



LANDFIRE Leadership Futures Forum Outcomes

November 2010 – Final Proceedings

The LANDFIRE Leadership Futures Forum was held November 8 and 9, 2010 in Park City, Utah. Approximately 50 leaders from across the USDA Forest Service, Department of the Interior, National Association of State Foresters, The Nature Conservancy and National Association of County Organizations discussed a contemporary vision regarding the future course of LANDFIRE and collaborative opportunities with improved integration of other program areas. Forum goals included:

- Develop a vision for broad based program partnerships to support stakeholder business requirements.
- Leverage existing data, shared capabilities, and program structures that facilitate increased data sharing, reduce overall costs, and redundant efforts.
- Frame expectations of participating partners for program governance/oversight and management/organization.
- Consider establishing a new “brand” name, if needed that reflects support to a broader scope of business requirements.
- Capture leadership intent and support that charts a pathway for success on elements such as, funding, agreements, stakeholder requirements, and program scope.

Two key note speakers addressed the group on the all lands, all data approach for a path forward as we look over the horizon at the future of LANDFIRE as a program.

Kirk Rowdabaugh, Director - Office of Wildland Fire Coordination, DOI, emphasized the wildland fire management communities’ desire to refine LANDFIRE to serve as a platform for future management applications.

- Fire – LANDFIRE continues as a foundation for current fire applications and uses. Fire recognizes the value of these data supporting multiple agencies, programs, and systems in the decision support arena; however the fire community is highly dependent on these data now and in the future.
- Broader Application - The next generation of LANDFIRE can have broader cross-agency application if those applications are in line with fire’s fundamental mission. There are several things LANDFIRE can do to optimize current applications. One of LANDFIRE’s strengths has been its dynamic, interactive nature.
- Open Door – The opportunity is available to other program areas to participate in charting a path forward to develop and deliver data like LANDFIRE. Our changing operational environment highlights the need for a common data set that has to address landscape conservation needs.
- Governance - Inter-agency collaboration and external partnerships is a key element that should be considered in a broader based LANDFIRE program. Long-term governance

should also be based on LANDFIRE's core mission, but coordinated governance with Fire Program Analysis (FPA) should suffice for the short-term.

Dave Cleaves, Climate change advisor to the Chief, USFS, provided context for the Forum's discussion and emphasized that future proposals related to LANDFIRE should consider:

- Debt – outside of defense, national security, and entitlement programs, budget items with large price tags will be judged as an investment. LANDFIRE must show a solid return on investment.
- Demographics – values at risk from wildfire and other disturbance events must be part of the equation. Social and economic factors and values must be linked to decision support systems to put people and their values into the mix.
- Disturbance – climate change will “ramp up” thus making disturbance events and their consequences occur at an increasing rate being a fundamental driver.
- Drive - for a competitive position will be determined on the basis of innovation that can be supported by the LANDFIRE platform. Make sure to account for this factor in your thinking and supporting rationale.

Dave emphasized the pillars supporting the Secretary of Agriculture's “all lands” conservation strategy and suggested LANDFIRE's future address: collaboration, coordination, scalability, and risk based. Decision making must consider a whole system of risks: risks and benefits against another relative to costs.

Presentations by representatives of different organizations discussed their vision of what LANDFIRE “could do for me”. Panel members included:

- Bud Cribley – BLM, Alaska State Director
- Robert E. Cope – NACO/Lemhi County Commissioner
- Jim Karels - Florida State Forester
- Michael Powelson, The Nature Conservancy

Key points during this discussion addressed the wide range of perspectives represented by panel members and included:

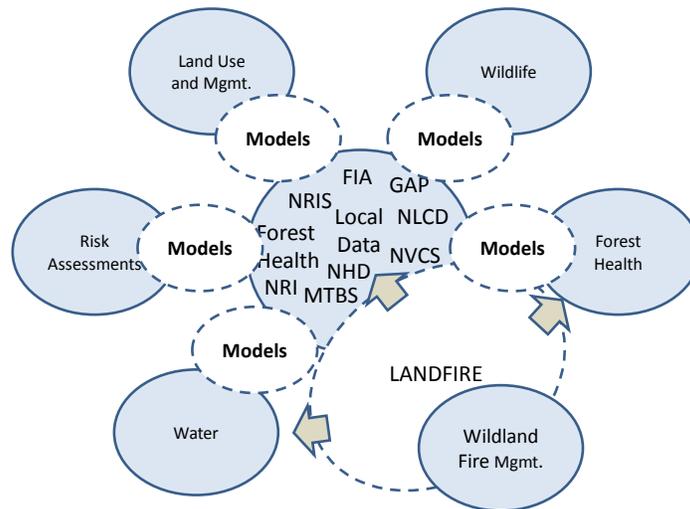
- All hands (Federal, State and Local), all lands, all data (starts and ends with collaboration),
- Dynamic updates of vegetation and changes of information are essential,
- Local data and data calibration processes must be part of the system,
- Ensure collaboration includes those “who are not paid to be there” from the local, to regional, to national level providing a scalable data set,
- Improvements in the data must happen – i.e. grassland/shrub information,
- Metrics (FRCC) needs to represent ecological departure,
- Consider the role of LANDFIRE in forecasting change,
- LANDFIRE can help in evaluating green/rural energy proposals and climate change to inform the decision making process and identify key areas for planning purposes,
- Technical transfer must connect with all users, not just GIS specialists,
- LANDFIRE provides an opportunity and can play a role in helping decentralized organizations, like the BLM, address issues of inconsistent local data,

- “LANDFIRE is a great start, not an end” – It is the best we have; we need to embrace now and avoid competition - finding the sweet spot of collaboration,
- Provide for an interdisciplinary and intergovernmental governance structure,
- All decisions are data limited. LANDFIRE can’t and won’t do everything, but it can make significant contributions,
- Work to make LANDFIRE beneficial to local government and private lands,

Following the panel discussion Forum participants engaged in more detailed small group discussions. In introducing the objectives of the work group discussions, it was emphasized that in framing the next generation of LANDFIRE and supporting information systems, leaders must define business requirements and ensure technical solutions met those requirements.

Leaders represented at the Forum discussed the panel’s perspectives and their views in small groups, which were then presented to the entire Forum. From these discussions concerns with the fragmented and “stove pipe” approach to managing data across agencies and different jurisdictions was a common concern. Many work groups thought that LANDFIRE had done a great job developing nationally consistent data sets for all lands within the US, but were also concerned about the scope of the LANDFIRE effort relative to other program roles and responsibilities and the potential duplication of effort. The role of specific programs like Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA), National Land Cover Data (NLCD), Forest Health Monitoring, the Forest Service Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) and other programs have been chartered by various entities with specific roles and responsibilities for providing data and information that must be recognized. These perspectives are represented by the following conceptual model.

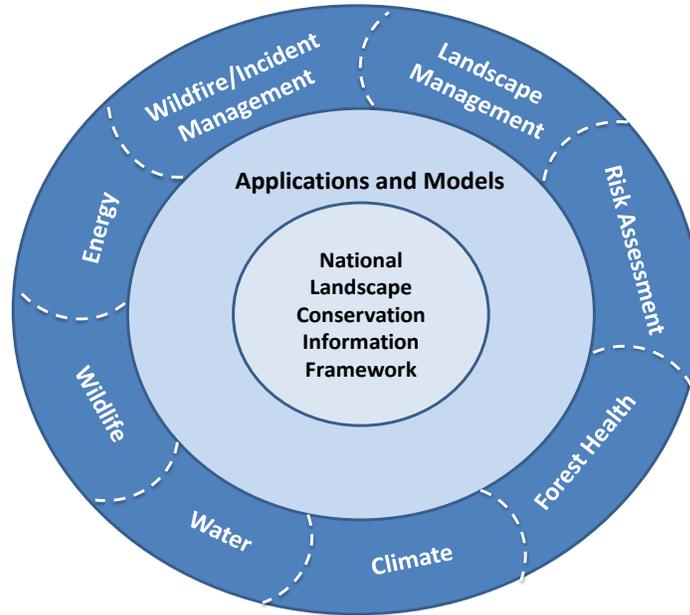
Existing and Evolving Landscape Conservation Data and Information Arrangement



During the work group presentations, a common vision of how to organize data and information to support multiple business needs emerged. At the core of this conceptual model is a National Landscape Conservation Information Framework that can be accessed by multiple parties operating at multiple scales to support a wide variety of business needs. The LANDFIRE program provides a “proof of concept” for how data and information can be processed to

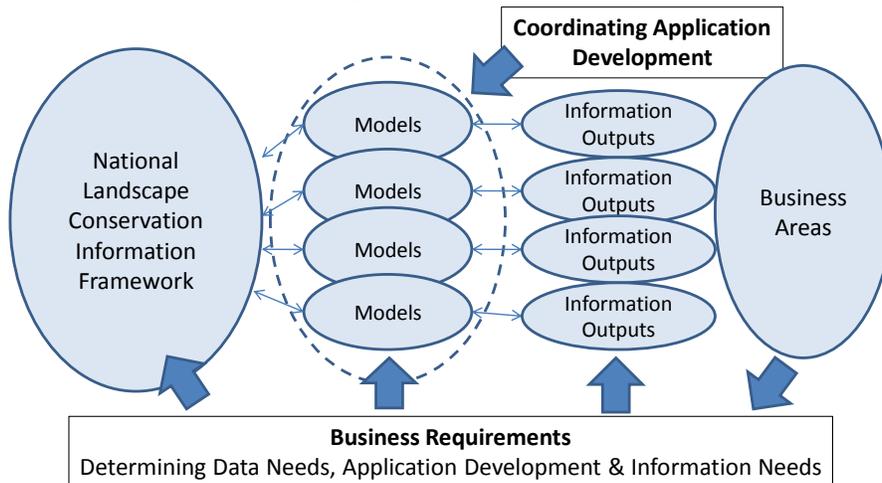
support natural resource, environmental, and fire needs and specifically demonstrates data needs for wildland fire management decision support systems.

National Information Framework to support Natural Resource Conservation and Management



This conceptual model was refined to emphasize that not only should data within this national framework be coordinated, but applications and models that process these data for use in decision making should also be harmonized. The need for leadership to define business requirements for data, applications, and information outputs is another refinement of the conceptual model supported by Forum participants. The following represents these concepts:

Leadership’s Role in Setting Business Requirements and Coordinating Application Development



Within this context LANDFIRE serves as one component of a fully integrated National Landscape Conservation Information Framework.

Forum participants endorsed moving forward with proposals to the Wildland Fire Leadership Council to:

- 1) Implement a National Landscape Conservation Information Framework and
- 2) To re-charter the LANDFIRE program as part of the information framework to support wildland fire management decision making.

Ad hoc work groups consisting of Forum participants will develop proposals to WFLC of the desired outcome, operational considerations, and general proposals formulated during the Forum.

Observations and Reflections

The Forum concluded with observations and reflections provided by Ed Shepard (BLM), Anne Kinsinger (USGS), and Harv Forsgren (FS).

- A lot of key folks are here to move forward and support the development of a unified governance structure,
- Important to follow through on the proposals we've identified and engage other NGOs and customers to strengthen the discussion of integration,
- Need to be strategic and systematic in our support and determine scope with data contributions and inputs for needs that require use of consistent information,
- Appreciative of the opportunity to attend and am committed to helping with the next steps so we don't lose what has made this discussion successful,
- Need to continue to be open-minded in providing for different backgrounds and approaches for a broader, more expansive effort,
- Communication and execution are critical to promote understanding and support the data portfolio,
- Vision of all lands, all data is a critical part with our engagement and within our spheres of influence taking the opportunity to make the data framework possible and establish connections to other business areas.