

State of Alaska FY2008 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 Non-Emergency Hazard Mitigation 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.

FY2008 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

| | | |
|--|-------------------|------------|
| FY2008 Results Delivery Unit Budget: \$30,065,300 | Personnel: | |
| | Full time | 32 |
| | Part time | 180 |
| | Total | 212 |

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 has historically been funded for 3-5 months for an anticipated fire season from April through 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 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.

Fires in remote locations help meet land manager resource objectives through hazardous fuel reduction and habitat improvement. Policy regarding remote private property protection on the "cabin Policy" is being reviewed. 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 FY2008

Proposed requests will meet the increased financial obligations to respond to a longer fire season and to pay for increased aviation contract costs. Requests will support the mission and measures established for continued deliverables and management of the fire program. No other significant changes in results to be delivered are anticipated.

Major RDU Accomplishments in 2006

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

| Contact Information |
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| <p>Contact: John "Chris" Maisch, State Forester Phone: (907) 451-2666 Fax: (907) 451-2609 E-mail: chris_maisch@dnr.state.ak.us</p> |

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

All dollars shown in thousands

| | FY2006 Actuals | | | | FY2007 Management Plan | | | | FY2008 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 | 11,720.4 | 367.8 | 735.2 | 12,823.4 | 12,577.5 | 779.3 | 574.6 | 13,931.4 | 14,960.5 | 832.8 | 599.1 | 16,392.4 |
| Fire Suppression Activity | 13,454.5 | 18,061.7 | 174.2 | 31,690.4 | 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 | 25,174.9 | 18,429.5 | 909.4 | 44,513.8 | 19,290.0 | 6,239.7 | 2,074.6 | 27,604.3 | 21,673.0 | 6,293.2 | 2,099.1 | 30,065.3 |

**Statewide Fire Suppression Program
Summary of RDU Budget Changes by Component
From FY2007 Management Plan to FY2008 Governor**

All dollars shown in thousands

| | <u>General Funds</u> | <u>Federal Funds</u> | <u>Other Funds</u> | <u>Total Funds</u> |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| FY2007 Management Plan | 19,290.0 | 6,239.7 | 2,074.6 | 27,604.3 |
| Adjustments which will continue current level of service: | | | | |
| -Fire Suppression Preparedness | 52.1 | -50.0 | -46.6 | -44.5 |
| Proposed budget increases: | | | | |
| -Fire Suppression Preparedness | 2,330.9 | 103.5 | 71.1 | 2,505.5 |
| FY2008 Governor | 21,673.0 | 6,293.2 | 2,099.1 | 30,065.3 |