

# **State of Alaska FY2007 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 and leased from private vendors to provide detection, aerial supervision, 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.

### FY2007 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

<b>FY2007 Results Delivery Unit Budget: \$27,559,800</b>	<b>Personnel:</b>	
	Full time	32
	Part time	179
	<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>

### Key RDU Challenges

The wildland fire season is occurring earlier and lasting longer in response to changes in climate, with wildland 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 professional level 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 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. Fires in 2005 such as the King County Creek and Fox Creek helped meet land manager resource objectives through hazardous fuel reduction and habitat improvement, but action was still necessary to protect private property and structures. With the results of numerous public meetings in Interior Alaska during the fall of 2004 in mind, the Division of Forestry is developing methodologies to incorporate individual land owner, as well as land manager, input into the annual review process of the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan. This interagency federal/state plan pre-identifies the suppression action that will occur on lands in Alaska. Legislative understanding of the natural role of fire in the environment and confidence in good fire management resulted in good support.

### **Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2007**

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 2005**

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*

	FY2005 Actuals				FY2006 Management Plan				FY2007 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
<b><u>Formula Expenditures</u></b>												
None.												
<b><u>Non-Formula Expenditures</u></b>												
Fire Suppression Preparedness	11,347.6	748.9	406.5	12,503.0	11,754.3	587.5	501.6	12,843.4	12,533.0	779.3	574.6	13,886.9
Fire Suppression Activity	51,718.9	27,793.8	470.0	79,982.7	6,712.5	5,460.4	1,500.0	13,672.9	6,712.5	5,460.4	1,500.0	13,672.9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>63,066.5</b>	<b>28,542.7</b>	<b>876.5</b>	<b>92,485.7</b>	<b>18,466.8</b>	<b>6,047.9</b>	<b>2,001.6</b>	<b>26,516.3</b>	<b>19,245.5</b>	<b>6,239.7</b>	<b>2,074.6</b>	<b>27,559.8</b>

**Statewide Fire Suppression Program  
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component  
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>
<b>FY2006 Management Plan</b>	<b>18,466.8</b>	<b>6,047.9</b>	<b>2,001.6</b>	<b>26,516.3</b>
<b>Adjustments which will continue current level of service:</b>				
-Fire Suppression Preparedness	320.5	28.4	20.5	369.4
<b>Proposed budget increases:</b>				
-Fire Suppression Preparedness	458.2	163.4	52.5	674.1
<b>FY2007 Governor</b>	<b>19,245.5</b>	<b>6,239.7</b>	<b>2,074.6</b>	<b>27,559.8</b>