

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

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Writing WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements that are relevant to the incident and relay leader's intent are fundamental to successful wildfire management, setting the purpose for actions and intended outcomes. Most WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements are written generically, and could apply to any fire in the country. Unclear Objectives and Requirements are of little use to Incident Management Teams (IMTs) in developing strategies and tactics to achieve an Agency Administrator's (AA) intent for managing a specific fire. Similarly, WFDSS *Strategic* Objectives and *Management* Requirements, established from Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) provide the foundation for managing each fire, but are rarely written with wildfire specificity. The lack of alignment from the LRMP to WFDSS Incident Objectives and Requirements decreases the likelihood that NEPA-based management direction is adequately implemented on a wildfire. It may also increase 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 Objectives, Requirements, Course(s) of Action, Rationale are related,
- Provides suggestions for improving understanding of clear leader's intent.
- Helps Incident Management Teams (IMTs) understand how best to provide feedback to AAs through dialogue that clarifies leader's intent and the fire's priorities in order to focus on limiting firefighter exposure while protecting the most Highly Valued Resources and Assets (HVRAs).

During the 2014 fire season, we systematically evaluated 23 published WFDSS Decisions by interviewing Agency Administrators, Incident Commanders and WFDSS Authors to understand how WFDSS Incident Objectives are being written. We analyzed all Incident Objectives in the WFDSS database as of May 2014. Recommendations provided here are based on our findings from those efforts. Improving WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements requires focusing on these key points:

- 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 as "leader's intent".
- Limit the number of WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements so priorities are clear.
- Use pre-season planning and scenarios to streamline development of typical WFDSS Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, and Course(s) of Action for areas which will reduce stress during the onset of an incident.
- Implement the WFDSS Spatial Fire Planning option to more easily relay site-specific and prioritized Incident Objectives regarding firefighter exposure and protection of HVRAs.

## 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
<a href="#"><u>Writing Clear, Specific Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements is Important.</u></a>	
<p>The lack of specificity in 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 and priorities. Requirements are the management constraints.</p> <p>When assets are limited, AAs and IMTs must choose which objectives they have capacity to achieve. Beyond protecting life, everything else is second priority and often 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><a href="#"><u>Who is responsible for crafting WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>How do meaningful WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements assist with setting priorities on an incident?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>How do meaningful WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements help with managing risk?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>What do clear, specific Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements look like?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Where do I start when it's time to craft WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Why should I limit the number of WFDSS Incident Objectives?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>LRMP direction uploaded into WFDSS for my unit is sometimes generic; how can I craft specific and useful WFDSS Incident Objectives?</u></a></p>
Summary Information	
Background:	Additional Information
<a href="#"><u>Within a WFDSS Decision, the tie between Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action and Rationale is important.</u></a>	
<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><a href="#"><u>Why is it important to tier this information?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>What should be addressed in the Course of Action?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>What should be included in the Rationale section of a Decision?</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Firefighter and public safety is important. How do I incorporate it into the Decision?</u></a></p>

Summary Information	
Background:	Additional Information
<a href="#">A tie between the WFDSS Decision and external information such as the Delegation of Authority, Inbriefing Package, and Incident Action Plan (IAP) is needed.</a>	
<p>The WFDSS Decision is the AA’s responsibility and communicates the leader’s intent regarding how to manage the fire.</p> <p>AA direction may conflict among the WFDSS Decision, delegation of authority, the briefing package, other documents and ad hoc discussions, resulting in misdirection in managing the fire. It is critical that this information is aligned.</p> <p>In many cases IMTs are not reading the WFDSS Decision.</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><a href="#">Communicating WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements to IMT's-- How and When</a></p> <p><a href="#">What does the WFDSS Decision mean to an IMT?</a></p> <p><a href="#">How does IMT feedback assist the Agency Administrator?</a></p> <p><a href="#">How does IMT involvement in the WFDSS Decision ensure sound risk management?</a></p> <p><a href="#">What is the tie between Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements in WFDSS and the incident objectives in the Incident Action Plan?</a></p> <p><a href="#">Where should I put information that is important to me and the IMT working on my unit but not about managing the fire itself?</a></p>

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

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

WFDSS Incident Objectives provide strategic direction while Incident Requirements provide rules and regulations. Both are equally important in conveying Leader’s Intent. Clear WFDSS Incident Objectives help ensure firefighting resources are committed only where and when they are needed to meet objectives, thus reducing firefighter exposure.

Based on the evaluation of fires, 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). These statements do little to inform risk tradeoffs.

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

It is the AA's responsibility to ensure the WFDSS Decision follows policy and guidance. Many land management units have a designated "WFDSS user" who crafts WFDSS 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 1) provide clear leader's intent, 2) are aligned with the LRMP, 3) are relatively few in number, 4) do not conflict, 5) indicate the "what, when, where, why" and 6) give an overall sense of priority.

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

The fire behavior, daily safety engagement, and the daily planning cycle drive the prioritization of actions during the incident but the AA must be involved in setting the overall priorities for the fire. Meaningful WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements 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 assists with priority setting and facilitates the risk management dialogue. Characterization of the importance of the value versus the risk to protect it can inform the tactical plan and potentially lessen the degree of firefighter exposure (ground and aviation resources).

A laundry list of unclear objectives or requirements is challenging for IMTs to use in a risk-management context. Although Authors don't typically put these items in numerical order, wording of value or acceptable fire effects can convey importance:

"...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."

"...to avoid damage to highly valued, genetically unique trout habitat."

In addition to clear writing, a dialogue between the IMT and the AA promotes understanding of the priorities and the feasibility of what the IMT can accomplish given the weather, fire behavior and resources at hand. 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 AA prioritization, the IMT determines priorities and trade-offs among all WFDSS Incident Objectives, and this will likely be different than what the AA intended.

## 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. Meaningful WFDSS Incident Objectives and Requirements enable AAs and IMTs to weigh

the risk to firefighters against the values to be protected based on current and expected fire behavior. The IMT must mitigate risk to the extent possible but the AA must also realize there is always some level of baseline risk and ask, *'is that value worth the risk to personnel?'* WFDSS users have tools to inform risk tradeoffs (e.g. Firefighter evacuation layer, fire behavior outputs).

### 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. Writing true SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-realistic) fire objectives can be challenging at the strategic level. Instead, provide a sense of prioritization using *what, where, when, why*. Leave 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. Including the intent and reasoning (the “why”) behind an objective can increase the overall understanding for improved site and time-specific tactical decisions.

These examples illustrate this concept. 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: Contain portion of fire north of the Elliot Highway on the west side.	Protect the town of Minto south of Elliot Highway.
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; only low-intensity fire is acceptable in the watershed.  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 without exposing firefighters to dense snag patches in the beetle-killed areas.

Original WFDSS Incident Objective/Requirement	Recommended Improvement
Objective: Keep fire east of Antelope Road and north of Garden Valley Road	<p><i>Requirement:</i> Do not engage the fire in the area west of Antelope Road and North of Garden Valley Road because it has been used for small arms range practice therefore unexploded ordinance is likely in the area. (<i>Explanation of “why” control line is located where it is and is addressed as a requirement instead of an Incident Objective</i>).</p> <p><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.</p>
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 that removes overstory trees.

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

Begin with the Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements from the LRMP that pertain to fire management. These are entered into WFDSS well before fire season, providing the basis for writing incident-specific WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements. Write WFDSS Incident Objectives and Requirements that explain *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.

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. This helps to ensure fire management tactics and strategies are in alignment with Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs), which are “contracts” with the public.

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.

It's possible that some of the Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements within WFDSS do not immediately apply to the incident and, in that case, there is no need to create an Incident Objective or Incident Requirement. 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 Incident Objective or Requirement would be needed to address this Management Requirement. If desired, WFDSS users can note why a particular Strategic Objective or Management Requirement was not specifically addressed.

### **Why should I limit the number of WFDSS Incident Objectives?**

A shorter, focused list of specific WFDSS Incident Objectives 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, "may be" applicable Incident Objectives were often included, as if the WFDSS Decision was a NEPA document. Instead, consider the likelihood of achieving the Incident Objectives, the likelihood fire will damage the asset, the political, social and economic impacts associated with potential fire damage.

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 helps focus the actions of the IMT and sets the tone for the strategies used and costs (human and monetary) involved. 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.

### **LRMP direction uploaded into WFDSS for my unit is sometimes generic; how can I craft specific and useful WFDSS Incident Objectives?**

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 AA) to come to an understanding about the intention in the LRMP in order to craft clear and specific language for WFDSS Incident Objectives.

If LRMP direction inserted in WFDSS by the local unit is not relevant to wildfire decisions, it will have to be sifted through on every Decision to determine if it is relevant. This can hinder creation of specific, relevant, prioritized Incident Objectives. If irrelevant direction is not removed, but there is concern that it should be addressed, a note can be made in the Decision in appropriate sections discussing why they were not addressed. This can all be avoided by simplifying information from LRMPs during a preseason WFDSS review.

## **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 AA's intent and basis for the tactical plan.

### **Why is it important to tier this information?**

Continuity of information within the WFDSS Decision leads to clearer understanding and implementation of 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 AA'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 implementation of the land management direction. Most importantly, firefighters will not be engaged in activities that are not important or that contradict LRMP direction. A clear articulation of the "why" allows IMTs to utilize a risk-management dialogue with their staffs and the AA to ensure the fire is managed while considering firefighter exposure.

### **What should be addressed in the Course of Action?**

A Course of Action (COA) 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. Ask, "How are we going to do this?" In incident-level decision making, the COA is comprised of selected strategies and specific actions to achieve the Incident Objectives while complying with Incident Requirements. The purpose of the COA 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 the COA conveys the strategy 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) Shapes can aid communication regarding various LRMP direction across a unit. Utilize the Strategy Slider bar and comment box to aid communication regarding the overall strategy for the fire.

Many incident COAs included a box cardinally described in which to keep the fire and *also* included an Incident Objective statement such as "keep the fire as small as possible." These are contradictory because the box implies it is acceptable to burn out the interior of that area and "keep it small" implies aggressive tactics are necessary to avoid more burned acres. It is not necessary to describe a box for the fire; that is an obsolete 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 not burn, describe the reasons why.

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

The Rationale section 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 about “Why am I making the decision to do *these things* on *this* fire?” and can reference specific *what*, *where*, and *when* sections of the Decision.

Consider using the following format to address 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 is considered throughout the risk assessment process and addressed while WFDSS Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, and Course of Action are developed. It is 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. To give it true meaning, emphasize safety throughout the Decision. Incident Objectives may discuss firefighter and public safety as part of the *why* it was written. Many feel that safety should be a WFDSS Incident Requirement. 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.**

Delivery of WFDSS Incident Objectives and Requirements, the risk management analysis in WFDSS, and additional Leader’s Intent occurs in a variety of ways. Important information is spread throughout the Delegation of Authority (DOA), in attachments to the DOA, verbally, and in the WFDSS Decision. With this varied method of delivery, conflicting information makes it difficult for IMTs to rapidly and effectively ascertain leader’s intent, priorities, 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 DOA and Inbriefing Package. This in turn should be articulated not only in the IAP Objectives (which are often different from WFDSS Objectives), but through the actions being planned daily on the incident. *To meet the AA'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 inbriefing. To avoid conflicting direction between the DOA and WFDSS Decision, avoid reiterating Decision information in the DOA. Although the WFDSS Decision is the AA's responsibility, it is critically important that IMTs read the current Published Decision to ensure they follow the leader's intent and provide Decision feedback to the Agency Administrator. AAs who want IMTs to read and understand the Decision need to keep the Decision focused, relevant, and organized. IMTs may assist the AA in updating or revising WFDSS Decisions.

## What does the WFDSS Decision mean to an IMT?

The WFDSS Decision provides information to the IMT relevant to managing a specific wildfire. 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. Risk assessment information completed by the local unit in WFDSS should be considered when the IMT undertakes actions. The team is often asked to review and provide feedback on the current Decision and assist in updating the information when necessary. These interactions provide opportunities 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 about priorities during daily command and general staff or other meetings. Alignment between what the IMT is implementing and the leader's intent is critical. Often a Strategic Operational Planner (SOPL) can be ordered to assist with updates to the WFDSS Decision, work on risk assessment updates, and work as a liaison between the IMT and AA. This feedback is important to ensure the AA 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. The IMT provides the ability to look more closely at the fire and evaluate the situation. Relaying those findings to the AA for consideration is critical to ensure the strategic intent is being met or there is clear 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 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 AA's strategic priorities whereas if the AA 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 provide leader's intent from a strategic standpoint. The IAP objectives are intended to tie from the WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements but are geared toward operations/tactics on a particular day/shift. The WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements 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.

### **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 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 information should be included in the Delegation of Authority to relay leader's intent. One might also consider if it makes sense to direct IMTs to follow policy – when it is policy.

**Table 3 Summary table showing information tiered from LRMP to IAP**

Source Document	Type of Direction	Information Type
<b>Information Provided</b>		
Land and Resource Management Plan Direction	Land management direction	Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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), <b>based on</b> LRMP.</li> <li>Ideally LRMP direction modified for application on fire incidents (may come from unit plan goals, desired conditions, strategies, objectives or guidelines).</li> <li>Designed to be uploaded in WFDSS pre-season, and most are optimally included in spatial planning (site-specific).</li> </ul>		
WFDSS Decision	AA's Decision	Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action, Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect agency administrator's intent for achieving desired outcomes and avoiding undesirable consequences.</li> <li>Primary means of directing actions on a fire, and greatly influence costs, duration, and outcomes (GTR-298).</li> <li>Incident-specific statements of direction necessary for selection of strategy(s) and tactical activities of resources on an incident (GTR-298).</li> <li>Contain detailed information specific to area, benefits from fire, values at risk, and fire conditions (<i>what, when, where, why</i>).</li> <li>Tiered to LRMP management direction based on applicable Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements.</li> </ul>		
Delegation of Authority/Leader's Intent	AA's Intent	Delegated authority for the fire, tie to WFDSS Decision (Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Leader's Intent – often provided as a supplement to the DOA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides core values information pertinent to the AA's intent as identified by the unit. (Safety-Core values, costs, human resources &amp; unit guidance).</li> </ul> </li> <li>Attach a copy of the latest Decision. Utilize WFDSS for briefing where applicable.</li> </ul>		
Inbriefing Package	AA's Intent	Communication expectations, key contacts, unit information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides information about the current fire situation, key contacts, and unit information.</li> </ul>		
Incident Action Plan (IAP)	AA's Intent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incident Objectives</li> <li>Incident Requirements</li> </ul> IMT's Intent	<b>Daily</b> Incident Objectives (ICS 202) <b>Tactical</b> Objective (Assignment List , ICS 204 in IAP)
<p><b>Daily</b> Incident Objectives (ICS 202)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should reflect guidance provided by the AA from WFDSS.</li> <li>Guidance and direction needed to select appropriate strategy(s), and the tactical direction of resources, specific to the location and conditions.</li> <li>Based on realistic expectations of what can be accomplished with allocated resources.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tactical</b> Objective (Assignment List , ICS 204 in IAP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific to tactics to be achieved within the operational period by personnel assigned to a division or group.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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).</li> </ul>		

## 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, including 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, spatial information is typically located in planning databases or on 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 informing risk management decisions by not only the IMT but all personnel on the fireline. When more than one unit or agency is within the Planning Area of a wildfire the IMT may not obtain relevant information in a timely manner. To alleviate this, the Spatial Fire Planning method was implemented in WFDSS as an option to replace the Fire Management Unit method. See agency specific guidance for direction regarding Spatial Fire Planning options.

### 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 to visually display language from Land and Resource Management Plans on a map display as shapes. The visual depiction of these data allows for greater data control because Data Managers can upload, manage, and associate shapes to represent the 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](#) Spatial Fire Planning header.

SFP can reduce redundant Decision content through shapes that portray content affecting the fire decision from the overarching LRMP. If common content is aggregated into appropriate spatial shapes, the SFP 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 SFP process can provide units with a better visual depiction of their LRMP direction and allows the unit to have greater control over their data. A visual representation of values and resources and their response to fire allows for improved WFDSS Incident Objectives and Requirements because they can be more easily tailored to the fire area. Incident-specific the WFDSS Objectives and Requirements convey leader's intent for appropriate implementation by fire managers.

Shapes that help define the Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements during an incident can be developed pre-season from LRMPs. 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 wildfire 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 wildfires. 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.*

We are working with fire planners to develop future guidance in the fire planning arena.