

Wildfire Management Branch Strategic Plan 2012-2017

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations



Mailing Address:

Wildfire Management Branch
PO Box 9502 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9C1

Location:

2nd Floor, Bldg. A
2957 Jutland Road
Victoria BC V8T 5J9
Telephone: 250 387-5965
Facsimile: 250 387-5685

Report a Wildfire:

1-800-663-5555 or *5555 from a cellular phone
Wildfire Information:
1-888-3FOREST or 1-888-336-7378
Burn Registration Line: 1-888-797-1717





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Executive Message

This revitalized Wildfire Management Strategic Plan 2012-2017 lays a solid foundation for the organization to meet the challenges that we face going forward. I am glad to see the strong linkages and commitment to collaboration with our partners and integration strategies within the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

The Wildfire Management Branch has established itself as one of the foremost leaders in wildfire management and is recognized globally for its achievements and continued success. Throughout the year, field staff, technical experts, strategic thinkers and fire operations staff are undertaking work and projects that are of vital benefit to British Columbians, Canada and our international partners. The work they do crosses all natural resource sectors and is integral to the safety of the public, communities, First Nations and our industries. By further working to integrate and advance fire management planning and providing emergency response support services, the Wildfire Management Branch will maintain and improve conditions to ensure that our communities are safe from wildfire and other hazards.

This Strategic Plan provides clear direction to meet current and emerging challenges over the coming years and helps guide our collective efforts in wildfire management. It builds understanding of the Wildfire Management Program and how our staff and partners contribute to its delivery. It highlights the importance of the work they do, the necessity for advancing relationships, and the need to continually work with our partners and to collaborate across all agencies and sectors.

This plan provides the strategic direction to ensure that the Wildfire Management Branch contributes to the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations vision of Environmental Sustainability and Economic Prosperity. I look forward to our continued success as the Wildfire Management Branch implements the Strategic Goals and Priorities identified in this plan.

This message confirms my full approval and support for the Wildfire Management Branch Strategic Plan 2012-2017.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gary Townsend".

Gary Townsend, Assistant Deputy Minister
Integrated Resource Operations Division
BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

Director's Message

It is my pleasure to present the approved 2012-2017 Strategic Plan for the Wildfire Management Branch, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. The last five years have provided many challenges and changes in our organization. The most important change was making the strategic shift from a primary role of fire response to embracing the broader mandate of Fire Management. The 2006 Strategic Plan was instrumental in our success and has provided focus to our efforts since its inception.

This new plan reflects the ongoing need to keep pace with change and the emerging trends that we can expect in the next five years and beyond. This plan aligns with the corporate direction of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and addresses our commitment to a current and clear Branch vision. These new strategies ensure we will continue to focus on the highest priorities in the future.

Broad consultation was undertaken in the development of this plan and shaped the final document. I want to thank all of the people and organizations who contributed, as this input was invaluable in the renewal of our plan. I would also like to thank our planning team led by the Strategic Business Services program area, as ultimately they were responsible for bringing it together.

As we move towards the implementation phase of this plan, your collective and individual support of the implementation process will be crucial. The Strategic Priorities will be the major drivers for setting priorities and taking action in the future. There will also be an increased emphasis on performance measurement and reporting out on our progress throughout the duration of this plan.

The success of our organization has always been built upon a foundation of dedicated people, strong partnerships and leadership at all levels. I am more confident than ever that we will deliver on the vision and priorities set out in this plan. I am also confident that we will deal with future fire management challenges with the high degree of professionalism, pride and commitment we are known for around the globe.

I am excited about the opportunities that the future will bring and I look forward to working with all of you to make our shared vision a reality!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Simpson'.

Brian Simpson, Director
British Columbia Wildfire Management Branch
BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

Introduction

The Wildfire Management Branch (WMB) resides within the Integrated Resource Operations Division of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO). The FLNRO was created in March 2011 to coordinate and deliver integrated natural resource management services to British Columbians.

A key aspect of resource management coordination is supporting shared service delivery. By working as part of an integrated system, ministry staff can allocate resources to respond to changing economic development priorities and pressures, and support the environmentally sustainable use of natural resources.

The FLNRO's vision of *Environmental Sustainability and Economic Prosperity* is the foundation for three corporate goals:

1. Efficient, citizen-centred public service delivery: "One Window; One Process; One Team."
2. Coordinated, integrated and sustainable management, development and use of natural resources.
3. Productive, thriving natural resource sectors and resilient communities.

Strategic Connections

The ministry's Service Plan and the WMB Strategic Plan support the province's goal to lead the world in sustainable environmental management. To ensure alignment with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, the direction and goals of the ministry's Service Plan provided direction for the establishment of WMB strategic goals, priorities and indicators. The WMB Strategic Plan provides strategic direction to ensure that the organization is well-positioned to respond effectively to current and future wildfire management challenges.

The strategic and operational focus of the WMB is determined by numerous factors, including: direction from government, public expectations, changes to workforce demographics and natural resource values. Analysis of current internal and external drivers – and consideration of future environmental factors, such as climate change – further influence the direction of the Strategic Plan.

The WMB Strategic Plan guides the development of the annual WMB Business Plan, which establishes how strategic priorities and actions will be addressed and resourced over the next five years. The Strategic Plan's priorities and indicators reflect the organization's long-term vision. The Business Plan provides the framework for the day-to-day operations and activities of the organization and sets out what will be achieved in the short term with existing resources.



Wildfire Management Overview

The province of British Columbia has spectacularly rich forests and wildlands spread over 94 million hectares. It is the most diverse geographic region in Canada and includes a rugged coastline, mountainous terrain, rolling grasslands and forests. There is great variation in weather conditions throughout the province, resulting in some of the most difficult fire management conditions in Canada.

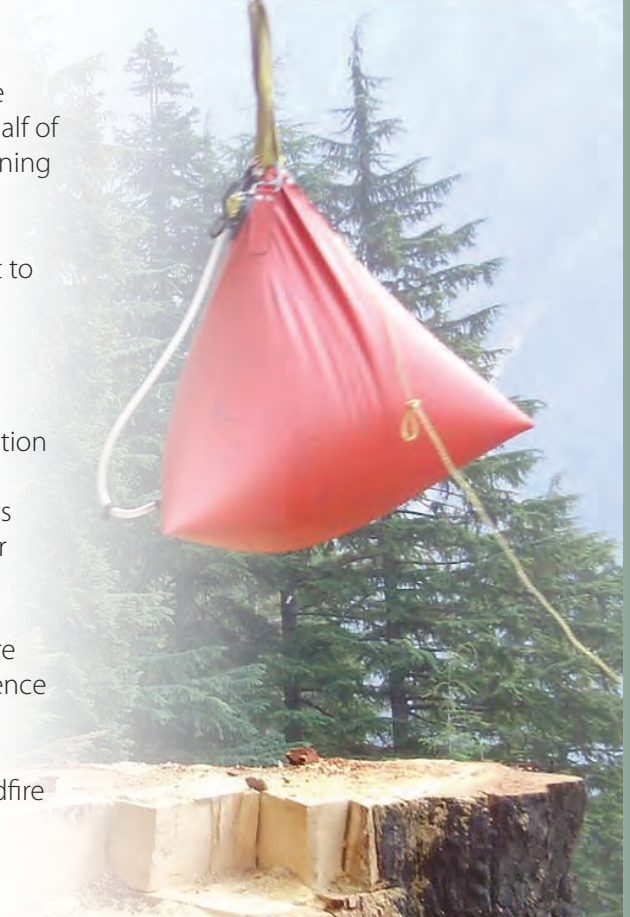
British Columbia's fire protection area is 84 million hectares and there are approximately 2,500 wildfires on average every year. Historically, about half of these wildfires are caused by humans and the rest are attributed to lightning strikes. Most fires occur in the backcountry and may threaten natural resource values. With British Columbia's growing population, however, wildfires have become increasingly large and complex and pose a threat to urban areas.

The WMB is the lead wildfire agency for the province and has been responsible for protecting British Columbia's communities and natural resources from wildfires since 1912. Through the use of coordinated aviation management and highly trained fireline response crews, the WMB has historically contained 92 per cent of all wildfires to less than four hectares in size. The WMB provides wildfire response crews and resources to other jurisdictions when called upon in times of crisis.

British Columbia is widely recognized as an international leader in wildfire management. The organization's high degree of professionalism, experience and innovation has been recognized around the world. Through its international program, the WMB has supplied technology, training and expertise to over 60 nations, assisting with the development of their wildfire management programs and providing aid when requested.

To successfully fulfill its mandate, the WMB relies on the support and cooperation of numerous other agencies, including Emergency Management B.C. (the Provincial Emergency Program and the Office of the Fire Commissioner), the Ministry of Environment, the Department of National Defence, Public Safety Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the First Nations' Emergency Services Society, local governments and natural resource industries. The WMB maintains strong partnerships with wildfire agencies throughout Canada and abroad, associated units within the FLNRO, other government agencies, contractors and clients. They are all essential to the WMB's success.

Cost-sharing protocols between the WMB and its clients, including First Nations, the forest industry, private landowners, utilities, railways and the federal government, have been in existence since 1964. The increased use of service and cost-sharing agreements started in 2004 with the introduction of the Wildfire Act and **Regulations**. The Act and **Regulations** allows a person to enter into a cost-sharing agreement or a service agreement with WMB where, for a fee, WMB will undertake fire control services on wildfires that would otherwise be the responsibility of that person.



Wildfire Management Response Priorities

The WMB responds to all wildfires on Crown land and also supports wildfire response on other public and private lands through service and cost-sharing agreements. When setting priorities for fire response objectives and the allocation of resources, human life and safety are the highest priorities. Other priorities include: protection of communities, infrastructure and other assets; mitigation of impacts on key environmental values; and maintenance of other natural resource values through the use of prescribed and natural wildland fire.

Wildfire Trends

Fire is a natural and essential ecological process in most of Canada's forests and balancing the potential benefits and risks of wildland fire is a complex task. British Columbia has diverse landscapes, demographics and weather patterns, and the province has long been recognized as a leader in wildfire management.

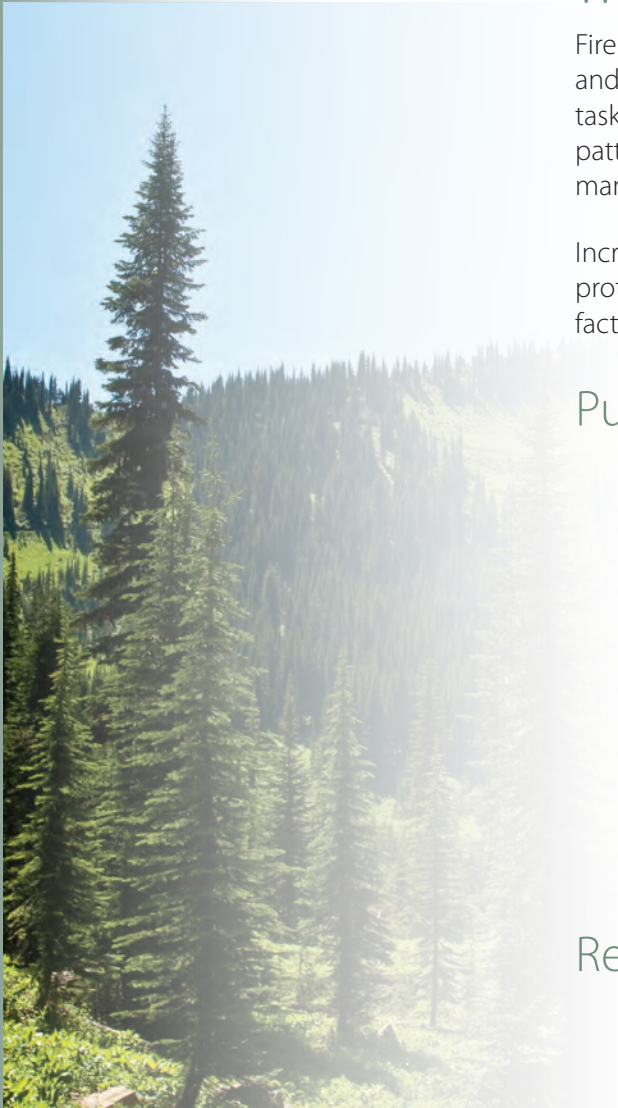
Increasingly, British Columbia's ability to determine the level of wildfire protection and response will be challenged by the interaction of numerous factors, including:

Public

- Firefighter and public safety
- Public expectations
- Population growth
- Expansion of home construction in forested areas and in the wildland-urban interface
- Expansion of major industrial developments, including mining operations, backcountry recreation facilities and independent power projects
- Jurisdictional overlap and inter-agency relationships

Resources

- Training, recruitment and retention of a highly skilled workforce
- Increasing costs of firefighting
- Resource capacity issues keeping pace with increasing workload
- Possible reduction in assistance received from mutual aid agencies



Environment

- Smoke management and air quality implications
- Increase in forest fuel loading
- Decline in vegetative health as a result of windstorms, pests and disease (e.g. 16 million hectares of forest land affected by the mountain pine beetle)
- Impacts of climate change
- Changes to management objectives related to forests and other natural resources



WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT BRANCH

Strategic Plan

In 2006, the Wildfire Management Branch (WMB) released a strategic plan to guide the organization in achieving its mandate. Four strategic goals and associated priorities were identified for the next five-year period. A report out was released on November 23, 2011 that recognized the organization's many achievements over the course of that strategic plan. That plan required a review and update after five years and this new plan addresses this requirement.

A Strategic Planning Team (comprised of a cross section of staff and led by the Strategic Business Services business area) was established to revitalize the strategic plan and identify key tasks to update the plan. To ensure that the new strategic plan reflects the current needs of the WMB, numerous avenues were developed to collect input from staff.

Open forum staff sessions to discuss the 2006 strategic plan and the steps needed to move forward were held throughout the province and a time-limited web page was created for staff to provide confidential input. Information from the Provincial Auxiliary Advisory Group survey was collected and staff were able to contact any member of the Strategic Planning Team to discuss their thoughts and to contribute ideas throughout the review process. In addition, external partners, clients and stakeholders were asked to provide feedback to further inform the plan.

This new Strategic Plan includes five Strategic Goals and 13 Strategic Priorities, with key actions and indicators for each Strategic Priority. The addition of actions and indicators to this new plan ensures that the WMB will have mechanisms in place to measure performance and report to executive, stakeholders and staff on its progress and achievements as the plan is implemented.



Strategic Foundation

Mandate

Deliver effective wildfire management and emergency response support on behalf of the government of British Columbia to protect life and values at risk and to encourage sustainable, healthy and resilient ecosystems.

Vision

Excellence in wildfire management and response services

Mission

To meet our mandate, the Wildfire Management Branch will:

- Provide for the safety of our workers and the public
- Deliver effective, innovative and cost-efficient wildfire management services
- Provide emergency response support and services
- Ensure strong and collaborative relationships with our partners and clients

Values

Wildfire Management Branch staff are committed to a common set of values and a dedicated work ethic that contributes to the success of the organization and to the achievement of our mandate and mission.

SAFETY

- Affirm a safety first attitude and promote a culture of safety in ourselves and our workforce
- Recognize risk and take appropriate action to minimize the impact on human resources from wildfire and other workplace hazards
- Promote effective and collaborative communication on safety
- Encourage and foster staff ownership, involvement and participation in safety
- Emphasize the importance of personal health and wellness to support our people

LEADERSHIP

- Provide focused strategic direction for the good of the people of British Columbia
- Empower and support our workforce to be innovative and successful
- Promote staff development and lead by example
- Make difficult decisions and be accountable for our choices and actions
- Embrace a culture of recognition at all levels



In addition to safety and leadership, we embrace government's core values with integrity and commitment at all times.

COURAGE

- Take thoughtful risks in generating and implementing ideas
- Be biased toward action
- Look beyond the process to see the possible
- Pursue a vision for the future

TEAMWORK

- Build trust by respecting the contributions of others
- Encourage new ideas
- Contribute to larger goals and positive engagement
- Support others and share information

PASSION

- Take pride in our work and service to the public
- Be a model of motivation and a positive influence on others

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Set clear goals and measure success
- Stay focused on the outcomes that government is trying to achieve
- Be consistently proactive in decisions
- Show persistence and tenacity in overcoming obstacles

SERVICE

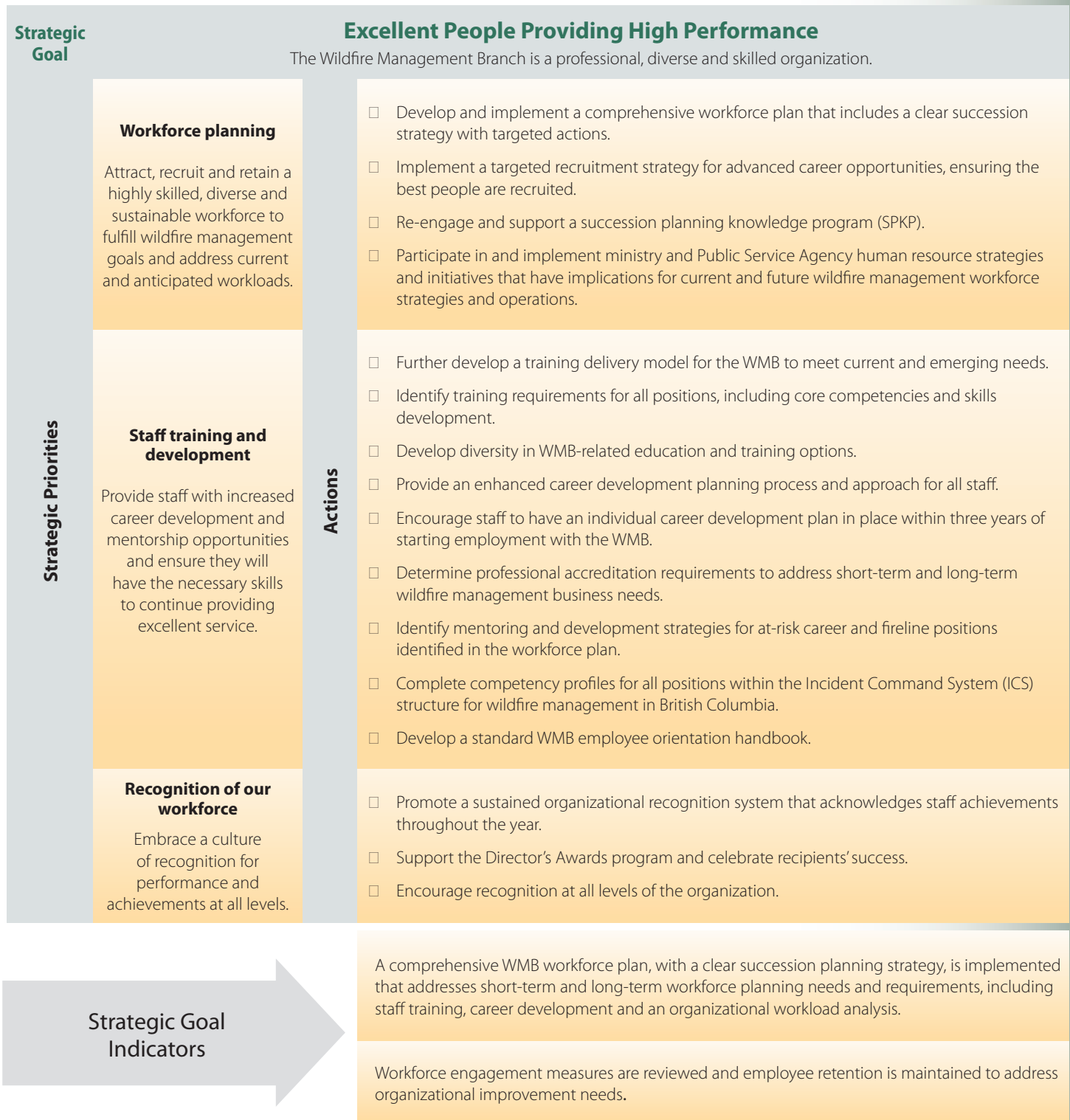
- Work collaboratively across government to enable success
- Place organizational objectives ahead of personal goals

CURIOSITY

- Seek out better ways to achieve goals
- Pursue opportunities to learn and develop
- Welcome ideas from others
- Be willing to learn from failure as well as success



Strategic Direction



Strategic Goal

British Columbia is prepared to respond to wildfires and protect community and natural resource values through safe and effective wildland fire management actions, as well as emergency response support services as requested.

Effective Business Practices**Strategic Priorities****Provincial wildfire management business practices**

Utilize modern business practices that are continuously improving and set a high standard.

Business performance

Establish consistent business planning processes that include performance measures and outcomes, transparent reporting and accountability.

Actions

- ☐ Implement a focused quality assurance and continuous improvement framework in the WMB.
- ☐ Update, implement and utilize modern financial management and reporting procedures consistently.
- ☐ Ensure consistent provincial operating guidelines and standards for all activities.
- ☐ Confirm, support and provide resources for working groups, task teams and committees.
- ☐ Update the Wildfire Act.
- ☐ Support the development, continuous improvement and implementation of a structured and comprehensive safety program.
- ☐ Develop consistent annual business planning across the WMB to strengthen ties between the ministry service plan, the WMB strategic plan, individual employee performance plans and a transparent basis for priority and resource allocation.
- ☐ Develop cost-effective business processes to achieve wildfire management goals and priorities.
- ☐ Develop a provincial process to set, monitor and report on performance targets consistently.
- ☐ Revise and communicate the cost-sharing agreement framework internally and externally.

Strategic Goal Indicators

WMB is recognized for achieving Level 3 status in the Excellence Canada framework, as outlined within the Progressive Excellence Program for organizational consistency and effectiveness.



Strategic Goal**Optimum Organizational Structure and Resources**

Address program responsibilities in a way that optimizes the allocation of resources and maximizes performance.

Strategic Priorities**Organizational structure and resource allocation**

Align the Wildfire Management Branch's organizational structure to optimize service delivery and maximize available resources and decision support tools to deliver cost-effective wildfire management and client services.

Actions

- ☐ Ensure that a system is in place to monitor, assess and review the organization's structure on an ongoing basis to achieve wildfire management goals, priorities and maximum performance.
- ☐ Undertake resource allocation planning to establish future needs and potential economic, social and environmental factors that will impact the organization.
- ☐ Develop and maintain a technology plan that embraces innovation, supports current operations, is adaptable to future needs and identifies the critical role of data integrity in achieving the WMB's mandate.
- ☐ Develop a workload analysis model for the WMB to support future resource allocation decision making and performance measurement processes.
- ☐ Conduct a strategic analysis based on predicted future fire load requirements to help determine optimum resource levels in the organization (e.g. fireline positions, organizational structure, hiring targets).

Wildfire Management Branch infrastructure investment

Pursue a systematic replacement strategy for Wildfire Management Branch infrastructure in anticipation of current and forecasted wildfire management needs.

- ☐ Maintain a comprehensive project inventory of WMB facilities that outlines capital replacement and maintenance priorities. Work with Corporate Services Division for the Natural Resource Sector (CSNR) to create a multi-year funding plan.
- ☐ Work with CSNR to create a WMB information and technology improvement plan to stay current with technological advances in the industry.
- ☐ Assemble an annual inventory of tangible capital assets required to conduct the WMB's core business. Collaborate with CSNR to develop a replacement and funding plan for those assets.

Strategic Goal Indicators

Optimum resource levels are achieved and adequately distributed throughout the organization based on priorities, resource needs and requirements identified in a model and process for allocating resources.

Facility and asset plans are in place, providing immediate response to capital and funding opportunities as they become available.



Strategic Goal
Effective Partnerships and Service Delivery

Partnerships at the provincial, national and international levels are essential to the success of the Wildfire Management Branch.

Strategic Priorities
Partnerships

Improve provincial wildfire management through strong, mutually beneficial partnerships to ensure the sharing of expertise and support wherever possible.

Service delivery

Deliver focused services to partners and support initiatives that utilize staff knowledge and expertise.

Communication and information management

Ensure that Wildfire Management Branch directions, expectations and actions are clearly communicated and understood, both internally and externally.

Actions

- ☐ Ensure WMB collaboration within ministries and with provincial, national and international agencies (e.g. Wildfire TEAMS, Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre).
 - ☐ Support and participate in key government initiatives that may impact the WMB, such as climate change policies and legislation, natural resource sector strategies and landscape management planning.
 - ☐ Work to support FLNRO integrated shared delivery models.
 - ☐ Advance the WMB's role in national and international wildfire management.
 - ☐ Confirm the WMB's international strategy and ensure that supporting policies are confirmed.
 - ☐ Pursue and promote legislative and regulatory changes that enable the WMB to generate innovative business opportunities and partnerships, both nationally and abroad.
 - ☐ Pursue opportunities to work cooperatively or in partnership with other clients, agencies or governments.
 - ☐ Encourage and advance safety-related initiatives and programs.
 - ☐ Uphold the ministry's protocols for First Nations consultation and information sharing.
 - ☐ Recruit, retain and encourage First Nations participation in the program and continue working toward increased diversity in the organization.
-
- ☐ Deliver aviation management and aircraft procurement services for FLNRO.
 - ☐ Provide safety check-in and flight watch services to appropriate ministry and natural resource sector field staff.
 - ☐ Provide emergency response support services to Emergency Management B.C. and other provincial, national and international agencies as requested.
 - ☐ Support the Office of the Fire Commissioner's implementation of FireSmart planning and construction practices by communities, by private landowners and for industrial and commercial developments.
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- ☐ Develop a provincial communications strategy.
 - ☐ Ensure that B.C. communities are informed and aware of wildfire risks, mitigation strategies and the WMB's role and responsibilities.
 - ☐ Develop a focused public education strategy to increase awareness of critical fire management needs.
 - ☐ Develop an improved information management strategy to promote timely recordkeeping and information management for the WMB, and to ensure that disclosure requirements are met promptly and fully.
 - ☐ Utilize modern communication methods and tools to enhance internal and external engagement.
 - ☐ Refresh provincial information management repository (i.e. the library) to ensure the availability of accurate and consistent information.

Strategic Goal Indicators

The WMB has improved collaborative relationships and increased communications resulting in local, national and international recognition for operational capability and expertise, integrated decision-making, enhanced service delivery and emergency response support.

Strategic Goal**Leading Wildland Fire Management and Practices**

Lead the implementation of the B.C. Wildland Fire Management Strategy through wildfire management planning and practices to achieve our mission.

Strategic Priorities**Fuel management**

Reduce loss and damage from wildland fires through community wildfire protection planning and fuel hazard reduction.

Landscape fire management planning

Lead landscape fire management planning that results in fire-adapted communities and fire-resilient ecosystems.

Wildfire management practices

Develop and promote innovative wildfire management science, practices, technology and decision support models.

Actions

- ☐ Continue to support the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative and community wildfire protection planning in partnership with the Union of B.C. Municipalities and the First Nations' Emergency Services Society.
- ☐ Promote fuel management planning, treatments and hazard abatement on all Crown and private lands.
- ☐ Assist local governments and agencies with the preparation and implementation of their Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
- ☐ Pursue long-term sustainable funding envelope for community protection.
- ☐ Develop provincial processes and standards for landscape fire management planning and natural resource management.
- ☐ Support the development of policies and legislation to maintain or advance landscape fire management planning and operational treatment requirements.
- ☐ Support a multi-agency, coordinated prescribed burn program and increase the use of prescribed fire to support land management objectives.
- ☐ Support land manager participation in operational treatments to meet objectives in landscape-level fire management plans.
- ☐ Support government initiatives for the alternative use of fuel hazard material in biofibre production.
- ☐ Develop innovative fire management modelling, support technology and expertise to enhance landscape fire management planning and fire management decision-making.
- ☐ Develop, utilize or refine fire weather, geomatics and fire behaviour analysis technology, expertise and modelling to support fire management objectives and resource allocation decision-making.
- ☐ Pursue opportunities to cooperate with other agencies nationally and encourage collaborative fire science research initiatives.

Strategic Goal Indicators

At-risk communities are participating in the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative, which supports communities in mitigating risks from wildfire in the wildland-urban interface, and fuel management treatment and planning is increased.

Landscape-level wildfire risk and threat analyses are completed and local landscape fire management activities for high risk areas are implemented in partnership with local communities, First Nations, industry and stakeholders.

Case examples are identified where completed work has significantly changed outcomes during an actual wildfire incident.



Appendix

Definitions



Cost-sharing Agreements: Agreements between agencies or jurisdictions to share designated costs related to incidents. Cost-sharing agreements are normally written but may also be oral between an authorized agency or jurisdictional representatives at the incident. (CIFFC definition)

Clients: An individual or organization that holds an agreement with the Wildfire Management Branch.

Fire Management: The activities concerned with the protection of people, property, and forest areas from wildfire and the use of prescribed burning for the attainment of forest management and other land use objectives, all conducted in a manner that considers environmental, social, and economic criteria. Note: Fire management represents both a land management philosophy and a land management activity. It involves the strategic integration of such factors as knowledge of fire regimes, probable fire effects, values-at-risk, level of forest protection required, cost of fire-related activities, and prescribed fire technology into multiple-use planning, decision-making, and day-to-day activities to accomplish stated resource management objectives. Successful fire management depends on effective fire prevention, detection, and pre-suppression, having an adequate fire suppression capability, and consideration of fire ecology relationships. (CIFFC definition)

Fuel Management: The process of modifying forest and range fuels to reduce the fuels available to burn in a wildfire event. This can involve thinning out of trees, pruning branches, prescribed fire use and other best practices. The primary objective is to manage hazardous wildland fuels in and around communities and out to the landscape level, in order to reduce the potential for loss of life, property, and infrastructure.

Optimum: The point at which circumstances are at their most ideal, favourable, or most advantageous position. For example, Wildfire Management Branch resources (i.e. funding and people) are allocated optimally throughout the province to ensure that the branch is meeting its goals to the highest possible capacity.

Partners: An organization or agency that the Wildfire Management Branch relies on to provide a service, or that it works with cooperatively on beneficial outcomes.

Prescribed Fire: Any fire utilized for prescribed burning; usually ignited according to agency policy and management objectives. (CIFFC definition)

Stakeholders: An individual or organization that has a vested interest in the land base or the activities of the Wildfire Management Branch or government.

Unwanted Wildfire: An unplanned or unwanted natural or human-caused fire, as contrasted with a prescribed fire. (CIFFC definition)



Values at Risk: The specific or collective set of natural resources and manmade improvements/developments that have measurable or intrinsic worth and that could or may be destroyed or otherwise altered by fire in any given area. (CIFFC definition)

Wildfire Management: The activities concerned with the protection of people, property and forest areas from wildfire and the use of prescribed burning for the attainment of forest management and other land use objectives, all conducted in a manner that considers environmental, social and economic criteria. Note: Fire management represents both a land management philosophy and a land management activity. It involves the strategic integration of such factors as knowledge of fire regimes, probable fire effects, values-at-risk, level of forest protection required, cost of fire-related activities, and prescribed fire technology into multiple-use planning, decision-making, and day-to-day activities to accomplish stated resource management objectives. Successful fire management depends on effective fire prevention, detection, and pre-suppression, having an adequate fire suppression capability, and consideration of fire ecology relationships. (Adapted from CIFFC definition of Fire Management)

