

Creating Incident-Specific WFDSS Objectives

October 2015

Incident Objectives are succinct and specific, outlining what the Line Officer *intends* to accomplish regarding management of the fire, understanding there may be many ways to achieve an Objective. Laws, regulations, Forest Plan standards and guidelines, or other local requirements should be addressed in Incident Requirements. The Incident is managed based on the collective picture painted by all of the Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements together; there is no need to address everything in one single comprehensive objective. Incident Objectives can be modified over time as the fire conditions change, but at a minimum must always include at least one “protection” objective. Fire conditions and availability of personnel dictate whether each objective can be accomplished safely and successfully. Leaders should convey the priority of each objective insofar as possible and avoid assuming that Leader’s Intent is adequately conveyed to an Incident Commander only through Incident Objectives--a dialogue is very important.

Examples for Incident Objectives are shown in four categories: protecting infrastructure (the built environment), protecting natural or cultural resources (cultural resources often fall into Incident Requirements), social-political needs, and using fire for achieving land management plan objectives. Not all of the objectives in this table would necessarily be used on a single incident, or would be worded exactly this way for local circumstances, but they are written to demonstrate a range of situations and options to convey intention. Incident Requirements are not specifically addressed here, but may be added to future versions. Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements in a Decision have equal “weight.”

The table is organized with a **Category** column to show ways of addressing certain types of items. The next four columns: **What, Where, When,** and **Why** are the items that should be addressed when crafting an incident-specific objective. “When” may not always be needed, but at times is useful—the examples demonstrate the use of this element. Reading the What, Where, When, and Why columns together makes a complete Incident Objective while demonstrating how each part of the sentence fits the architecture of a clear Incident Objective. The **Corresponding Language for Course of Action (COA)** column shows an *example* of a COA to illustrate how the COA is different, yet related to, the Incident Objective. Finally, the **Interpretation Notes** provides some background for the selected wording in the table to help users apply these concepts when creating Incident Objectives for their own unique fire situations.

This document will be revised based on user feedback. Please contact the Wildland Fire Management Research, Development and Application program through our website: go to www.wfmrda.nwcg.gov and click “Contact Us”.

Recommended Wording for Incident Objectives						
Category	Do WHAT?* <i>Protect, Coordinate, Maintain, or Utilize are suggestions</i>	At WHERE?* <i>Describe site using specific place names</i>	WHEN? <i>Use time-based language only when needed</i>	Because WHY?* <i>Write clear, specific descriptions of resource value and overall importance to convey priority</i>	Corresponding Language for Course of Action (COA) <i>Describe actions that meet the Incident Objective</i>	Interpretation Notes
<i>Protect WUI Infrastructure</i>	Protect the community	of New Meadows**	n/a	to prevent loss of our most Highly Valued Resources and Assets such as private residences and infrastructure.	To protect New Meadows, utilize open fuel type in the prescribed fire treatment (2010). Avoid suppression actions in snag areas from Jack Fire (1992) due to firefighter exposure. Assess utility of closed Beaver Ridge Road for improvement and holding actions.	<i>This is preferred over “keep the fire small” or “keep the fire west of the road” and focuses on what needs protection. Allows for multiple strategies and risk mitigation. Demonstrates priority. Suggests locally known options for control.</i>
<i>Protect Isolated Infrastructure</i>	Protect isolated Forest assets	in Great Bear Wilderness including Johnson Cabin, Lakeside Comm Tower, Main RAWS, and Comms Site at Hilltop Ridge**	n/a	to prevent loss of highly valued Forest infrastructure and assets, and prevent loss of critical forest-wide communications that would compromise ability to maintain safe and effective operations.	Utilize point-protection tactics in Great Bear Wilderness to protect isolated forest assets where surrounding landscape does not require suppression; if needed, allow fire to burn to Corridor Road where suppression tactics have a high probability of success.	<i>Point-protect may imply that fire in the general area is acceptable, and there is no need to suppress, or that limited firefighting resources preclude suppressing the entire fire edge. This is not too tactical; tactics would involve use of dozers, sprinklers, wrapping, etc. Only the highly valued assets need to be listed.</i>

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<i>Protect Special Infrastructure</i>	Protect the historic OTO Dude Ranch** compound buildings, infrastructure, powerlines, and cottonwoods	at the head of Clear Creek	n/a	to avoid loss or damage to this highly valued National Historic Landmark lodge, cabins, fence, and historic landscaping.	Use direct and indirect tactics that include Road 4322/422, and changes in fuel types. Burnout operations should limit loss of trees and shrubs within 0.25mi of Ranch. Consult with READ when developing tactics.	<i>This is a “compound” of buildings of high historic value, and this priority is implied in the language used. The trees are an integral part of the historic landscape. Additional details must be conveyed through verbal consultations with Resource Advisor or Line Officer. Consultation with READ can also be relayed through Leader’s Intent letter.</i>
<i>Protect Natural Resources</i>	Protect Coho Salmon habitat	in Bald Creek drainage**	n/a	by limiting fire intensities that will kill overstory and raise stream temperatures to lethal levels.	Limit fire spread in Bald Creek drainage, or use burnout operations to limit intensities to flame lengths less than 4 feet. Consult with READ when developing tactics.	<i>How fire intensity is limited is not dictated here, but inclusion of this resource implies its importance. What can be tolerated in terms of fire is clearly defined. Verbal consultation with the Line Officer and/or READ is important.</i>
<i>Protect Natural Resources</i>	Protect pre-commercial timber stands	in Sections 11, 12 of Wolf Creek drainage**	n/a	by not allowing fire to enter the stands.	Limit fire spread in the Wolf Creek area using direct or indirect tactics that include skid roads and old dozer line from 1998 Clark Fire.	<i>If the LRMP states that it is completely unacceptable to allow fire here, it should be emphasized in the Objective.</i>

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<i>Social-Political Need</i>	Maintain public access	from the 4356/2234 road junction to Hiawatha Lake**	through Labor Day weekend	to allow public recreation at this highly valued site.	Develop operational trigger points to ensure public safety based on weather, fuels, and topography.	<i>The “when” is included as an important component. The COA allows the Incident Management Team to develop appropriate trigger points. Incident Objectives must also be written to illustrate protection needs.</i>
<i>Social-Political Need</i>	Maintain hunting access	in the Selway Wilderness (see MAPs)***	through October 15	to allow elk hunting by individuals and outfitters, and consideration of outfitters relying on hunting season.	(No Course of Action developed because Management Action Points exist to guide actions.)	<i>The “when” is included as an important component. A MAP is included as part of the long-term plan so that outfitter camps can be notified. In this case, a MAP was already developed by the host Unit. Incident Objectives must also be written to illustrate protection needs.</i>

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<i>Use Fire for Achieving Land Management Objective</i>	Utilize fire	in Leafy Tree drainage**	n/a	to promote aspen regeneration as described in the LRMP; all types of fire are acceptable.	Monitor fire spread and behavior in Leafy Tree drainage; develop a plan to confine/contain the flank outside of the Roadless area utilizing operational trigger points***. Monitor fire behavior and effects for future development of burn prescriptions. Utilize READ.	<i>This is the desired outcome that explains the type of fire needed to achieve resource objectives. It does not dictate how to achieve the objective. Incident Objectives must also be written to illustrate any protection needs.</i>
<i>Use Fire for Achieving Land Management Objective</i>	Utilize natural fire as much as possible	in the Aldo Leopold Wilderness and the Roadless management area north of Garden River**	n/a	to enhance wilderness character and fire-dependent ecosystems as described in the LRMP.	Monitor fire spread in Aldo Leopold Wilderness, and develop a long term plan in WFDSS. Utilize existing roads/fuel types to confine/contain fire if it is expected to spread outside of Wilderness. Utilize READ.	<i>The “as much as possible” indicates this fire is acceptable and should not be confined, contained, or controlled just because moderated weather provides an opportunity. Incident Objectives must also be written to illustrate any protection needs.</i>

**Indicates that this must be addressed when crafting an incident-specific objective.*

***All objectives can be linked to an “Objective Shape” to help define the “where” component on the Situation Map in WFDSS.*

****Management Action Points, or M.A.P.s can be used to indicate a “trigger point” for notifying an outfitter camp, closing a trail, or utilizing more aggressive tactics when the fire reaches a certain point; provide these details in the MAP dialogue in WFDSS, not in the Incident Objective.*