



WFDSS Preseason Training Information

Fire season is quickly approaching and many users have not utilized the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) since last fire season. This document is a quick reference to review the system and recent enhancements to help you prepare for creating and documenting decisions.

User Help:

- WFDSS has an extensive Help system that can be accessed any time by selecting the Help icon  in the upper right corner of any WFDSS screen. You can find topics alphabetically in the WFDSS Help index, or look for information using the search feature.

WFDSS Home Page:

It is worth your time to orient yourself to the WFDSS Home Page; it contains useful information.

- **Latest Information:** The latest WFDSS release information is located in the upper right hand corner of the WFDSS Home Page.
- **WFDSS Twitter Feed:** Breaking news about WFDSS system updates, the latest tips from the field, and important reminders are posted to the Twitter feed which is located below Latest Information on the right hand side of the WFDSS Home Page.
- **Training:** Scheduled training, videos, quick tips, how to documents and other Elearning information can be found on the *WFDSS Home Page > Training*.
- **Data:** WFDSS data information, spatial data downloads, resources, and links to the FRAMES page with more WFDSS information including the WFDSS FMU tracker is available from *WFDSS Home Page > Data*.
- **Related Resources:** Several WFDSS related documents and references such as 508 compliance information, a glossary, WFDSS user documentation, WFDSS tools, training information, quick tips, videos, white papers, fire behavior information, historical fire data, release notes, and policy/procedures are all available from *WFDSS Home Page > Related Resources*.
- **Request Account:** Use Request Account to request new user accounts, *WFDSS Home Page > Request Account*.
- **Phone Numbers:** The WFDSS Help Desk (password resets, account problems) and the National Fire Decision Support Center (fire behavior analysis requests, regional/incident decision support) phone numbers are located on the WFDSS Home Page in the left hand corner below Request Account.
- **Google Search:** A search function is located in the upper right hand corner of the WFDSS Home Page. This allows users to search the WFDSS Website in a Google Search format for specific information without logging in to the system.
- **Help:** A link to the Help  content is located above the Google Search tool on the WFDSS Homepage and provides access to the WFDSS Help without logging into Production or Training.

User Accounts (My Home Tab):

- **Passwords:** Users are allowed one account per person and it provides access to both WFDSS Production and Training sites. Your password must be changed every 60 days. If you have not logged into WFDSS recently you may still be able to log in, but you will be required to change your password. If the system does not allow you to log in, more than 90 days have passed since your last log in and you are likely locked out. Contact the Help Desk (1-800-253-5559) and request a password reset. **Do not request a**



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new account; this will cause confusion when preparing decision documents and performing other WFSS functions.

- **Contact Information:** Check your contact information and ensure that it is up to date. This information is used by the WFSS system and WFSS users to contact you for various reasons, for example if you are an incident owner you will receive confirmation when any fire behavior analyses are completed on your incident to the email address listed in your Contact Information. If you have changed jobs, geographic areas, or even agencies you can simply update your Contact Information. **Do not request a new account!** Once you have a WFSS account established it is designed to stay with you throughout your career. *Help > Updating your Contact Information.*
- **User Roles:** Ensure that your User Roles are appropriate for your current position and job duties. To view your current User Roles select *My Home > User Roles*. You can also reference *Help > Requesting Additional System Privileges* or *WFSS User Roles* to learn more about user roles and privileges.
- **System Preferences:** You may select preferred default settings to customize specific items, for example the default base map layer. New map layers are added periodically to the list of available Map Layers from System Preferences. The Map Layers listed in the right hand box will be available for display on WFSS maps. All new available layers are now located in the right hand box, therefore available for viewing from WFSS maps. Users must move those layers that are not needed back to the left hand box to prevent them from displaying in WFSS maps. *Help > Changing your System Preferences.*
- **Address Book:** Check your address book to ensure it is up to date. Preseason is an excellent time to customize your My Address Book. You can set up groups now for use on incidents later. *Help > Address Book*, or see the other WFSS Help topics related to the address book such as, *Creating a Group* and *Editing a Group*.

Other Preseason Considerations:

- **Filters:** Filters are available from the Incidents and Analyses tabs to aid in searching for incidents and analyses. Preseason is a good time to create or edit custom filters to allow quick and easy access to incidents/analyses of interest. See *WFSS Home Page > Training > Videos > Using Filters*.
- **Data Managers:**
 - Ensure that your Unit's FMUs, Strategic Objectives, and Management Requirements are up to date and correctly activated. *Help > Activating an FMU Code*, and *Activating and Deactivating Objectives and Requirements*.
 - **Unit Shapes** can now be pre-loaded to WFSS prior to an incident. Unit Shapes must be non-complex shapes (up to 100 points per shape or 50,000 vertices for lines and polygons). Consider breaking up larger shapefiles into multiple files if they don't meet these criteria. *Help > Uploading Unit Shapes*, or *WFSS Home Page > Training > Webinars and Other Elearning > Data Manager Unit Shapes*.
 - **FMU Shapefiles:** The FMU update schedule can be found at:
http://frames.nbii.gov/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=688&&PageID=3641&mode=2&in_hi_userid=2&cached=true

WFSS Enhancements:

WFSS has undergone many changes; please refer to the *WFSS Home Page > Latest Information* (upper right) for specific release information. Some changes you might be interested in reviewing are listed below.



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- **Incident Information Page:** When a lat/long for a fire is initially entered into WFDSS the Responsible Unit Name at Point of Origin, the Unit ID, and the Jurisdictional Agency at Point of Origin will automatically populate. All three fields are editable from the Incident Information page.
- **Unit Shapes:** Data Managers can pre-load unit specific geospatial data that may be important to support local fire decisions as Unit Shapes (also discussed under the Other Preseason Considerations section above). Data can be related to values, tactics, or objectives. Consider pre-loading Unit Shapes to use later as Management Action Points or Incident Objectives. *Help > Uploading Unit Shapes.*
- **Unit Wide Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements:** Data Managers can load Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements that pertain to all FMUs on a unit under the FMU Code Description *All FMUs in Unit* to allow for automatic inclusion of Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements that are effective unit wide to eliminate redundant information in the system across FMUs.
- **Camera Tool:** The Camera Tool icon , located on WFDSS maps, captures the current image shown on your screen. This tool is valuable for capturing and archiving images that can later be incorporated into a decision to support assessments, objectives, courses of action, or rationale.
- **Help Icon:** The Help icon  is available not only in the upper right hand corner on all WFDSS pages, but also appears throughout WFDSS in the body of the screens. These Help icons link to context sensitive Help content. For example, if you click the Help icon located next to the Landscape Data Source information on the Information tab, Help content relating specifically to landscape data sources will appear first in the Help menu in a new window. The full Help content can also be searched.
- **Spreadsheets:** You can now download many of the lists/tables displayed in WFDSS to a spreadsheet. Look for the Spreadsheet Icon  in the upper left corner of lists/tables which indicates they can be downloaded as a spreadsheet.
- **Objective Shapes:** You can now draw or upload shapes and associate them to multiple Incident Objectives and Requirements on the Situation page. This feature is helpful for uploading local data that might be relevant to the incident. *Help > Creating Objective Shapes or Uploading Shapes.*
- **My Home Page:** My Home Page, available from the My Home tab, now displays your work from the last 7 days, making it easier to go directly to recent tasks.
- **Map Layers:** Reference map layers (Boundaries, Designated Areas, Infrastructure, and Natural and Cultural Resources) are being added and updated periodically. To adjust which layers are visible to you on map screens in WFDSS select *My Home > System Preferences*. Also see System Preferences in the User Account heading above. The map layers can be viewed on the Situation map in WFDSS by clicking on the (+) sign to the left of the layer grouping (i.e. Infrastructure, Natural and Cultural Resources). This layer switcher tree has been revised for easier viewing of the data.
- **Validation:** The validation process has been changed slightly for users.
 - If you initially validate that your Course of Action (pre-planned response) is satisfying the Strategic Objectives by selecting 'Yes,' no other action is required.
 - If you select 'No,' then a decision is needed. After creating a Pending Decision you will need to use the Validation tab to confirm that the proposed Course of Action in your Pending Decision satisfies Incident and Strategic Objectives. You will not be able select the Begin Review/Approval Process button without first validating the Course of Action in the Pending Decision.
- **Download KMZ:** Any WFDSS user can now download a KMZ (Keyhole Markup Language zip file) that contains a multitude of information related to a Published Decision for an incident. The file includes planning information, MAPs, objective shapes, fire perimeters, accepted fire behavior analyses, and more.



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It's available from the left hand menu under the Information tab. This file can be opened in Google Earth and may be useful to display incident data to individuals or groups for briefings or training. *Help > Downloading an Incident KMZ File for a Published Decision.*

- **Pending KMZ:** A Pending KMZ file, which contains information related to a Pending Decision is also now available, but can only be viewed by incident Owners and Editors since it contains information that has not yet been approved and published. The Pending KMZ is available from the Decision tab when there is a Pending Decision. *Help > Downloading an Incident KMZ File for a Pending Decision.*
- **Copy Decision:** Incident Owners can now copy a Published Decision for the purpose of creating a new Pending Decision that contains the information in the previous Published Decision as a starting point for a new Pending Decision. After a Published Decision is copied, Incident Owners can open the new Pending Decision and modify it as needed. Caution must be taken when copying a decision as updates to the appropriate information must be made to ensure old/remnant information is revised. *Help > Copy a Published Decision.*
- **Incident History List:** The Incident History List, available from the left hand menu for an incident, provides detailed information about the activities occurring in WFDSS for an incident, such as a time and date stamp for activities relating to creating and publishing a decision. Notice the spreadsheet icon  has been added for easy download capability of this information. *Help > Incident History.*
- **Organizational Needs Assessment:** The Organizational Needs Assessment (ONA) has been added to WFDSS and can be found in the left hand menu. As per NWCG direction (December 2010) the ONA is to be used for Type 1, 2, and 3 incidents and should be used to replace the Incident Complexity Analysis. The ONA aids fire managers and Agency Administrators in determining their needed management organization, both in escalating and moderating incident situations. The ONA can be updated at any time. Past and current ONAs are reflected in the Incident History List. The ONA is not inserted in the decision content since it can be changed throughout the life of the incident regardless of the need to publish new decisions. *Help > Organizational Needs Assessment Reference.*
- **Incident Privileges:** Incident Owners, Editors, Reviewers, and Approvers can easily be added or changed for an incident, by incident Owners, by selecting Incident Privileges from the left hand menu for an incident. *Help > Incident-Level Privileges.*
- **3.14 Release:** Additional details regarding the 3.14 release can be found on the WFDSS Home Page. *WFDSS Homepage > Latest Information* (upper right corner).

Little Known WFDSS Features:

- **Values Inventory:** Did you know that a Values Inventory is populated based on Planning Area, or completed Short Term or Near Term Fire Behavior analyses? Values Inventory uses structural (cadastral) and national infrastructure values to populate the Values Inventory table. Consider addressing these values in your decision and when evaluating Relative Risk.
 - Planning Area Values Inventory is available from the Situation tab. To view: expand the Incident menu tree option (+) and select Planning Areas from the map layers. Expand the Planning Areas menu (+) and select Current. Click the downward facing black arrow to the right of the Current area in the menu pane. Click on the link Values Inventory to open the table in a new window.
 - Short Term or Near Term Fire Behavior Analysis Values Inventory is also available from the Situation tab. To view: expand the Analysis menu tree option (+) and then expand either the Short Term or Near Term analysis menu (+). Click the downward facing black arrow to the



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right of the desired analysis' name in the menu pane. Click on the link Values Inventory to open the table in a new window.

- **Values at Risk (VAR):** WFSS Values at Risk combines FSPRO outputs with structural (cadastral) and national infrastructure values to quantify the number, miles, or acres of specific values within each probability contour of FSPRO output. Economic values are NOT associated with a VAR.
 - FSPRO VAR is available from the Situation tab. To view: expand the Analysis menu tree option (+) and then expand the FSPRO Results analysis menu (+). Click the downward facing black arrow to the right of the desired analysis' name in the menu pane. Click on the link Values at Risk to open the table in a new window.
- **Appending Polygons:** You can append and merge fire perimeter polygons as a fire grows, rather than create a new shape each time you update the fire growth. See *WFSS Home Page > Training > Videos > Appending and Merging Shapes*.
- **Relative Risk:** The Relative Risk assessment can be completed from the left hand menu while working in an incident. It is recommended that this be completed early during the decision process and that you address values as identified from the Situation tab, Values Inventory, and/or Values at Risk. It is important to document your considerations and rationale while completing the Relative Risk assessment as the content (Rating, Duration, and Notes) will be automatically uploaded to your decision document in the Validation section, although the charts do not. See *WFSS Home Page > Training > Videos > Calculating Relative Risk*.
 - Relative Risk populates information into the Organizational Needs Assessment. More information on the ONA and direction can be found at www.wfmrda.org/policy.php
- **Publishing a Decision:** Training documents regarding creating and publishing a decision are located at the *WFSS Home Page > Related Resources > WFSS Decision Documentation*.
 - These documents outline considerations for the documentation process.
 - Utilize these materials to evaluate past decision documents to determine if more could or should have been addressed or if decision issues were adequately addressed.
- **Management Action Point (MAP) Shapes:** Management Action Points can be spatial or non-spatial. For those that are spatial, MAP Shapes can be drawn or uploaded into WFSS and geospatially linked to MAP direction. MAPs can be included or excluded from a decision or edited by creating a new version for subsequent decisions. A summary report of MAPs can be printed from the Reports tab. See *WFSS Home Page > Training > Videos > Creating MAPs*.
- **Fire Perimeters:** Drawing or uploading fire perimeter shapes does have its advantages! Once in the system they can be viewed on future fires that occur in the area. Viewing fire perimeters are useful for planning purposes and/or can be used by Fire Behavior Specialists as a landscape mask to modify fuels to reflect the fuel changes resulting from fire. WFSS assumes the fire perimeter with the most recent date is the most current and automatically updates the acreage for Incident Size from the Information tab. The Incident Size can be manually updated if necessary; however for WFSS database purposes the perimeter (i.e. shapefile) with the most recent date will be represented in the WFSS fire history layer as the final perimeter.
- **Fire Behavior Analysis:** There are four fire behavior tools in WFSS: Basic Fire Behavior, Short Term Fire Behavior, Near Term Fire Behavior, and Fire Spread Probability.
 - Basic Fire Behavior (BFB) is a simple way to get a “snapshot in time” of potential fire behavior, such as flame lengths and rates of spread.



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- Short Term Fire Behavior (STFB) provides an idea of potential fire spread for 1 to 3 days given 1 weather scenario.
- Near Term Fire Behavior (NTFB) provides 1-5 day fire progression modeling and displays modeled fire growth over a specified time period with changing weather conditions.
- Fire Spread Probability (FSPro) output displays the probability of fire spread based on past climatology.
- Automated Fire Behavior: Automated versions of Basic Fire Behavior and Short Term Fire Behavior are available for use by Dispatchers and members of an incident owner group. These automated versions of the tools do not allow for much user input and provide very quick outputs that may be useful in the initial actions on an incident.
- Analyst Assisted Fire Behavior: Full versions of the BFB, STFB, NTFB, and FSPro are available for use by Fire Behavior Specialists and Super Analysts. These tools allow for maximum user adjusted inputs.
- Webinars on the different fire behavior tools have been recorded and are available at *WFDSS Home Page > Training > Webinars and Other Elearning*. Reference guides can be found at *WFDSS Home Page > Related Resources > Fire Behavior*.
- If you do not have personnel available to provide needed analysis contact your WFDSS Geographic Editor, or if not available contact the National Fire Decision Support Center (NFDSC) 208-473-8107.
- **Fire Danger Rating ERC Graphs:** There are many ways to obtain ERC graphs in WFDSS. Users can select Fire Danger Rating Graph from the sub tab Info under the Situation tab. This ERC graph consists of information from the nearest Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) to the fire's origin that has enough data to support generating the graph. This station may or may not be representative of the fire area. To obtain an ERC graph for other RAWS:
 - Click the “i” button at the top of the map screen on the Situation map, then click a point on the map. This will create a temporary point. Now when Fire Danger Rating Graph is selected from the left window pane, WFDSS will select a RAWS nearest to that temporary point.
 - Or, from the sub tab Map expand the Fire-Related menu and select RAWS Stations. Select a RAWS on the map you are interested in by clicking the RAWS symbol. For currently functioning and updated NFDRS automated RAWS a link for Fire Danger Graph will appear in the pop up window.
- **Smoke Dispersion:** Basic atmospheric smoke dispersion forecasts can be obtained from the sub tab Info on the Situation tab. This feature provides forecasted smoke dispersion information at 3 hour intervals for the first 3 days and 6 hour interval for days 4 - 7. This data displays mixing height, transport wind information, ventilation rate, Haines ratings, and surface PM2.5 values.
 - Air Quality Tools are available from left hand menu, under Fire Related Links. Select Air Quality to open the Wildland Fire Air Quality Tools portal page, which contains a suite of air quality assessment tools. *Help > Air Quality Tools*.

Review of Common Problems:

- **Decisions – Editing and Checking In & Out:** From the Decision tab, a Pending Decision can be worked on by multiple Owners/Editors at the same time. Owners/Editors of the decision can check out portions or all of the decision at a time to add content. For others to be able to work on it or submit the



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decision for approval the user that checked out the decision needs to check it back in when they have finished working on it. See the *WFDSS Home Page > Training > Videos > Editing a Decision Document*.

- To edit a portion of the decision, expand the Pending Decision menu using the down arrow and select the radio button to the left of the portion you are interested in editing, then use the Edit button below the list to edit and “check out” the document.
 - Note: By selecting the top radio button within a Pending Decision and selecting Edit the users “checks out” the entire Pending Decision and locks other Owners/Editors out of the all portion so the decision until it is checked back in.
- Use the Check In button to allow others to access and edit portions of the decision.
- Of Note: You can determine who is currently editing each section by expanding the view of the Pending Decision.
- **Multiple Approvers:** It is important to review the list of approvers for a Pending Decision. To do this, navigate to the Decision tab. Click the radio button next to the Pending Decision and select View Info. Or select Contact Information from the left hand menu pane. Approvers can be added or removed by selecting Incident Privileges from the left hand menu.
 - Of note: If an Approver is removed after a decision is submitted for approval and after all other Approvers have already approved the decision; one of the remaining Approver(s) must re-approve the decision in order to publish it.
 - The last Approver to review and approve the document will receive reminder emails for the Periodic Assessment.
- **Rationale:** The Rationale is the final portion of the decision. It pulls together why you are taking the current Course of Action on the incident. This is where you tell the story of “why”.
 - Review the training material at the *WFDSS Home Page > Related Resources > WFDSS Decision Documentation* for suggestions to what might be included in the Rationale.
- **Capturing an Image:** Images captured from the WFDSS application and images uploaded using the Upload Image button from the left hand menu are stored in the Incident Content. They can be found in the image folder while working within a decision. See the *WFDSS Home Page > Training > Videos > Capturing Images*.
- **Creating a New Pending Decision:** After a decision is approved, you can begin documenting another future decision in two few ways.
 - From the Decision tab, select Create to create a new Pending Decision. Users may also choose to use the Copy button to copy a Published Decision as discussed earlier in this document. The Situation, Objectives, Course of Action, Validation, and Rationale should be entirely reassessed and updated as needed.
 - If the Periodic Assessment indicates the decision is no longer valid a new decision is needed.