

What You Need to Know About WFDSS - 2019

This document is a quick reference and review of WFDSS enhancements, little known features, recommendations, and things to consider that will help you use WFDSS more efficiently for all roles.

Fire Behavior Specialists may want to take a look at the "[WFDSS Tips and Tricks for Modeling](#)" document as a useful refresher.

If you cannot find an answers to your questions in WFDSS Help, you can call the Help Desk at 1-866-224-7677 (Toll Free), 1-616-323-1667, or navigate to <https://iiahelpdesk.nwcg.gov/>. The Fire Applications Help Desk provides level 1 technical support for WFDSS. You can also submit Feedback using the link in the upper right corner of the application.

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WFDSS Enhancement Refresher

Four WFDSS releases occurred in 2018 to improve code and overall system stability, resolve bugs/known issues and deliver long-awaited enhancements. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the enhancements, and are broken down for two audiences; Incident Owners/Authors/Approvers and Fire Behavior Specialists. On the WFDSS home page, click the *What's New in WFDSS* menu option to view full release information. Don't forget to check out the Hot Picks menu on the right for recent training materials and guides.

Changes/Enhancements for Incident Owners/Authors/Approvers

Table 1: WFDSS Changes/Enhancements

Feature	Description
WFDSS Lite decommissioning	WFDSS Lite will be decommissioned in the spring of 2019. The full WFDSS application can be accessed on a mobile device using the Chrome app/browser. Note: The fly-out menus do not work on some mobile devices (mainly iOS). Disabling the Fly-out menu from a computer prior to logging in will solve this problem.

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	<p>WFDSS also works well in Safari although it has not been fully tested to ensure functionality.</p>
<p>Incident Groups List</p>	<p>From the Incident Groups List, you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collectively View Incident Group information in Excel format for all incidents in a group by selecting View Incident, and then clicking the Excel icon above and to the left of the Incident Name column, or ● Quickly view current decision status for each incident in an incident group by selecting View Incident and then locating the Decision Status column on the far right. Click the hyperlink for an incident to review its decision status. If a published decision exists, the date is the hyperlink. If the first decision is pending, the hyperlink displays as "Pending." The column is blank for incidents without decisions. <p>Refer to Editing an Incident Group for further information.</p>
<p>Subscribing to Planning Area Notifications</p>	<p>From the account system preferences page, some WFDSS user roles (Viewer, Dispatcher, Author, GA Editor, National Editor, and Data Manager) can subscribe to planning area notifications for one or more units. Planning area subscriptions are optional, but intended to help facilitate communication between neighboring units and promote cooperation early in the life of an incident and decision-making process. Make sure to update your contact information to include your phone number and cell phone provider if you would like receive notifications via text message.</p>
<p>M.A.P. Displays</p>	<p>Pending M.A.P.s display as dotted lines. Activated M.A.P.s, those that are included in published decisions, display with a solid line. Deactivated M.A.P.s display with a dashed line. Once a decision is published, pending M.A.P.s become active and display with other, previously activated M.A.P.s and appear as solid lines.</p>

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	When you exclude an M.A.P. and publish a new decision, excluded M.A.P.s are 'deactivated' and display with dashed lines in map displays.
Predictive Services Significant Fire Potential	This service and all related topics have been removed.
Relative Risk (RR) and Organization Assessment (OA) graphics included in Decision Content	In the past, RR and OA notes were automatically included in decision content but accompanying graphics/charts were not. Both the notes AND the graphics/charts are now automatically included in decision content and there is no need to add this content manually.
Incident Owner receives 'Decision Reviewable' email	Previously, only Decision Approvers received an email alert that a decision had been 'submitted for review/ approval' and was now Reviewable, indicating accessibility to approvers. This email is now sent to incident owners as well, to improve monitoring.
Wildcard Search Feature to Improve Incident Search by Name	A wildcard search feature improves the ability to search for an incident by name when using the quick search feature above the incident list.
Decision Reject button updated to read 'Return for Edits'	Previously, decision Reviewers and Approvers 'rejected' a decision to return it to pending status. Now, the button reads 'Return for Edits' to clarify intent and facilitate updating.
Determine who has Drawn/Uploaded Fire Perimeter	The name of the user who drew or uploaded a fire perimeter is now accessible in the LayerSwitcher when viewing a map display. To determine who drew or uploaded a shape, click the black expansion arrow beside the shape and the name will display below the effective date/time stamp.
Improvements to Fire Behavior Request Screen	The fire behavior request screen has been improved to solicit more detailed information related to the need for analysis. Rather than Rational for Request, the prompt now reads "What management questions are you trying to answer through fire behavior modeling?" to help you, the analyst, determine the best products for

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	<p>delivery. If the primary concerns (fuels, weather, topography, values etc.) are not outlined, contact the incident owner for clarification of Line Officer concerns.</p>
<p>Option to Add Note to Approver when Submitting a Decision for Review/Approval</p>	<p>Incident Owners can add an optional note to the Decision Approver(s) when they submit a decision for review/approval. The note is included in the notification mail to the approver(s) and added to the Incident History list, but it is NOT added to the decision. 500 character limit.</p>
<p>Improved Access/Download options for Periodic Assessments</p>	<p>You can now download an Excel file of all Periodic Assessments related to a decision. From the Decision tab, select a decision and then click View Info. An Assessment History section has been added; click the Excel icon in the upper left to download.</p>
<p>Uploading images</p>	<p>You can upload images from almost any screen using the Upload images menu option to the left, or from the default decision editor when you insert comments. This makes images easy to upload when you plan your decision, or are finalizing your decision.</p>
<p>Fire Behavior Requests</p>	<p>Fire behavior requests are monitored only by GA Editors.</p>
<p>Managing Incident Groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You can create Incident Groups by drawing and saving a polygon around incidents on the Intelligence map. ● You can edit and manage filters from the hyperlinks on the Incident Groups page. <p>You can share group ownership among one or more individuals.</p> <p>You can download incident decisions from the Incident Groups page. This generates a zip file with the selected decisions.</p> <p>Refer to Editing an Incident Group for further information.</p>

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Incident Objectives	You can prioritize incident objectives by selecting an objective and clicking the Move Up or Move Down button at the bottom of the screen.
Importing/Exporting between Training and Production	Users with Data Management privileges can import and export management objectives and requirements from Production to Training and from Training to Production.
Map Toolbar Icons	You can use shift-click to close a shape when using the polygon or line tools.

Enhancements for Analysts

Table 2: Enhancements for Analysts

Feature	Description
Merged Fire Behavior Specialist and Super Analyst Roles	<p>The role of Fire Behavior Specialist has expanded to include the same capabilities as Super Analyst. As a result of these changes, all Fire Behavior Specialists have the same capabilities as Super Analysts, but their title remains Fire Behavior Specialists. All users previously with the Super Analyst role are still called Super Analysts, but their capabilities are now the same. Fire Behavior Specialists can now:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set conditioning days to zero. This makes initial fuel moistures the same for every cell on the landscape, regardless of slope, aspect, elevation, shading and previous weather conditions. It should, generally, only be used for model testing or homogeneous, unshaded fuels on flat terrain. ● View, copy, and edit any analysis in the system without being added to the incident privileges. ● Download more options for completed runs (All Models: Analysis Input. FSPRO: Daily Acres, Average Time Grid, Arrival Day Distribution, Suppression Effect, Ensemble Perimeters.) ● ‘Terminate’ runs that have been queued or are currently processing. (NOTE: The Terminate button does NOT work instantaneously; it should only be clicked ONCE and it may take minutes, or hours, for the run to actually stop because it has to complete current calculations. Clicking it more than once could cause additional issues...) <p>See Fire Behavior Specialist for more information.</p>

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Improvements to Fire Behavior Request Screen	The fire behavior request screen has been improved to solicit more detailed information related to the need for analysis. Rather than Rational for Request, the prompt now reads “What management questions are you trying to answer through fire behavior modeling?” to help you, the analyst, determine the best products for delivery. If the primary concerns (fuels, weather, topography, values etc.) are not outlined, contact the incident owner for clarification of Line Officer concerns.
Spot Ignition Delay added for Short Term Fire Behavior (STFB)	The Spot Ignition Delay (< = 60 minutes) has been added to STFB as a new input field on the Short Term Information page. As with NTFB, the input is an estimate of the amount of time that passes between an ember landing and fire spread occurring. Default is zero minutes.
View Analysis Notes from Analysis List	A Fire Behavior Specialist can view notes for a modeled run from the Analysis List by selecting a run and then clicking View Notes. This useful feature can help you quickly compare and contrast notes/inputs for individual runs when calibrating for example, without having to open the analysis itself.
Ability to ‘Delete All’ Analysis Notes	When you copy an analysis, you may not want to retain all the notes associated with it. The Delete All button helps you start from scratch without having to painstakingly delete each individual analysis note.
Import Analysis Notes	A Fire Behavior Specialist can import notes from one analysis into another (within an incident), to create documentation efficiencies when calibrating and/or creating runs with similar inputs. When importing notes between different modeled runs, FSPRO to NTFB for example, only notes on shared pages (Landscape and Landscape Editor) import.

Changes to Data Layers

Table 3: Recently Added Data Layers

See the [Data Refresh Schedule](#) for more information about upcoming updates.

Data Layer	Description
2008 Landfire Data Removed	The link to the 2008 Landfire data was removed in order to prevent analysis with outdated data.
Building Cluster Data	New data for building clusters in the state of Virginia and Tennessee. Building cluster data for Clark, Madison, and Valley Counties in Idaho,

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	and Custer County in Colorado was added. Numerous areas with existing building cluster data were updated.
NPS and USFS Admin Boundaries and Buildings	Data for Administrative boundaries and building locations was updated.
Critical Habitat	Line and Polygon data for critical habitat was updated.
Counties	Updated
Fire WX Forecast Zones	Updated
Wilderness Areas	Updated
Nature Conservancy Land Boundaries	Updated
FMU/SO Shape Layers	<p>FMU/SO data continues to be updated. A new schedule has been posted for updates or changes to unit Fire Management Unit (FMU) or Strategic Objective (SO) data layers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To accommodate the inclusion of strategic objective shapes in WFDSS; additional updates may be scheduled on an as-needed basis throughout the year. These updates will be announced to the WFDSS Geographic Area Editors and via the WFDSS GIS Team. Please contact your representative to enquire about updates that are not posted on this schedule. • We make every effort to have the update loaded by the "Available in WFDSS" dates however, sometimes unpredictable challenges prevent us from getting the data loaded on time. In these cases we will notify the WFDSS GIS Team Leads of the revised schedule and reason for the delay.
Predictive Service Products	The Predictive Services Areas layer and the corresponding Significant Fire Potential layer have been removed.

IRWIN-related Updates

Table 4: IRWIN Updates

	Description
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IRWIN v5 Released	<p>This update changes much of the code that WFDSS uses to exchange data with IRWIN and is designed to improve performance and lower future maintenance cost. In addition, it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce the number of instances where fires from dispatch centers (WildCAD, FireBeans, IFM) are incorrectly flagged as duplicates and kept out of WFDSS ● Reduce the impact of true duplicates, as they will be kept in 'quarantine' status in IRWIN and will not show in WFDSS until conflicts have been resolved in the originating system. ● If your fire is not appearing in WFDSS but you KNOW it was entered into FireCode, WildCAD, or 209 - check the helpdesk for the application in which the fire was created. ● Use WFDSS Feedback to get assistance on data exchange issues, but it should be secondary to identifying problems in the originating application - usually a computer aided dispatch application.
Safeguards to Creating Duplicate Fires	<p>When creating a fire that you can't find in the system, pay particular attention to warnings from WFDSS, Sit/209, or other applications stating that their fire is a potential duplicate of a fire that already exists. Verify with dispatch, a duty officer, or person in touch with the current situation before choosing to create the fire anyway.</p>
<u>WFDSS & IRWIN Data Exchange Service: Working in a Connected World</u>	<p>This document that explains the workflow and process of information exchange that occurs with the IRWIN system. It is accessible from the from the Hot Picks section of the WFDSS Home page.</p>

Training Aids

Table 5: Training Aids


	Description
<u>WFDSS Annual Refresher Training Recommendations</u>	<p>This document is intended to be a reference for individuals putting together annual WFDSS training refreshers for their unit. This training can fulfill the recommendations/ requirements for Agency Administrators (depending on agency).</p>
An Author's Guide to WFDSS Decision Making	<p><u>The Author's Guide to WFDSS Decision Making</u> was developed to assist an author through the WFDSS decision process. The Guide uses a Q and A type of walkthrough. The guide was not developed to be a button by</p>

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	button process, but rather designed to guide the author through the decision support process.
WFDSS Incident Groups and Decisions	<p>Although the WFDSS Incident Groups feature provides functionality to users managing multiple fires, it is best not used to create a single decision for multiple fires. Thorough documentation and clarity on incident direction is best completed for individual fires; creation of a single decision for multiple fires should be uncommon.</p> <p>The document link to the left expands on this topic.</p>
WFDSS 101	<p>This series of lessons are intended to be completed as a suite, and in numerical order, but can be used as stand-alone lessons to help guide your self-paced training in WFDSS. Each lesson contains one or more short exercises that will teach you how to use WFDSS tools, as well as ideas for incorporating the tools into your workflow.</p> <p>See the Training tab on the WFDSS home page.</p>
YouTube WFDSS Support Videos Channel	<p>WFDSS training videos that walk you step-by-step through many common tasks are available on YouTube. You can easily search for available offerings (WFDSS Support Videos) or subscribe to the channel to view new videos as they become available.</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/user/WFDSSSupportVideos?feature=g-high-u</p>

Little Known Features

Table 6: Little Known Features

Feature	Description
<p>Situation Map pop out</p> 	<p>Quickly view the situation map for an incident at any time by clicking on the small map icon on the right hand side of your screen.</p> <p>The Situation Map and its map layers is an excellent briefing tool with its comprehensive set of relevant, incident-related data and information. Use it to guide briefings for incident management teams, fire managers and Line Officers; inform decision making and approval, and share information when meeting with public, cooperators and other audiences.</p>
Quickly View Incident Content Library	<p>Did you know you can quickly access ALL Incident Content to review available inputs (such as images) for a decision? Select Incident Content Library from the fly-out menu on the left.</p>

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	Remember that Incident Content is ALL the information available for a decision that has been created, uploaded or captured during the life of the incident in WFDSS.
Estimated Ground Evac Time	This data layer (Fire Environment and Safety map layers) displays estimated ground evacuation time and models the shortest ground transport time in hours from any point within the continental United State to a hospital. The layer has been designed for strategic decision making only. Its intent is to encourage thoughtful decisions about the risks being transferred to firefighters and how to mitigate those risks. See Estimated Ground Evac Time Overview .
Basic Fire Behavior Hauling Chart	The surface fire characteristics chart, known as the hauling chart, now includes the wind speed and direction used in the simulation as part of the title of the chart. To access the hauling charts, a Basic or Short-term fire modeling run must be generated. Next, view the modeling run and under the results tab there is a link to the hauling charts.
Incident Groups	WFDSS populates incident complexes (from IRWIN) under the Incident Groups tab. Here users can view/create a collection of incidents and view analyses for two or more incidents on the same map page. This can be advantageous when you are monitoring several incidents that are in close proximity and/or you wish to evaluate the impacts of adjacent fires on one another. These groups can remain private or made public and shared with other users.
Reports	Need to quickly generate a list of MAPs and map locations for Operations? WFDSS enables you to create reports that are useful for conducting briefings and sharing published MAPs for active incidents, as well as post-fire for after action reviews and reclamation plans. You can pull information from WFDSS documentation such as text, maps, tables and images into a report format and both edit/publish the report as you would a decision. See To create Management Action Point Reports .
Smoke Dispersion Forecast	A Smoke Dispersion forecast is available when you are viewing a map display in WFDSS (Situation map > Info sub-tab > Smoke Dispersion). The forecast is pulled from the National FCAMMS Point Forecast Product and its updated every three hours. Any user with an active WFDSS account can access it.

Recommendations and Further Information

Table 7: Recommendations and Further Information

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Feature	Description
Managing WFDSS Passwords – Keep your password current!	All users must change their passwords every 60 days. WFDSS sends 10 day and 3 day warning email alerts to help users avoid account lockout. When a user fails to change their password prior to expiration their account will lock and they must contact the Helpdesk to obtain a new password. (Previously National Editors, Administrators, and the Help Desk needed to change their passwords every 30 days, but it has been changed to 60 days for everyone.)
WFDSS Known Issues	In 2017 a WFDSS Known Issues (found in the Hot Picks) document was created to keep WFDSS users and NFDSC staff informed of current WFDSS bugs/issues. It will be used again in 2019. If you experience an issue with the application or its performance, refer to the document to determine if the issue has been reported previously. You may learn helpful workarounds or a timeline for repair. If the issue is not covered in the document then it is likely a new issue that needs to be reported via Feedback in the Training or Production application.
WFDSS Feedback vs IIA Helpdesk	The IIA HelpDesk provides account management services to all WFDSS users, and can be accessed at https://iahelpdesk.nwcg.gov/ , or at (866)224-7677 or (616)323-1667. The Helpdesk provides quick password resets and can answer commonly asked questions but cannot provide technical troubleshooting services; these types of questions are escalated to the WFDSS Team for resolution sometimes resulting in delays. Technical issues are best reported through the WFDSS Feedback option, which routes direct to the WFDSS Team and without use of middleman. Knowing which source to access when you need assistance will help you get the right help when you need it.
WFDSS Help Resources	Throughout the application, there are many sources of help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Users can click the ? icons to display help topics relevant to where they are in the application. ● There is a Search feature on the WFDSS homepage that can help you locate help topics using keyword searches. ● The WFDSS home page contains many sources of help (navigate the menu options on the left side of the page). It also contains a section called <i>Hot Picks</i> that lists some of the most commonly used WFDSS resources.
Decision Editor Limitations	The default decision editor accommodates text, but does not allow the copying and pasting of tables, images, and bulleted lists. When using the advanced decision editor, create tables and lists manually using the text editor tools to avoid potential errors. All images should be

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	<p>uploaded, regardless of which editor is being used. The Default Decision Editor can accommodate up to 4000 characters per section.</p>
<p>Capitalize on the Reviewer role</p>	<p>Decision Reviewers, if assigned, are responsible for examining decision content that's been submitted for review and/or approval, and indicating whether they have successfully reviewed it or are returning it for edits.</p> <p>The Reviewer role is not necessary to publish a decision. However; aside from Approvers, Reviewers are the only other incident privilege that can return a decision to pending once it's been submitted for review. This is useful if a decision needs to be returned to pending status due to an error or if it was submitted before it was ready. A Reviewer can intervene and kick it back to pending status without involvement from the decision Approver.</p>
<p>Incident Objectives Project</p>	<p>The Incident Objectives project findings reveal that 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. Incident objectives and incident requirements should cover what, where, and why and should be communicated consistently in incident documentation.</p> <p>See the WFM RD&A Reference & Guidance and Decision Support Toolbox webpages for additional information and links to the USDA FS Briefing Paper and white papers titled Creating Incident-Specific WFDSS Incident Objectives and Improving WFDSS Incident Objectives & Incident Requirements and Relaying Leader's Intent.</p>
<p>Decision Content Rationale</p>	<p>The decision rationale provides the opportunity to tell the "story" of the incident. Onscreen help on the Rationale vertical tab (default decision editor) is intended to help Line Officers develop rationale for their decision that is both informed and thorough. They should document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Their decision. ● Who the cooperators are that share the decision process and why. ● What the values of concern are and the likelihood of impact on them. ● What the relative risk assessment and organization needs indicate. ● What the current fire situation is. ● What triggers would indicate revisions to the decision or when a new decision is needed.

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	See Creating Rationale .
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Preseason Preparation Checklist (My Home tab)

Table 8: Preseason Preparation Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	Feature	Description
<input type="checkbox"/>	Passwords	<p>Users are allowed one account per person and it provides access to both WFDSS Production and Training sites.</p> <p>Your password must be changed every 60 days or your account will be locked. If the system does not allow you to log in and more than 60 days have passed since your last login, you are likely locked out. Contact the Help Desk (1-866-224-7677) and request a password reset. Do not request a new account; this causes confusion when preparing decision documents and performing other WFDSS functions.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Disabled Accounts	<p>If two years have lapsed since your last login and your account is subsequently disabled, you must do two things; first contact your local GAE to request role(s) reassignment and second, call the Help Desk (+1 866.224.7677) to request a password reset. If you are unsure of who your local GAE is, the Help Desk can help you with this. Do not request a new account; this causes confusion when preparing decision documents and performing other WFDSS functions.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact Information	<p>Check your contact information and ensure that it is up to date. This information is used by the WFDSS system and WFDSS users to contact you for various reasons, for example if you are an incident owner you will receive confirmation when any fire behavior analyses are completed on your incident to the email address listed. If you have changed jobs, geographic areas, or even agencies you can simply update your Contact Information.</p> <p>See Updating your Contact Information.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	User Roles	<p>Ensure that your User Roles are appropriate for your current position and job duties. To view your current User Roles select My Home > User Roles. See Requesting Additional System Privileges or WFDSS User Roles to learn more about user roles and privileges. User roles granted in Production are automatically carried over to Training but conversely, user roles granted in Training are exclusive to the Training site only.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	System Preferences	<p>You may select preferred default settings to customize specific items, for example the default base map layer. New map layers are added periodically to the list of available Map Layers from System Preferences. The Map Layers listed in the right hand box are available for display on WFDSS maps. It's a good practice to check these Layers periodically to ensure pertinent data is available for viewing from WFDSS maps (Disturbance History > Fuel Treatments are a good example; these map layers need to be manually added). Users must move those layers that</p>

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		are not needed back to the left hand box if they don't wish to display them on their WFDSS maps. See Changing your System Preference .
<input type="checkbox"/>	Address Book	Preseason is an excellent time to customize your My Address Book. You can set up groups now for use on incidents later. See Address Book , or see the other WFDSS Help topics related to the address book such as, Creating a Group and Editing a Group .