InFORM Best Practices for Alaska

The future of fire reporting is here: *"One fire, one record, one authoritative data source."* This guide is intended to provide basic information on InFORM and best practices geared specifically to fire reporting and certification workflows for Alaska. The InFORM Inspector web application is still in development hence this guide is aligned with the program's current functionality (as of March 2021).

Refer to the Final Fire Report portion (Section V.1.B) of the 2021 Alaska Statewide Operating Plan for official guidance on the final fire report process.

InFORM Basics

Access to InFORM

1. Users must have a NIFC org AGOL account in order to access InFORM. NIFC AGOL accounts can be requested here: https://nifc.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html
2. After your NIFC AGOL account has been created, users must then request access to the InFORM Inspector Web Application Group and select a role (see #3).
    - DOF, BLM and FWS: Contact AICC Aircraft/Tactical Desk at blm_ak_accair_dispatch@blm.gov
    - USFS: Contact Laura Barrett at lbarrett@fs.fed.us
    - NPS: Contact Brian Sorbel at brian_sorbel@nps.gov
    - BIA: Contact Nathan Lillie at nathan.lillie@bia.gov
3. InFORM Inspector roles (Certifier, Editor and Viewer) are defined in the InFORM User Guide.
4. InFORM Inspector Web Application (Production): https://inform.firenet.gov/inspector
5. New InFORM Website: https://in-form-nifc.hub.arcgis.com/

Alaska Best Practices – The Do's & Don'ts

This list provides ***important*** do's and don'ts for fire report editing and certification in Alaska. This is a work in progress as the InFORM Inspector web app evolves.

1. **ALL** fire reports in Alaska **must** be initiated through the CAD systems (IFM and WildCAD). **DO NOT** use InFORM Inspector web application or InFORM mobile apps (Survey 123 or Collector) to **create** a new incident.

2. If you are an Editor or Certifier, you can edit **ANY** fire report in InFORM (not just in Alaska). Please **DO NOT** make changes to fire reports outside of your jurisdiction. Edits made in InFORM are captured in IRWIN along with the user ID of the editor/certifier (so the editor will be known).

3. **DO NOT** edit *any* fields in the InFORM fire report **until you have been notified** by the dispatch office/protecting agency that it is ready for review (see bullets #4 & #5 for more details and exceptions).

IMPORTANT CONCEPT: InFORM operates using an Authoritative Data Source (ADS) model where all the programs that feed IRWIN (and then populate InFORM) are ranked. Data coming from the highest "ranked" program for a particular data field "wins" and will overwrite others. **NOTE:** Contact your agency InFORM project lead for viewer access to the IRWIN ADS structure.

Example: An InFORM Inspector editor updates the cause and adds a containment date/time (before dispatch has completed the fire report). Next, dispatch updates the acreage in WildCAD, but the containment date/time is still blank within their system. WildCAD will "push" the new acreage but it will also "push" the cause (changing it back to what it was prior to editing in InFORM) and overwrite the containment date/time, changing it back to "blank".

Lesson: Do not edit in InFORM until notified it is ready for review. The data fields in this example have equal "rank" in the ADS between WildCAD and InFORM. Since InFORM does not write back to WildCAD (i.e., a change made in InFORM will not make a change in WildCAD), WildCAD will continue to overwrite InFORM edits in this scenario each time it is updated.

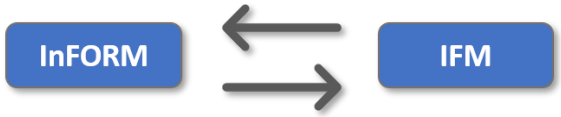
4. **For the 2021 fire season in Alaska, it is strongly recommended that nearly ALL edits** to the InFORM fire report (see exceptions in bullet #5) be communicated back to the dispatch office for corrections to be made in the CAD system (either WildCAD or IFM). This will ensure the data exchanges work properly between the CAD systems, IRWIN and our Alaska specific processes. The InFORM platform continues to be updated so this is the safest method to maintain data integrity.

   NEVER edit the fields below in InFORM. Doing so will cause significant issues.

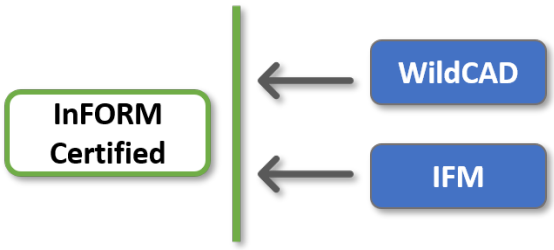
   - ***Request FireCode*** – **DO NOT** request a firecode in InFORM. This function is ONLY for areas that do not use a CAD system.
   - ***Point of Origin Coordinates*** – The POO coordinates are linked to many other programs and have a complex data stream (i.e., changing the lat/long could change the jurisdictional unit, landowner category, etc.). **ALL** edits should occur in the CAD systems to correctly populate all systems linked to IRWIN **AND** our Alaska GIS database for fire locations (points).

   IMPORTANT CONCEPT: The current data exchange process is different for IFM vs WildCAD. **Note:** Diagrams below are very simplified. See the Alaska Data Exchange Systems graphic for more details.

Fire data in WildCAD populates InFORM via IRWIN. Edits made in InFORM **DO NOT** write back to WildCAD (which feeds AICC Fire Maps, Sit Report, etc.) (BLM-AFS & USFS)



Fire data in IFM populates InFORM via IRWIN. **Edits made in InFORM write back to IFM!** Be cognizant of this and communicate with dispatch. (DOF)



After the fire report is *certified* in InFORM, any changes to the incident in WildCAD or IFM will **NOT** affect InFORM.

5. **Exceptions:** There are three fields that can be edited in InFORM Inspector without impact to other systems. The following fields are currently ***optional*** and are **not** derived from any other data source:

    - ***In Fuels Treatment?*** (true or false)
    - ***In NFPORS?*** (true or false)
    - ***Narrative*** (text – limited to 3999 characters). Editors/Certifiers may add additional incident details as needed. **Reminder:** The incident narrative is provided by dispatch from the WildCAD Incident Card or IFM Final Fire Report as a pdf document.

Fire Perimeter Collection & Editing with InFORM

Using the InFORM Collector Application

The ***InFORM Collector App*** (for mobile devices) may be used to create fire perimeters in the field. To use this method, the BLM AFS GIS Team **MUST** be notified **EACH** time a perimeter is created or edited (BLM_AK_AFS_GIS@blm.gov). The InFORM Collector App feeds directly into the National Incident Feature Service (NIFS) and bypasses the traditional Alaska GIS workflow. Perimeters without the correct attributes will **NOT** be visible on Alaska mapping products! Contact the BLM AFS GIS Team or your local GIS specialist for how to access/setup the InFORM Collector App.

IMPORTANT: The BLM-AFS GIS Team **MUST** be notified so they can extract the perimeter from NIFS and adjust important attribute fields.

Editing Perimeters in InFORM Inspector (Web Application)

DO NOT edit fire perimeters in InFORM Inspector – **ALL** perimeter edits should be submitted to the AFS GIS Team (preferred) or occur via the Collector App. See the AICC/AFS Perimeter Submission Guide for detailed instructions (updated March 2021).

Tips for Certifiers

When fire reports are ready for review and certification, all affected jurisdictional agency representatives and the AICC Aircraft/Tactical Desk will receive an email notification from the protecting agency along with the WildCAD Incident Card or IFM Final Fire Report (as the narrative).

- For multi-jurisdictional fires, the jurisdictional agency representative at the **point of origin** is the designated certifier. All parties should review and communicate corrections to **all** affected representatives and the protection agency (in order to make the corrections in the CAD system). This will be an interagency effort.
- **False Alarms** require certification.
- Only certify fire reports in which you are the designated certifier (agency representative at the **point of origin** – see agency specific guidance). The InFORM program will allow anyone with a certifier role to certify **ANY** fire report.
- Certification of the fire report also includes certification of the **perimeter**.
- Make sure your **contact information** is correct on the AICC Agency Representative spreadsheet in order to receive fire report notifications (contact AICC – Jennifer Humphrey at jhumphre@blm.gov).
- Use the WildCAD Incident Card, IFM Final Fire Report and other sources to review and verify **ALL** fields in the fire report including the perimeter.
- Ensure all required fields (*) are completed.
- Common Errors:
    - Point of Origin outside of the fire perimeter - InFORM will allow certification in this situation so this must be manually checked.
    - Point of Origin in wrong location – This affects other fields like Landowner Category & Kind, Jurisdictional Agency, etc. and has many other downstream impacts.
    - Current Size and Calculated Size do not match.
    - Poor perimeter – Submit a final perimeter to the AFS GIS Staff before certifying the fire report (required for fires 10 acres or larger).
    - Initial Strategy incorrect.
- The WildCAD Incident Card or IFM Final Fire Report serves as the fire report Narrative. The Narrative field will remain blank in INFORM (however, additional information can be added by an editor/certifier as needed).
- Reference the InFORM User Guide section on “Certifying Final Fire Reports”.
- After certifying a report, it can be printed (with the map) and signed if required (see agency specific guidance). **Note:** The map prints at the browser window extent. Zoom in or out for the best map.
- Certifiers must “uncertify” a fire report to make additional changes. Be sure to re-certify after corrections are made.
- Request an IRWIN Observer account (see link under Troubleshooting in InFORM). IRWIN Observer allows users to see which data source (e.g., WildCAD, IFM, ICS-209, WFDSS, IROC, etc.) is populating each fire report field. This can be very useful in identifying data errors.

Fire Report Notifications for Alaska – Example

The final fire report guidance is provided in the *2021 Alaska Statewide Operating Plan (Section V.1.B Final Fire Reports)*. The scenario below provides a detailed example of the notification process.

1

Fire is called out and the 15-day clock starts for fire report completion.

Ex: Fire 145 on NPS land in Copper River Area is called out on July 17. Fire report must be completed by July 31.

2

If the fire is 10 acres or larger, a perimeter is required. Perimeters should be submitted to the BLM AFS GIS Team (see AICC/AFS Perimeter Submission Guide) who will then load them to the National Incident Feature Service (NIFS) for InFORM.
Note: Any fire personnel using the Collector App for perimeters MUST coordinate with the BLM AFS GIS Team.

Ex: Copper River Dispatch ensures that DOF Fire GIS Lead has provided final fire perimeter to BLM AFS GIS Team.

3

Editor for Protecting Agency will log into InFORM and complete any missing required fields in the Incident Details. IRWIN auto-populates most fields.

Ex: Copper River dispatcher logs into InFORM and completes missing fields. Also completes IFM Final Fire Report (pdf) to meet the Alaska narrative requirement.

4

Protecting agency notifies designated representative(s) of affected jurisdictional agency(ies) and AICC Aircraft/Tactical Desk that fire report is ready for certification. The WildCAD Incident Card or IFM Final Fire Report will be uploaded to the Sharepoint site. AICC will document the report has been submitted on the website. (This is the point in the process that must be reached within 15 days – Fire Report completion. See agency specific guidance for certification deadlines.)

Ex: Copper River dispatch emails NPS rep, AICC AC/Tac Desk and BLM DM 620 rep that the fire report is ready for review/certification and uploads a copy of the IFM Final Fire Report to the Sharepoint site.

See Dispatch Notification Flows Charts by Protecting Agency.

5

The jurisdictional agencies are responsible for communicating with each other for multi-jurisdictional fires and directly to the protecting agency for edits to the fire report (so they can be made in the CAD system). The jurisdictional agency at point of origin (POO) is the designated certifier in multi-jurisdiction fires. AICC will document the InFORM fire report is certified on the AICC website.

Ex: NPS rep certifies fire in InFORM. The AICC AC/Tac Desk will archive InFORM Fire Report & Narrative documentation.

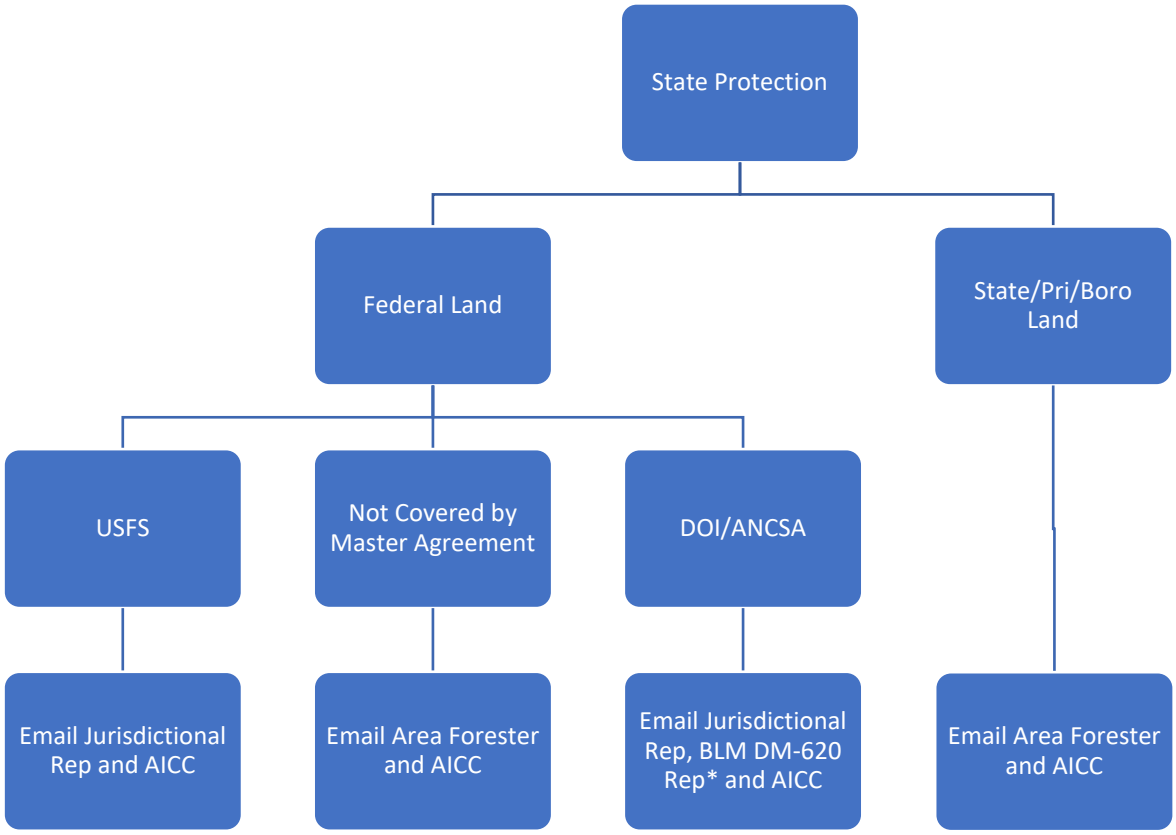
Dispatch Notification Flow Charts

The following flow charts outline dispatch notifications for review/certification of fire reports by protecting agency (adapted from J. Humphrey, BLM-AFS). The AICC Aircraft/Tactical Desk maintains the agency representative contact list.

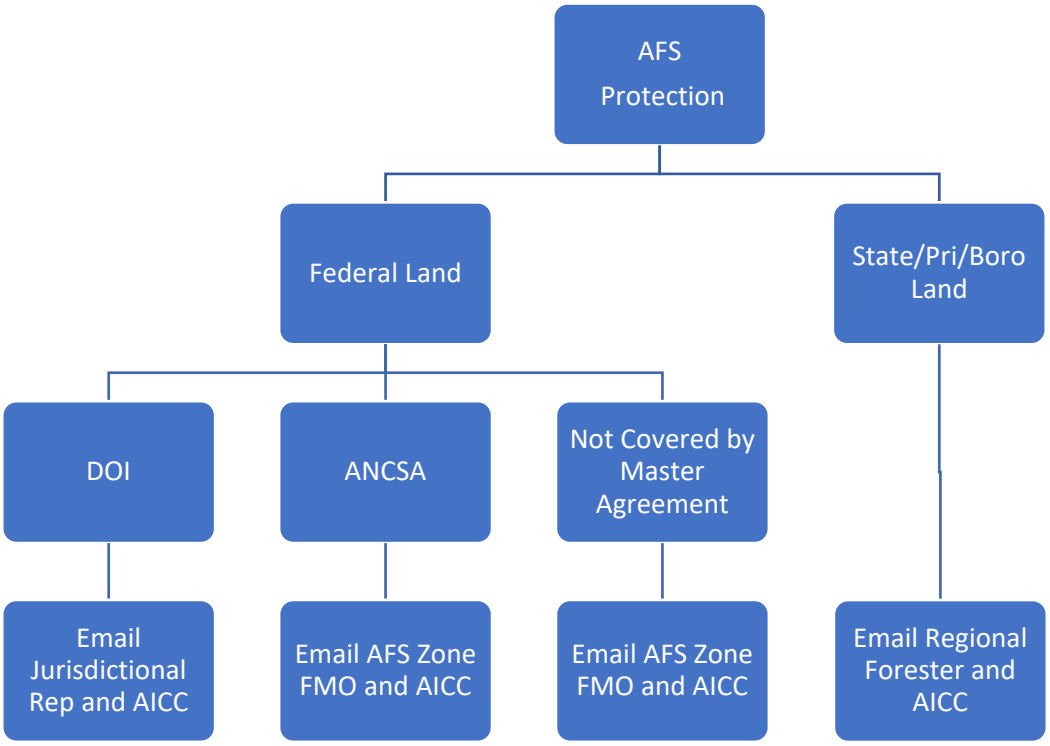
Example: If a fire burned on US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) land under State of Alaska – Division of Forestry protection, email notifications would be sent to the FWS jurisdictional agency representative (certifier), the DM 620 representative and the AICC Aircraft/Tactical Desk when the fire report was ready for review/certification.

***Note:** The BLM DM-620 representative should be notified for fires on **non-BLM** DOI lands (NPS, BIA or FWS lands) under State of Alaska or US Forest Service protection.

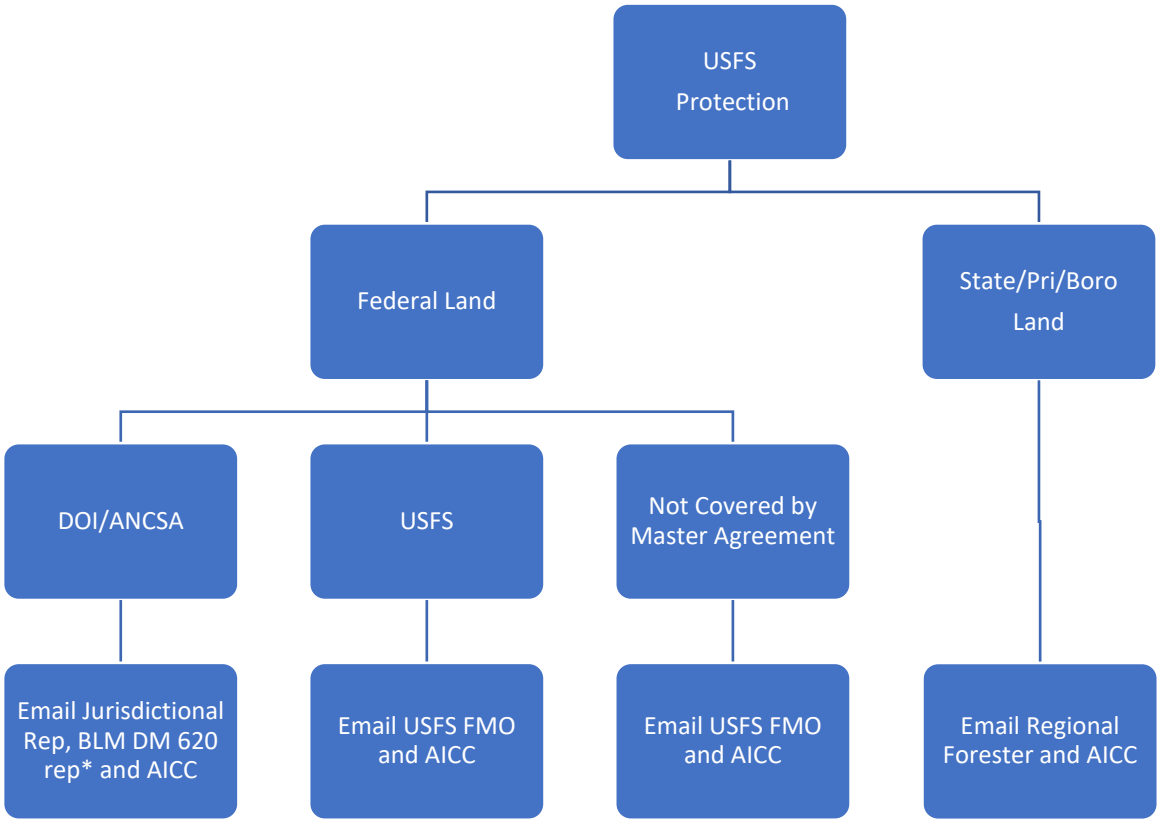
State of Alaska – Division of Forestry Protection



BLM – Alaska Fire Service Protection

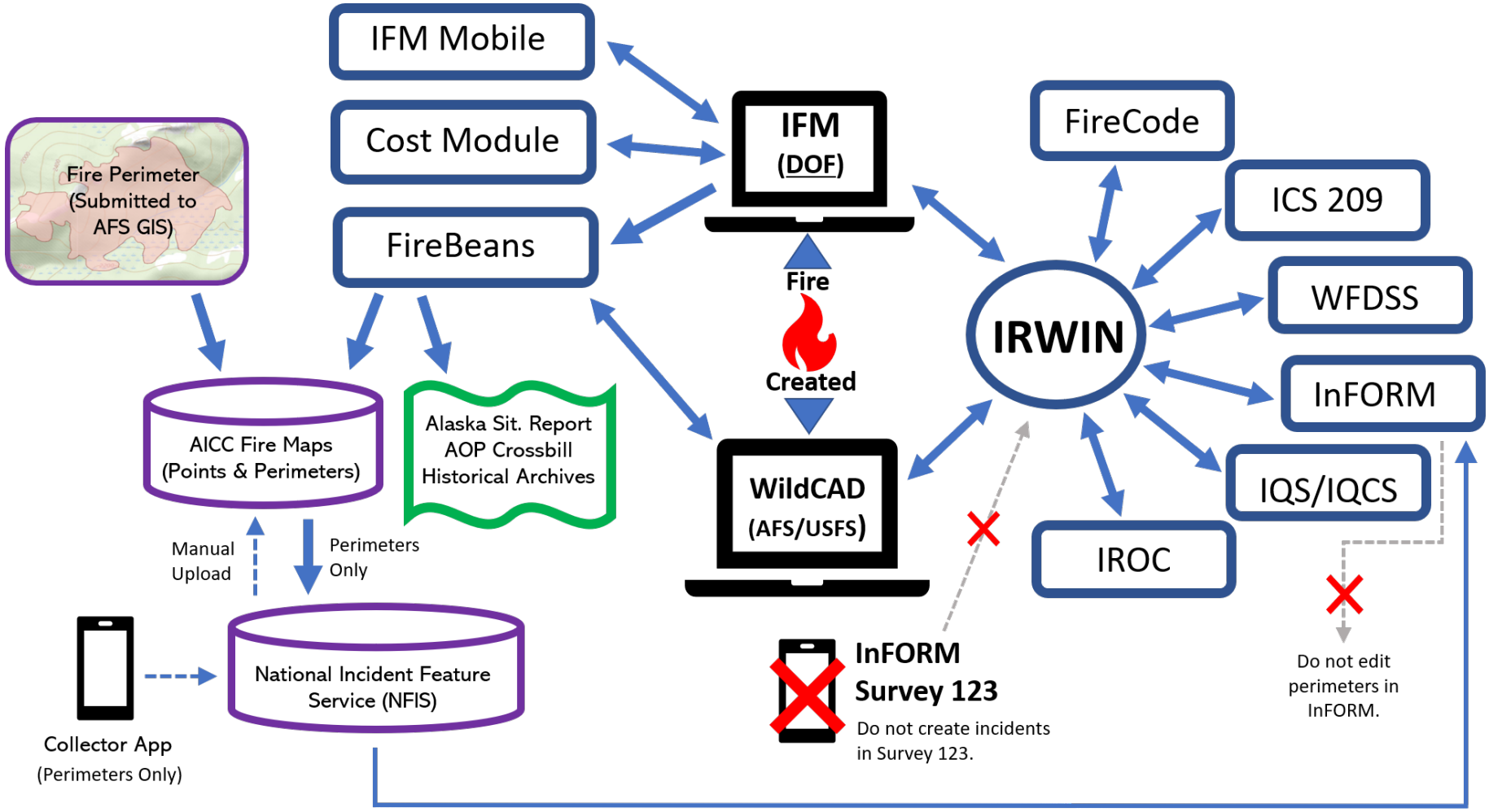


US Forest Service Protection



Alaska Data Exchange Systems

This graphic illustrates the data exchange environment used in Alaska (adapted from M. Butteri, DOF). The national-level Interagency Fire Data Integration graphic can be found here. **Note:** The use of the InFORM Mobile Collector App for perimeters may be used but **MUST** be done in close collaboration with the BLM AFS GIS Team.



Troubleshooting in InFORM

- User Guide: https://in-form-nifc.hub.arcgis.com/pages/in-form-user-guide
- Data Dictionary (crosswalk between IRWIN & InFORM data fields): https://in-form-nifc.hub.arcgis.com/pages/in-form-user-guide
- Frequently Asked Questions: https://in-form-nifc.hub.arcgis.com/pages/in-form-faqs/ Top Tips:

  Q: What happened to my perimeter? It was there before but now it's gone.

  A: Perimeters are managed in the National Incident feature service (NIFS). NIFS is meant to be a temporary housing for incident operational spatial data and is subject to "fall-off" rules. If your perimeter is missing, it's probably in the Archive and can be retrieved in Inspector if needed. (Contact your Fire GIS staff or the BLM AFS GIS Team for assistance.)

  Q: How are complexes and merged fires managed in InFORM?

  A: Complexes do NOT receive final fire reports, but the individual fires within the complex DO. Wildfires that merge with another active wildland fire will be treated as a single wildfire. The "parent" wildfire will be the record that is certified. A wildfire that burned into an inactive wildfire is treated as a unique record and each wildfire will have its own record.

  Q: Where does trespass fit in?

  A: Trespass is a separate component. Refer to your agency guidance.

  Q: Can a record be uncertified?

  A: Yes, if there changes to a report, then the report would need to uncertified first before changes can be applied and then re-certified.

- Request access to IRWIN Observer: https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/intelligence/IRWINObserverGettingStarted.pdf
- Contact your local dispatch office.
- Elevated problem or error? Contact AICC – Jennifer Humphrey (jhumphre@blm.gov)

Questions or Comments?

For questions or comments on this document or the Final Fire Report process in general, contact Jennifer Hrobak (jennifer_hrobak@nps.gov) or Jennifer Humphrey (jhumphre@blm.gov) for DOI/USFS **OR** Mike Butteri (mike.butteri@alaska.gov) for DOF.