

State of Alaska FY2006 Governor's Operating Budget

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

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 managing 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 fire suppression preparedness and fire suppression activity by the division as well as negotiating cooperative agreements with federal agencies and local government fire cooperators for assistance.

The RDU funds wildland fire suppression operations and fixed preparedness 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 suppress 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.

FY2006 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

FY2006 Results Delivery Unit Budget: \$26,291,400	Personnel:	
	Full time	31
	Part time	178
	Total	209

Key RDU Challenges

The wildland 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 for firefighting positions is a major problem and openings have been recruited within Alaska and nationally with very poor results. Critical shortages in dispatch, logistics, and experienced fire managers have necessitated national recruitment. 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. Waivers for basic requirements in positions such as dispatch and logistics have been obtained but have not resolved the recruitment and retention problems.

Use of the Division 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. The 2004 fire season has established a new high year which increases the base funding level above what is budgeted. The state is 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 can 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 and the Camp Creek fire in 2004, 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. Public meetings in the fall of 2004 in 13 Northern Region communities will obtain additional input and expand public awareness after this fire season. Legislative understanding of the fiscal implications and confidence in good fire management resulted in good support.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2006

A continuation budget will support the mission and measures established for deliverables and management of the fire program but further specifics cannot be determined at this date. No other significant changes in results to be delivered are anticipated.

Major RDU Accomplishments in 2004

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

Contact Information
<p>Contact: Jeff J. Jahnke, State Forester Phone: (907) 269-8474 Fax: (907) 269-8931 E-mail: jjahnke@dnr.state.ak.us</p>

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

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2004 Actuals				FY2005 Management Plan				FY2006 Governor			
	General Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds
<u>Formula Expenditures</u>												
None.												
<u>Non-Formula Expenditures</u>												
Fire Suppression Preparedness	11,387.5	343.8	543.0	12,274.3	11,344.0	543.1	476.4	12,363.5	11,558.3	569.8	490.4	12,618.5
Fire Suppression Activity	7,995.9	7,392.4	460.1	15,848.4	6,712.5	5,460.4	1,500.0	13,672.9	6,712.5	5,460.4	1,500.0	13,672.9
Totals	19,383.4	7,736.2	1,003.1	28,122.7	18,056.5	6,003.5	1,976.4	26,036.4	18,270.8	6,030.2	1,990.4	26,291.4

**Statewide Fire Suppression Program
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component
From FY2005 Management Plan to FY2006 Governor**

All dollars shown in thousands

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2005 Management Plan	18,056.5	6,003.5	1,976.4	26,036.4
Adjustments which will continue current level of service:				
-Fire Suppression Preparedness	214.3	26.7	14.0	255.0
FY2006 Governor	18,270.8	6,030.2	1,990.4	26,291.4