

# **State of Alaska FY2005 Governor's Operating Budget**

## **Department of Natural Resources Statewide Fire Suppression Program Results Delivery Unit Budget Summary**

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## Statewide Fire Suppression Program Results Delivery Unit

### Contribution to Department's Mission

Forestry's contribution to the department mission is to manage wildland fires in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible, meeting statutory requirements to provide wildland fire protection to all state, municipal, and private lands. This contribution is delivered through the Fire Suppression Preparedness, Fire Suppression Activity, and EFF Non-Emergency Projects components.

### Core Services

The Division provides fire management to meet its statutory responsibilities under AS 41.15.010 for wildland fires on all state, municipal and private lands in Alaska. The core service provided is rapid and aggressive initial attack on wildland fires consistent with the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan. This is accomplished directly through preparedness and activity by the division as well as cooperative agreements with federal agencies and local government fire cooperators.

The RDU funds wildland fire suppression operations and fixed operating costs to provide for critical supplies, services, equipment, and personnel. Helicopters, air tankers and light fixed-wing aircraft will be contracted from private vendors to provide detection, transportation of initial attack firefighters and application of fire retardant to wildland fires. Village emergency firefighting crews, incidental emergency firefighters, local government and federal cooperator personnel will be hired in emergency situations to supplement the division's seasonal firefighters.

### FY2005 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

**FY2005 Results Delivery Unit Budget: \$24,273,200**

**Personnel:**

Full time	30
Part time	179
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>

### Key RDU Challenges

The fire season is occurring earlier and lasting longer in response to warmer winters and less precipitation, with fires occurring as early as January and commonly in March. The initial attack workforce is funded for 3-5 months for an anticipated fire season from mid-April through mid-August. The extended fire season is creating significant problems in accomplishing required training as well as initial attack with too few staff-months.

Recruitment of firefighting positions is a major problem, both within Alaska and for some positions nationally. Critical shortages in dispatch, logistics, and experienced fire managers has necessitated national recruitment without major results. Competition for personnel from both municipal and federal positions offering significantly higher wages is no longer offset by the state's benefits since the advent of Tier III. Waiver for basic requirements in positions such as dispatch and logistics has been obtained but has not resolved the problems.

Use of Forestry's highly trained and qualified ICS firefighters for all-risk incident response is becoming increasingly common both in Alaska and nationally. While this provides benefits to the state, when combined with the limited staff-months funded, it has an increasing impact on the availability of personnel for the basic wildland fire mission.

Costs of the fire program vary not only directly with the intensity and length of the fire season, but with unavoidable increases in fixed costs. The establishment of a new budget structure creating Fire Suppression Activity and Fire Suppression Preparedness with basic funding is expected to provide more control over the normal year costs for fires. The funding levels were based on the average fire costs over a ten year period, eliminating the high and low years. We are observing earlier and longer fire seasons and may find that the baseline for the last ten years is no longer indicative of

the normal fire season with the observed climate changes.

An important challenge is public acceptance of large fires in remote areas that result in loss of cabins or remote developments. There is a major cost associated with protection of recreational cabins or remote developments in areas that otherwise benefit from fire through increased habitat and natural forest regeneration. As shown in the Sand Lake (Goodpaster River) fire in 2003, Forestry worked closely with a large number of cabin owners to encourage a combination of individual response to their own cabin protection, while resisting pressure to outright suppress the fire with the resultant large fire costs. Legislative understanding of the fiscal implications and confidence in good fire management resulted in good support.

### **Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2005**

Reductions in funding will impact deliverables and management of the fire program but cannot be determined at this date. No other significant changes in results to be delivered are anticipated.

### **Major RDU Accomplishments in 2003**

See specific detail at component level for Fire Suppression Activity and Fire Suppression Preparedness.

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**Statewide Fire Suppression Program  
RDU Financial Summary by Component**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	<b>FY2003 Actuals</b>				<b>FY2004 Authorized</b>				<b>FY2005 Governor</b>			
	<b>General Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>	<b>Other Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>General Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>	<b>Other Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>General Funds</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>	<b>Other Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>
<b>Formula Expenditures</b>												
None.												
<b>Non-Formula Expenditures</b>												
Fire Suppression Preparedness	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10,738.7	377.4	456.0	11,572.1	4,897.3	542.5	7,159.5	12,599.3
Fire Suppression Activity	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7,363.5	6,960.4	0.0	14,323.9	724.4	3,460.4	7,489.1	11,673.9
Fire Suppression	27,412.8	12,220.6	549.7	40,183.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27,412.8</b>	<b>12,220.6</b>	<b>549.7</b>	<b>40,183.1</b>	<b>18,102.2</b>	<b>7,337.8</b>	<b>456.0</b>	<b>25,896.0</b>	<b>5,621.7</b>	<b>4,002.9</b>	<b>14,648.6</b>	<b>24,273.2</b>

**Statewide Fire Suppression Program  
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component  
From FY2004 Authorized to FY2005 Governor**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<b>FY2004 Authorized</b>	<b>18,102.2</b>	<b>7,337.8</b>	<b>456.0</b>	<b>25,896.0</b>
<b>Adjustments which will continue current level of service:</b>				
-Fire Suppression Preparedness	-5,991.4	165.1	6,703.5	877.2
-Fire Suppression Activity	-6,639.1	-3,500.0	7,489.1	-2,650.0
<b>Proposed budget decreases:</b>				
-Fire Suppression Preparedness	-100.0	0.0	0.0	-100.0
<b>Proposed budget increases:</b>				
-Fire Suppression Preparedness	250.0	0.0	0.0	250.0
<b>FY2005 Governor</b>	<b>5,621.7</b>	<b>4,002.9</b>	<b>14,648.6</b>	<b>24,273.2</b>