

Framing Fires: Wildfire Management Planning and Performance Measures¹

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Abstract

The development and use of performance measures for fire management is an issue that has confounded many fire and land management agencies. How to measure losses/damage that was prevented (i.e. did not occur), and establish performance trends in the absence of benchmarks and historical data or risk profiles are some of the key challenges. This paper will discuss a range of issues relating to fire program performance measurement and propose some principles to address this difficult task.

Wildfire Management has become recognized as a global issue, and is increasing in profile, for a range of reasons including heightened attention toward global warming, and a proliferation of severe fires. Some parts of the world have experienced severe fire seasons in a number of years over the past decade, 2003 being a dramatic year and 2006/7 shaping similarly with deployments across the Pacific both ways, ongoing fires in South East Asia and continuing potential for serious wildfires in Mediterranean Europe.

Wildfire management is evolving away from single agency, single tenure models to wider landscape approaches. The requirements for fire management in developing nations is changing and historically has often not formally or strongly addressed fire management.

The Fire Management Framework enhanced the emergency management cycle through the inclusion of an 'Analysis' stage. The Analysis stage is in part an analysis of fire behavior, including a description of wildfire events and their impacts, concurrently aligning with Risk Management processes. The framework for wildfire management has been applied or considered in a range of contexts including Thailand, Vietnam, Ghana, Indonesia and Australia as a brief introduction to the concepts and tools now available.

This paper then offers some initial thoughts and ideas on performance measures following a review of efforts in this field to date and considering among other approaches the objectively verifiable indicators developed for Logical Frameworks.

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