

State of Alaska FY2007 Governor's Operating Budget

Department of Natural Resources Fire Suppression Activity Component Budget Summary

Component: Fire Suppression Activity

Contribution to Department's Mission

The Division of Forestry's contribution to the Department's mission is to manage wildland fires in the safest, most efficient and cost-effective manner possible, meeting statutory requirements to provide wildland fire protection, commensurate with values at risk, to all state, municipal and private lands.

Core Services

The Division's Wildland Fire Management Program consists of two components under its statutory responsibility in AS41.15.010 for wildland fires on all state, municipal and private lands in Alaska. This component funds wildland fire suppression operations and closely related activities.

The Division provides appropriate management response to wildland fires consistent with the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan. Appropriate management response ranges from rapid and aggressive initial attack to surveillance, dependant on values at risk and land manager objectives. In some parts of the state, this will be accomplished through cooperative agreements with federal and local government fire cooperators.

Helicopters, air tankers and light fixed-wing aircraft are contracted and leased 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 firefighters.

Note: Performance measures for the Statewide Fire Suppression RDU components are included in the Fire Suppression Preparedness Component.

FY2007 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

FY2007 Component Budget: \$13,672,900	Personnel:	
	Full time	0
	Part time	0
	Total	0

Key Component Challenges

Length of the fire season has increased significantly, impacting staffing, budget and urban/interface risk. The legislated wildland fire season is May 1st through September 30th annually. However, due to changes in the weather pattern, the Division's initial attack firefighters are normally fighting wildland fires much earlier than the May 1st date. In the last three years the Division has averaged 16 fire responses in March, which is eight times the average of the previous ten years. Most of these fires occurred in the urban interface and several of these early fires threatened homes and other structures directly. In 2005, Division fire fighters responded to 38 fires prior to May 1, including the 5000 acre Tracy Avenue fire that threatened over 100 homes near Homer.

Alaska's population continues to move into the forested areas of the state which makes responding to the rising numbers of urban interface wildland fires one of the key issues facing the Division and its cooperators. In 2004 and 2005 the Division suppressed numerous serious urban interface wildland fires that directly threatened inhabited structures. For the 2005 fire season 275 of 346 fires were in the wildland urban interface areas of the state. In 2004, 314 of 398 fires were urban interface and in the 2003 fire season, 353 of 369 fires were in this category. Geographically, the urban interface fire zone continues to increase as new homes and subdivisions are built.

Forestry's ICS trained and experienced personnel are increasingly being used for all-risk incident response ranging from the 9/11 response and Hurricanes such as Katrina and Rita, to windstorms, floods, and earthquakes. The state is increasingly relying on their availability in planning disaster or terrorism response. However, the majority of these personnel are 3-5 month seasonal staff, whose seasons are already too short to provide required training and ensure their availability for fires. The increased all-risk workload is falling to the few fire managers who have full time fire management responsibilities. Because of its trained and experienced personnel, Forestry is probably the best choice for many emergency response situations. However, the commitment of staff-months expended annually toward all-risk assignments negatively impact the Division's ability to accomplish the basic wildland fire management missions in the safest, most effective and cost-efficient manner.

Component costs are increasing due to longer seasons, hazardous fuel accumulations and more urban interface wildland fires. 6.6 million acres of forested lands burned in Alaska during the 2004 fire season, and 4.6 million acres burned in 2005. These were Alaska's the first and third largest fires years, respectively. In 2004, three of the state's responsibility fires were declared FEMA disaster fires and were eligible for reimbursement of 75% of approved fire suppression cost. While the 2004 fire season was the most expensive to date, the 2005 fire season will also be significantly more expensive than the ten year average. Higher costs can be attributed to a longer, more intense and lightning prone fire season with the wildland fires threatening human life and structures in the wildland urban interface areas of the state. Approximately 33% of the total number of fires statewide were in limited protection and required no suppression action. However, 84% (328 of this year's 390 fires) of the wildland fires that required suppression action occurred on state responsibility lands resulting in the State of Alaska being required to pay the suppression costs. This year, of the seven fires that became costly project fires requiring the assignment of incident management teams, four were wholly or partially the state's fiscal responsibility.

Notable in both 2004 and 2005 were the duration of the seasons. In 2005, the Tracy Avenue fire, which started near Homer on April 28 and burned over 5,400 acre, was the earliest project fire in Alaska's history. In both years, several large fires were staffed into late August and early September, which is well past the historic norm for a fire season-ending weather event. The Kenai Peninsula in 2005 also witnessed the most lightning strikes and the largest number of fires started by lightning ever recorded. This lengthening fire season and increased fire activity requires the constant rotation of firefighting personnel, including incident management teams and suppression crews. In the past two years, there have been 33 requests for Incident Management Teams between 16 different fires and fire complexes. In 2005, two Alaska Type 2 Teams were mobilized to 3 fires each and one Type 2 Incident Management teams from the lower 48 was mobilized to two fires in Alaska. The Division of Forestry mobilized approximately 307 individual overhead personnel, fourteen Type 1 crews, and 98 smokejumpers from the lower 48. Additionally, four Air Tankers, four helicopters, and 1 infrared mapping aircraft were requested by DOF from the lower 48 and Canada.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2007

This component will operate at current funding service levels. No significant changes are anticipated at the current funding level.

Major Component Accomplishments in 2005

Fire Program budgeting was previously split in Forest Management and Development and Fire Suppression, and is now in Fire Suppression Activity and Fire Suppression Preparedness.

- Successfully suppressed 98% of the 192 wildland fires in critical protection at 10 acres or less exceeding the goal of 90% and equaling the 2000, 2002, 2003 and 2004 fire seasons where the division also successfully suppressed 98% of the wildland fires in critical protection. This measure is highly dependent upon conditions including weather, winds, number of simultaneous fires, etc. This trend supports an outcome of decreased wildland/urban interface fires that reach project fire level, thus saving the state suppression costs and protecting public lives and property.

- Successfully suppressed 94% of 275 wildland fires in critical and full protection at 10 acres or less, exceeding the measure of 90%. These urban/ interface fires were suppressed by firefighters in Tok, Fairbanks, Delta Junction, Copper River, McGrath, Anchorage, the Mat-Su Valley, Soldotna and the Haines Areas. This trend supports an outcome of increased wildland/urban interface fires that require extended and more expensive attack.
- Mobilized 66 (16-person) EFF village crews filled 166 crew requests on 24 different in-state fires. 1 DOF Type 1 crew was mobilized to the Lower 48. The state expended more than \$3.7 Million in EFF wages in CY05. Hiring EFF crews supports an outcome of increased employment for Alaskans in rural areas that have few sources of income as well as cost-effective support of Alaskan fire suppression efforts.
- Provided Air Tanker and Aerial Supervision Module support for 45 days to the State of Oregon through the Northwest Compact. Sharing of resources through participation in the NW Compact provides an outcome of reciprocal assistance when Alaska experiences resource shortages during high levels of fire activity.
- The State provided the Incident Commander, and other key personnel to the Alaska Interagency Incident Management Team, which was assigned to the FEMA managed Hurricane Katrina recovery effort in Alabama and Mississippi in September of 2005. Participation on National Type I teams provides outcomes of invaluable experience and reciprocating service to Alaskan firefighters, particularly in wildland-urban interface.
- Provided Alaskan aviation vendors with income from thirteen 90-day and one 45-day aircraft contracts for helicopters, air tankers and fixed wing aircraft used to support wildland and wildland/ urban interface fire suppression. Economic support of Alaskan aviation vendors results in an outcome of a healthier Alaskan aviation sector and increased employment.
- Managed and responded to a total of 346 wildland fires in both wildland and wildland/urban interface areas on 134 million protection acres. A diversified outcome effect results in increased employment, increased economic benefit to vendors, and protection of life and property.
- Provided fire weather forecasting 7 days per week during the fire season, providing critical information to managers making decisions to restrict open burning, position firefighters and aircraft in certain areas, and call in more resources. The outcome allows Forestry to preposition initial attack for quick response during high fire danger and take other actions that result in more efficient fire management. The outcome, which provides more efficient fire management, saves the State money.
- Analyzed daily lightning occurrence data to determine areas where wildland fires are most likely to occur. Provided aircraft detection to areas of multiple strikes and provided rapid response to fire starts in areas with high value natural resources and human improvements. The outcome allows Forestry to preposition crews and send aerial detection to areas of high lightning occurrence for quicker initial attack.
- Payments to 1,000+ vendors who supplied additional aircraft detection, commodities and supplies during fire suppression activities this season. This major economic influx supports an outcome of increased employment and an increased economic stimulus to the state's economy.
- Purchased firefighting capabilities from the federal government saving the state duplication of services and funding. This supports an outcome of more efficient government.

Statutory and Regulatory Authority

Alaska Statutes - Title 41

Section 41.15.010 - 41.15.170

Section 41.15.200 - 41.15.240

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**Fire Suppression Activity
Component Financial Summary**

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2005 Actuals	FY2006 Management Plan	FY2007 Governor
Non-Formula Program:			
Component Expenditures:			
71000 Personal Services	17,326.6	3,152.3	3,152.3
72000 Travel	2,002.9	150.8	150.8
73000 Services	54,637.3	8,464.8	8,464.8
74000 Commodities	5,988.3	1,905.0	1,905.0
75000 Capital Outlay	27.6	0.0	0.0
77000 Grants, Benefits	0.0	0.0	0.0
78000 Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0
Expenditure Totals	79,982.7	13,672.9	13,672.9
Funding Sources:			
1002 Federal Receipts	27,793.8	5,460.4	5,460.4
1004 General Fund Receipts	51,718.9	6,712.5	6,712.5
1108 Statutory Designated Program Receipts	470.0	1,500.0	1,500.0
Funding Totals	79,982.7	13,672.9	13,672.9

Estimated Revenue Collections

Description	Master Revenue Account	FY2005 Actuals	FY2006 Management Plan	FY2007 Governor
Unrestricted Revenues				
Other Restricted Revenue	51000	76.2	0.0	0.0
Unrestricted Total		76.2	0.0	0.0
Restricted Revenues				
Federal Receipts	51010	27,793.8	5,460.4	5,460.4
Statutory Designated Program Receipts	51063	470.0	1,500.0	1,500.0
Restricted Total		28,263.8	6,960.4	6,960.4
Total Estimated Revenues		28,340.0	6,960.4	6,960.4

**Summary of Component Budget Changes
From FY2006 Management Plan to FY2007 Governor***All dollars shown in thousands*

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2006 Management Plan	6,712.5	5,460.4	1,500.0	13,672.9
FY2007 Governor	6,712.5	5,460.4	1,500.0	13,672.9