and the Rationale must provide a clear explanation of how these elements of the Decision link together and why the specific course of action provides the best means of achieving the objectives.</p>	<p><u>Why is it important that this information is tiered?</u></p> <p><u>What should be addressed in the Course of Action?</u></p> <p><u>What should be included in the Rationale section of a Decision?</u></p> <p><u>Firefighter and public safety is important. How do I incorporate it into the Decision?</u></p>

Summary Information	
Background:	Additional Information
A tie between the WFDSS Decision and external information such as the Delegation of Authority, Inbriefing Package, and Incident Action Plan (IAP) is needed.	
<p>Objectives and other agency administrator direction often differ and sometimes conflict between the WFDSS Decision, delegation of authority, the briefing package, other documents and ad hoc discussions, which sometimes results in misdirection in managing risk and the fire.</p> <p>In many cases IMTs are not even reading the WFDSS Decision.</p> <p>The WFDSS Decision is the line officer’s responsibility and communicates the leader’s intent regarding how to manage the fire. It is critical that this information is aligned with the Letter of Delegation, the Inbriefing Package and ultimately the Incident Action Plan utilized by firefighters.</p> <p>Agency Administrators, Incident Commanders, and fire personnel should be aligned in their understanding of priorities for the incident. A sense of priorities for objectives should be conveyed in the course of action and should also be described in the rationale.</p>	<p>Communicating WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements to IMT's-- How and When</p> <p>What does the WFDSS Decision mean to an IMT?</p> <p>How does IMT feedback assist the Agency Administrator?</p> <p>How does IMT involvement in the WFDSS Decision ensure sound risk management?</p> <p>What is the tie between Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements in WFDSS and the incident objectives in the Incident Action Plan?</p> <p>Where should I put information that is important to me and the IMT working on my unit but not about managing the fire itself?</p>

Summary Information	
Background:	Additional Information
Spatial Fire Planning can aid in providing clear WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements	
<p>Spatial Fire Planning will assist managers in gleanning pertinent information for the direction on a wildfire, but prudence in applying only relevant LRMP information is critical.</p>	<p>What is Spatial Fire Planning and why would I want this implemented in WFDSS?</p> <p>How does implementation of Spatial Fire Planning impact the way I write WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?</p> <p>My unit will be updating its LRMP soon, what should be considered?</p>

Writing Clear, Specific Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements is Important.

WFDSS Incident Objectives need to be clearly written to ensure firefighting resources are committed only where and when they are needed to meet objectives which will reduce firefighter exposure. It is important to ensure fire management tactics and strategies are in alignment with Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs), which are “contracts” with the public. Clear Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements that are tiered to LRMPs, facilitate prioritization when situations are less than perfect so leadership can choose a realistic fire strategy.

Ability to develop concise, focused Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements varies with the location of the fire and conditions. At the beginning of a wildfire incident, time can be limited; therefore completing work pre-fire season is critical. This work might include utilizing scenarios to practice writing WFDSS Incident Objectives, Incident Requirement and Course of Action based on LRMP direction and communicating this with staffs or utilizing Spatial Fire Planning to organize the information more effectively.

Why is it important to write Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements that are specific and meaningful?

Writing clear Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements affords better understanding of leader’s intent for the fire. More than 90 percent of WFDSS Incident Objectives are generic (e.g. minimize the size of the fire), refer to policy (e.g. keep costs commensurate with values at risk), are doctrinal (e.g. adhere to LCES), state core values (e.g. firefighter safety is the number 1 priority), or have vague terms that have different meaning to individuals (e.g., keep the fire small).

If WFDSS Incident Objectives are vague or too many in number, there is a lack of prioritization amongst them or they may conflict with each other. For example, prioritizing firefighter safety may result in an inability to protect some highly valued resources and assets under current fire behavior conditions; or all firefighters available may be needed to protect a small community while the protection of private timber land or spotted owl habitat has no firefighting resources assigned. Clear leader’s intent must be provided in the Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements so priorities are established and can lead to informed risk management.

Who is responsible for crafting WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?

It is the Agency Administrator’s responsibility to ensure the WFDSS Decision is created and that it follows policy and guidance. It is also recognized that many land management units have a designated “WFDSS user” who may craft Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements for AA approval. Anyone who is an Incident Author, Owner, or Editor can create these statements, but the Approver (usually the Agency Administrator) must review them carefully to ensure they: provide leader’s intent, are in alignment with the LRMP, are clear and relatively few in number, do not conflict, indicate the “what, when, where, why” and give an overall sense of priority.

How do meaningful WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements assist with setting priorities on an incident?

Meaningful Incident Objectives convey leader's intent as a statement of direction related to desired future conditions and avoidance of undesired outcomes. Emphasis on what is important (what, when, where, why), rather than generic statements will assist with priority setting. This, in turn, facilitates the risk management dialogue that also must occur. Characterization of the importance of the value or priority versus the risk trade off can decrease exposure to fire resources (ground and aviation) and inform the tactical plan.

A laundry list of unclear objectives is challenging for IMTs to use in a risk-management context. Although Authors don't typically put the objectives in numerical order of priority, wording of value or effects from fire can be used to convey importance. For example:

“...to protect WUI, the most highly valued asset.”

“...to protect integrity of the Haines Watershed by reducing the threat of high intensity fire, but taking advantage of low-intensity fire where feasible.”

In addition to clear writing in WFDSS, a dialogue between the IMT and the Agency Administrator must take place to ensure understanding of both the priorities set and the feasibility of what the IMT can accomplish given the weather, fire behavior and resources at hand. If this clarification does not take place the probability of increased firefighter exposure or some values not being protected is high. This clarity in leader's intent is especially important in multi-jurisdictional fires where there may be equally valued resources to protect but limited resources. Without Agency Administrator prioritization, the IMT must determine priorities among all WFDSS Incident Objectives and determine how to make trade-offs among competing Objectives. The fire behavior, daily safety engagement, and the daily planning cycle drive the prioritization of actions during the incident but the Agency Administrator must be involved in setting the overall priorities for the fire.

How do meaningful WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements help with managing risk?

It is important to recognize that ground and air resources are exposed to hazards on all wildfire assignments. Ensuring that WFDSS Incident Objectives are clear and concise enables Agency Administrator and IMTs to weigh the risk to firefighters against the values to be protected. The IMT must mitigate risk to the extent possible but the Agency Administrator must also realize there is always residual risk and ask themselves *'is that value worth the risk to personnel?'* If clear and concise WFDSS Incident Objectives are articulated both through the WFDSS Decision and in the IMT inbriefing the importance of specific values to protect and their relative priority will be clear. Clear characterization of the importance of the value or priority versus the risk trade off can be weighed against exposure to fire resources (ground and aviation) when constructing the tactical plan.

What do clear, specific Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements look like?

When WFDSS Incident Objectives and Requirements are written with context, it increases the likelihood that they are understood and can be achieved. Although SMART objectives are often referred to, it is understood that writing true SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-realistic)

objectives can be challenging at the strategic level. The intent is to provide a sense of prioritization as well as *what, where, when, why* leaving the *who and how* for tactical planning.

WFDSS Incident Objectives should include content that is specific to the location, conditions, and time of the fire. They include context on the intent and reasoning behind the objective statement. When the intent and reasoning (the “why”) behind an objective is included, it increases the ability of all persons involved in a fire to understand and make site and time specific decisions about actions to take.

The examples below illustrate that by including more of the *what, where, when, why* leads to clearer understanding of what is most important to protect/consider. Sometimes information on how the Incident Objective would be achieved is appropriate but not in a level of detail that makes it tactical.

Table 2 Original WFDSS Incident Objectives and Requirements with Recommended Improvement

Original WFDSS Incident Objective/Requirement	Recommended Improvement
Objective: Keep fire contained on FS land east of Black Swamp Road, south of Catfish Lake Road and west of Wells Oaks Road	Keep fire from burning on to private lands within Camp Bryan and east of Black Swamp Road. To protect timberlands and privately owned cabins on Catfish Lake, east of Wells Oak Road. (<i>Explanation of “why” control line is located where it is.</i>)
Objective: Keep fire east of Antelope Road and north of Garden Valley Road	Keep fire east of Antelope Road and North of Garden Valley because this area on Fort Huachuca west of Antelope Road and south of Garden Valley Road has been used for small arms range practice and unexploded ordinance is likely in that area. (<i>Explanation of “why” control line is located where it is.</i>) <i>A related Course of Action may be:</i> Do not conduct tactical air missions until the Range Control Officer can be contacted to provide guidance regarding potential explosions caused by aircraft below 1200’AGL.
Objective: Contain portion of fire north of the Elliot Highway on the west side.	Contain portion of the west side of the fire north of the Elliot Highway to prevent the fire from hooking back around to the south and west and threatening Minto. (<i>Good information on why the control line should be located where it is based on local knowledge of likelihood of success.</i>)
Objective: Protect public & private facilities to prevent loss through wildfire.	Prevent damage to all private and public facilities within and near the fire area that include the Visitor’s Center and Cedro Campground. -OR- Protect Sweet Lake Patrol Cabin.
Objective: Control the fire at the smallest size.	In the Smallville municipal watershed limit fire spread to the southeast. Protect electronic sites on Fuego Mt to the west of the fire. To prevent damage to numerous residences and power grid infrastructure amid beetle-killed conifers limit fire spread west of Black Horse Creek.
Objective: Protect the public.	Protect the public from exposure to fire but allow visitors from around the world to visit Yosemite Valley when feasible.

Original WFDSS Incident Objective/Requirement	Recommended Improvement
Requirement: Avoid use of fire retardant in riparian zones.	In the Jenny Lake basin and within ¼ mile of the Golden River corridor avoid using fire retardant.
Requirement: Keep fire out of owl nest stands.	To protect owl habitat in the Hamburg Meadow area avoid large scale tactical firing and manage fire intensities (low) through owl PAC.
Requirement: Keep fire out of owl nest stands.	Exclude fire from MSO (Mexican Spotted Owl) Protected Activity Centers, due to breeding season. Minimize fire intensity as second option where possible.
Protect longleaf pine stands	In the longleaf ecosystem avoid plowlines; use natural barriers and roads when possible.
Protect Bald Eagle habitat.	Protect Bald Eagle habitat north of Rocky Ridge from high intensity fire.

Where do I start when it's time to craft WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?

The Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements come from the LRMP and are entered into WFDSS well before fire season and should be the basis for writing WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements. Consider whether a site-specific Incident Objective is needed for the Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements and if so write one that helps readers understand *what, where, when, and why* the incident needs to be managed a certain way. Consider they apply to the specific location of the fire today or over the life of the Decision. At times one Incident Objective or Incident Requirement may address several Strategic Objectives or Management Requirements.

WFDSS Incident Objectives provide the strategic direction or leader's intent while Incident Requirements provide the 'side boards' for the fire often relaying the rules and regulations. Although these are often looked at as one having higher priority than the other, they are both equally important and should be treated as such.

It's possible that some of the Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements within WFDSS do not immediately apply to your fire and, in that case, there is no need to create an Incident Objective and Incident Requirements. For example, there may be a requirement to protect bird nests during a certain time of year, but it does not apply at this time, therefore no Objective or Requirement would be needed to address this Management Requirement.

Why should I limit the number of WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?

A shorter, focused list of specific WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements provides more meaning to IMTs and firefighters engaging the fire. More than five WFDSS Incident Objectives may be considered but the number any IMT can achieve safely and successfully is limited due to uncontrollable variables (e.g. weather, terrain, type and availability of resources, prioritization of multiple fires/incidents). In numerous wildfire Decisions reviewed, the "may be" applicable Incident Objectives were often included, as if the WFDSS Decision was a NEPA document. The intent of a risk management

decision is that there is a clear identification of what is important, and why; and a statement of the tradeoffs for different actions taken to achieve objectives. If there are too many Incident Objectives in the Decision, it is difficult or impossible to truly weigh tradeoffs. A limited number of Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements help focus the actions of the IMT and sets the tone for the strategies used and costs (human and monetary) involved.

On a large fire there are many Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements that are challenging to synthesize and winnow down the most important. To triage these, consider the likelihood of achieving the Incident Objectives, the likelihood fire will damage the asset, the political, social and economic impacts associated with the fire damage.

The WFDSS Management Requirements for a resource on my unit are somewhat generic; how can I craft a specific, useful WFDSS Incident Objective?

Some LRMP direction has broad resource protection related statements, for example “limit damage to cultural resources and endangered species.” This generic Strategic Objective provides no information on what constitutes damage to the cultural resource, where it is at in general or what habitat features are important to the endangered species. This makes it difficult for the home unit or IMT to develop appropriate strategies and tactics. When this information is not clear in the LRMP or has not been filtered for use in WFDSS, it is necessary to convene the key decision-makers (in this case a cultural resources staff member and the line officer) to come to an understanding about the intention in the LRMP and to craft clear and specific language for Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements.

If LRMP direction that is not relevant to wildfire decisions has been inserted into WFDSS, it does not help users create specific, relevant, prioritized Incident Objectives or Incident Requirements. If irrelevant direction is not removed, a note can be made in the Decision in appropriate sections discussing why they were not addressed. Simplifying information from LRMPs during the preseason is just as important as providing clear direction for the fire at hand.

Within a WFDSS Decision, the tie between Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action, and Rationale is important.

In an Incident Decision, there should be a direct tie between Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action, and the Rationale. They are all tiered down from the LRMP direction and provide the Agency Administrator’s intent and the basis for the tactical plan.

Why is it important that this information is tiered?

Continuity of information within the WFDSS Decision leads to clearer understanding and implementation of the LRMP direction. The leader’s intent (Incident Objectives), the sideboards for the incident (Incident Requirements), and the intended actions (Course of Action / Management Action Points) all describe the Agency Administrator’s decision regarding how to implement that LRMP direction. This information should not be tactical in nature, to avoid unnecessarily limiting the IMT’s ability to take actions based on fire behavior and priority.

Information from the LRMP tiered down to the tactical plan (Incident Action Plan) will result in sound fire management on public lands and ensure we are implementing the land management direction. Most importantly, firefighters will not be engaged in activities that are not important or that contradict

the land management plan direction. A clear articulation of the “why” allows IMTs to utilize a risk-management dialogue with their staffs and the Agency Administrator to ensure the fire is managed while considering firefighter exposure.

What should be addressed in the Course of Action?

A Course of Action is an overall plan describing the selected strategies and management actions intended to meet Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements based on current and expected conditions. In incident-level decision making, the Course of Action is comprised of selected strategies and specific actions to achieve the Incident Objectives while complying with Incident Requirements. The purpose of the Course of Action is to adequately mitigate or control the risk to values to be protected, and identify where fire may contribute to meeting land management objectives in those areas where risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level.

Ensure that the COA conveys the strategic management actions to manage the fire while protecting Highly Valued Resources and Assets (HVRAs), which include fire fighter and public safety. WFDSS Fire Management Unit (FMU) or Strategic Objective (SO) Shape specific COAs can aid communication regarding management of lands with different LRMP direction. Utilize the Strategy Slider bar and comment box to aid communication regarding the overall strategy for the fire.

During the review of incidents it was noted that many incident COA included a box cardinally described in which to keep the fire along with Incident Objective statements such as “keep the fire as small as possible.” It is not necessary to describe a box within which to keep the fire; that is a dated MMA (Maximum Management Area) concept. Additionally, it conflicts with statements such as “keep the fire as small as possible.” If there are areas where the fire should be avoided, describe the reasons why.

What should be included in the Rationale section of a Decision?

The Rationale is the ‘executive summary’ for the incident where the Agency Administrator describes what was considered, what was rejected, and the decision made. It should describe more of the what, when, where, and why and can reference specific sections of the Decision.

Consider using the following format to addresses important information:

My decision is...

Discuss what is allowed in the LRMP, the probability of being successful, expected duration of the incident, what was considered but rejected

The cooperators involved in sharing this decision process are...

Discuss who and why

The values of concern are...

Summarize why they are important and the likelihood of them being impacts, area closures

The Relative Risk Assessment and Organization Assessment indicate...

Tie to values, highlight expected firefighter exposure, IMT needs

The current fire situation is...

Describe the area the fire is burning in and the fire environment

The following triggers would indicate revisions to or a new decision is needed...

Describe low probability/high consequence events

Firefighter and public safety is important. How do I incorporate it into the Decision?

Firefighter and public safety should be a requirement for all actions taken on a fire, therefore it should be considered throughout the risk assessment process and addressed while WFDSS Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, and Course of Action are developed. It should be an underlying principle and a priority for all activities undertaken on the fire. When it is a generic Incident Objective, *“firefighter and public safety is the number one priority”*, with no context it loses its meaning and emphasis, almost becoming obsolete in the actions being taken. To give it true meaning, it is recommended that emphasis is put on it throughout the Decision. Incident Objectives may discuss firefighter and public safety as part of the *why* it was written. Many feel that it should be a WFDSS Incident Requirement because it provides a sideboard for the incident and is a must. However, a better way to incorporate firefighter safety and keep it relevant to the incident is to address it specifically in an Incident Objective or COA Action Item. For example if there is an Incident Objective discussing keeping fire out of the bug killed area an Action Item could be created that states *“If fire spreads within the bug kill area, do not expose firefighters to the numerous snags in suppression efforts, locate containment lines outside of the these areas.”*

A tie between the WFDSS Decision and external information such as the Delegation of Authority, Inbriefing Package, and Incident Action Plan (IAP) is needed.

Site visits to active incidents and interviews of Incident Commanders revealed a chronic problem in delayed delivery of WFDSS Incident Objectives in the context of the risk management analysis (WFDSS) and a highly varied combination of delivery devices for the leader’s intent. WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements were sometimes delivered in the Delegation of Authority, verbally, or in the WFDSS Decision; all of the former or in varied combinations. With this varied method of delivery, information often conflicted or was difficult for the IMTs to rapidly and effectively ascertain the leader’s intent and strategic direction. It is important that consistent messages are provided to the IMT through all of the above mentioned methods of communications. Table 3 shows how information is tiered from one plan to another.

Communicating Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements to IMTs – How and When.

There should be a direct tie between the WFDSS Decision information and what is relayed to the IMT in the Delegation of Authority and Inbriefing Package. This in turn should be articulated not only in the objectives in the IAP but through the actions being planned daily on the incident. To meet the Agency Administrator’s strategic direction, the actions being taken on the ground must be in alignment with leader’s intent.

A published WFDSS Decision should be ready at the IMT in inbriefing. Although the WFDSS Decision is the line officer’s responsibility, it is critically important that Incident Management Teams read the current Published Decision to ensure they are following leader’s intent and that they provide feedback to the Agency Administrator on that decision. IMTs may be involved in assisting the AA in writing new WFDSS Decisions during their tenure on the unit.

What does the WFDSS Decision mean to an IMT?

The WFDSS Decision should provide information to the IMT relevant to managing the specific wildfire to which they are assigned. The WFDSS Decision includes direction from the LRMP, Incident Objectives (leader's intent), Incident Requirements (incident 'sideboards'), Course of Action / Management Action Points, as well as the Rationale. Often it includes risk assessment information already completed by the local unit which should be considered when the IMT undertakes actions on the fire. The team is often asked to review and provide feedback on the current Decision and to assist in updating the information when necessary. These interactions provide opportunity for risk dialogue and alignment of leaders' intent with respect to risk.

How does IMT feedback assist the agency administrator?

The IMT can provide feedback on the WFDSS Decision or any other concerns they have with priorities during daily command and general staff meetings or other meetings attended. Alignment between what the IMT is implementing and the leader's intent is critical. Often a Strategic Operational Planning (SOPL) can be ordered to assist with updates to the WFDSS Decision, to work on risk assessment, and to liaison with the IMT. This feedback is important to ensure the Agency Administrator understands the risks being taken to meet their strategic intent and to determine if that level of risk is acceptable.

How does IMT involvement in the WFDSS Decision ensure sound risk management?

When the IMT provides feedback to the WFDSS Decision and assists with updating the Relative Risk Assessment it validates the strategic intent versus the current fire behavior and actions being taken on the ground. Often the IMT provides the ability to look more closely at the fire and evaluate the situation. Relaying those findings to the Agency Administrator to consider is critical to ensure the strategic intent is being met or that there is an understanding of the risk tradeoffs needed to meet the intent. WFDSS is an iterative risk management process where continual feedback is used to update and revise the Decision as needed to ensure continual sound risk management. The initial plan may not work, or may not work as intended. Consequently, this feedback mechanism is important to revise the plan to provide a greater likelihood for success. If IMTs independently take action it may conflict with the Agency Administrator's strategic priorities whereas if the Agency Administrator has provided expectations that can't be met by the IMT, adjustments must be made.

What is the tie between Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements in WFDSS and incident objectives in the Incident Action Plan?

There are incident objectives in both the WFDSS Decision and in the daily Incident Action Plan (IAP) which are intended to be tied but not necessarily identical. The WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements are meant to providing leader's intent from a strategic standpoint. The IAP objectives are intended to tier from the WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements but are geared toward operations/tactics on a particular day/shift. The Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements from WFDSS should be reflected well enough in the IAP that firefighters working on the incident have a clear understanding of the overall intent of their actions. If this understanding is clear, better feedback and intelligence will be provided to the IMT through the chain of command.

Table 3 Summary table showing information tiered from LRMP to IAP

Source Document	Type of Direction	Information Type
Information Provided		
Land and Resource Management Plan Direction	Land management direction	Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad statements of desired outcomes and appropriate actions (e.g. fire response) for specific areas (e.g. wilderness), ecosystem types, or resources (e.g. cultural sites), based on LRMP. Ideally LRMP direction modified for application on fire incidents (may come from unit plan goals, desired conditions, strategies, objectives or guidelines). Designed to be uploaded in WFDSS pre-season, and most are optimally included in spatial planning (site-specific). 		
WFDSS Decision	Agency Administrator's Decision	Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action, Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect agency administrator's intent for achieving desired outcomes and avoiding undesirable consequences. Primary means of directing actions on a fire, and greatly influence costs, duration, and outcomes (GTR-298). Incident-specific statements of direction necessary for selection of strategy(s) and tactical activities of resources on an incident (GTR-298). Contain detailed information specific to area, benefits from fire, values at risk, and fire conditions (<i>what, when, where, why</i>). Tiered to LRMP management direction based on applicable Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements. 		
Delegation of Authority/Leader's Intent	Agency Administrator's Intent	Delegated authority for the fire, tie to WFDSS Decision (Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegation of Authority (DOA) - Designates the IMT Incident commander as taking command of the fire at a certain time as agreed. Should reference the WFDSS Decision and expectations for following it. Leader's Intent – often provided as a supplement to the DOA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides core values information pertinent to the AA's intent as identified by the unit. (Safety-Core values, costs, human resources & unit guidance). Attach a copy of the latest Decision. Utilize WFDSS for briefing where applicable. 		
Inbriefing Package	AA's Intent	Communication expectations, key contacts, unit information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information about the current fire situation, key contacts, and unit information. 		
Incident Action Plan (IAP)	Agency Leader's Intent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incident Objectives Incident Requirements IMT's Intent	Daily Incident Objectives (ICS 202) Tactical Objective (Assignment List , ICS 204 in IAP)
<p>Daily Incident Objectives (ICS 202)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should reflect guidance provided by the AA from WFDSS. Guidance and direction needed to select appropriate strategy(s), and the tactical direction of resources, specific to the location and conditions. Based on realistic expectations of what can be accomplished with allocated resources. Ideally includes information on context on values at risk and AAs priorities. Every firefighter should have information on the purpose and importance of their actions to provide an understanding of expectations and risk vs. gain. <p>Tactical Objective (Assignment List , ICS 204 in IAP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific to tactics to be achieved within the operational period by personnel assigned to a division or group. Should reinforce geographic incident objective for that division that spells out values at risk and safety hazards that explain "why" the fire should be contained there. Include clear leader's intent to ensure line personnel are clear when changes in tactics are warranted as the fire situation changes yet understand the overall strategy for the fire (leader's intent). 		

Where should I put information that is important to me and the IMT working on my unit but not really about the fire?

The 2014 review revealed that policy is often inserted into WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements, such as “keep costs commensurate with values at risk”, “adhere to LCES”, “ensure that fire personnel are qualified for assignments.” Putting this type of information in the WFDSS Incident Objectives or Incident Requirements detracts from specific objectives for a fire. Fire benefits, values at risk, and fire behavior should be the primary focus of an IMT. This type of information should be included in the Delegation of Authority/leader’s intent letter to relay leader’s intent. One might also consider if it makes sense to direct IMTs to follow policy – when it is policy.

Spatial Fire Planning can Aid in providing clear WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements

LRMPs include spatial information on resources and values, with associated management direction. This includes recreation sites, facilities, wildlife habitat, management areas and more. WFDSS Strategic Objectives, Management Requirements, Incident Objectives, and Incident Requirements in wildfire Decisions are mostly tied to these areas and can be represented spatially. However, the spatial information is typically located in planning databases or local computers, and not immediately available to an IMT when most needed. This causes delays in use of resource information, critical to wildfire strategies and tactics. Spatial information may also include locally known safety hazards. Immediate availability of this spatial information is crucial to informed risk management decisions by not only the IMT but all those on the fireline. When more than one unit or agency is within the Planning Area of a wildfire the difficulty of the IMT using the information is increased. To alleviate this, the Spatial Fire Planning method was implemented in WFDSS to replace the Fire Management Unit method, for units that choose to adopt it. See agency specific guidance for direction regarding SFP adoption and implementation.

What is Spatial Fire Planning and why would I want it implemented in WFDSS?

Spatial Fire Planning (SFP) is an optional planning process available in WFDSS that can spatially describe an administrative unit’s Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements. WFDSS users assigned the role of Data Manager manage SFP and associated tasks. Using this type of planning, units can visually display language from their Land and Resource Management Plans on a map display as shapes. The visual depiction of these data allow for greater data control because data managers can upload, manage, and associate shapes to represent their unit’s planning direction, and make changes as needed throughout the year. For resources to assist with switching to the Spatial Fire Planning method see the [WFDSS Training page](#), header Spatial Fire Planning.

Spatial Fire Planning can reduce redundant content in the Decision by using the appropriate shapes to portray the content that affects the fire decision from the overarching LRMP into a Decision. If common content is lumped into appropriate spatial shapes the Spatial Fire Planning process will benefit the user in that only relevant information to the fire will be provided one time for the Planning Area.

How does implementation of Spatial Fire Planning impact the way I write WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?

The Spatial Fire Planning process can provide units with a better visual depiction of their LRMP direction and allow the unit to have greater control over their data. Having a visual depiction of where values and resources, that can benefit from and be harmed by fire, are located on the ground allows for better incident specific Objectives and Requirements to be created. The more incident specific the WFDSS Objectives and Requirements are the more likely leader's intent will be understood and implemented by fire managers.

Shapes can be developed pre-season from LRMPs that will lend themselves to defining the Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements during an incident. An example would be discussion of threatened and endangered species protection areas such as those related to Spotted Owls, Sage Grouse, and Red Cockaded Woodpeckers. Shapes representing these species can be utilized in Spatial Fire Planning making it easier to create Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements because only relative, well described information has been preloaded in the system.

My unit will be updating its LRMP soon, what should be considered?

Fire planning is evolving in the federal fire agencies. The public, other agencies and organizations, agency administrators, and agency employees of varied disciplines are collaboratively developing goals, objectives, desired conditions, and management strategies for public lands.

Wildfires occur on all national forests and grasslands, yet very little management direction is included in LRMPs beyond basic fire response (e.g. suppression, or monitor). This means that for wildfire events, there is a void in LRMP management direction. This is important because for many national forests wildfires affect far more area than all projects combined annually or in a decade. Considering how the unit plans can be applied to wildland fire management is therefore important. Consider the following when revising LRMP direction:

- *Incorporate plan components into LRMPs undergoing revision that are designed to be directly applicable to wildfire. This clear direction can be easily utilized during an incident in WFDSS with little modification or translation.*
- *Ideally, Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements are LRMP direction that can be applied easily to fire situations and can be spatially represented.*
- *Identify the relationship between LRMP plan components (goals, desired conditions, strategies, objectives, guidelines, and standards) and Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements used in WFDSS.*