

2012 WFDSS Preseason Training Information

Fire season is here and many users have not used the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) since last fire season. This document is a quick reference review of 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:** WFDSS 101 training, additional decision and modelling learning resources, quick tips, how to documents and videos can be found on the WFDSS Home Page > Training.
- **Data:** WFDSS data information, spatial data downloads, resources, and links to more WFDSS information including the WFDSS FMU update schedule is available from WFDSS Home Page > Data.
- **Related Resources:** Several WFDSS related documents and references such as 508 compliance information, a glossary, WFDSS Decision documents, WFDSS tools, 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 Wildland Fire Decision Support (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.
- **Sign In Links:** Links to the Production, Training and Mobile website are also found on the left hand side of the WFDSS Home Page.

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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 WFDSS 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 WFDSS 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 WFDSS Home Page > Training > Videos > Data Manager Unit Shapes.
 - FMU Shapefiles: You can find the FMU update schedule at:
http://frames.nbii.gov/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=688&&PageID=3641&mode=2&in_hi_userid=2&cached=true .

User Accounts (MyHome 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 (1-866-224-7677) and request a password reset. Do not request a new account; this will cause confusion when preparing decision documents and performing other WFDSS functions.
- **Contact Information:** Check your contact information and ensure that it is up to date. This information is used by the WFDSS system and WFDSS 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 WFDSS 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 WFDSS 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 WFDSS maps. All new available layers are now located in the right hand box, therefore available for viewing from WFDSS maps. Users must move those layers that are not needed back to the left hand box to prevent them from displaying in WFDSS maps. Help > Changing your System Preferences.

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- **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 WFDSS Help topics related to the address book such as, Creating a Group and Editing a Group.

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 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):** WFDSS 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 layer tree option (+) and then expand the FSPRO Results analysis layer (+). Click the downward facing black arrow to the right of the desired analysis name in the layer pane. Click on the link Values at Risk to open the table in a new window.
- **Appending Polygons:** You can append your fire perimeter polygons as your fire grows, rather than creating new ones each time you update your fire growth. See WFDSS HO training video "Merging Perimeters" under the Training tab on the WFDSS homepage.
- **Relative Risk Rating:** As of 2010, relative risk assessments are automatically uploaded to your decision document? But, only the Rating, Duration, and Notes carry over (the Relative Risk Rating Charts do not). Therefore, it is important to document your considerations and rationale while completing the relative risk rating. See training video "Calculating Relative Risk" under the Training tab on the WFDSS Home page. In the future, the Relative Risk Assessment will also be brought forward in the Organizational Needs Assessment (which is scheduled to be added to WFDSS this spring). More information can be found at www.wfmrda.org/policy.php.
- **Publishing a Decision:** (Formerly named "Thought Flow Document") this document can be found at the Related Resources tab on the WFDSS website under WFDSS User Documentation. This document outlines things to consider when going through the documentation process. Take a look at this document and compare it to decision documents you or others have previously completed to determine if more could or should have been addressed or if decision issues were adequately addressed.

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- **Management Action Points (M.A.P.):** Can be drawn or uploaded into WFDSS and geospatially linked to the planning document. M.A.P.s may also be temporal, such as when a condition or set of conditions are met and no geospatial linking is needed. M.A.P.s can be included or excluded from your decision document and edited with different versioning in subsequent decision documents. You can also print a summary report of M.A.P.s from the Reports tab. You will find a video explaining M.A.P.s under the Training tab on the WFDSS homepage.
- **Uploading Final Fire Perimeters:** Uploading your final fire perimeter does have its advantages! Once in the system, it can be viewed on future fires that occur in the area. This can be useful for planning purposes and/or it can be used by Fire Behavior Specialists as a landscape mask to modify fuels to reflect the fuel changes resulting from the fire. Uploading your perimeters also gives you a fire progression map within WFDSS. WFDSS v3.14 and later uses the most recent fire perimeter to update the Acres field on the Incident Information page.
- **Fire Behavior Analysis:** Basic Fire Behavior (BFB) and Short-Term Fire Behavior (STFB) are basic automated models that can be run by Dispatchers, the Incident Author, Owner, or anyone granted incident privileges. **Basic Fire Behavior** (BFB) is a simple way to get "snapshot in time" of potential fire behavior, such as flame lengths and rates of spread. **Short-Term Fire Behavior** (STFB) is a quick way to get an idea of potential fire spread over the next 1 to 3 days. A values inventory is also available based on the STFB analysis. A PDF version of training on BFB and STFB can be found under the Webinars and Other eLearning section under the training tab on the WFDSS website. A Reference Guide can be found under the Related Resources tab under the Fire Behavior section.
- **Near-Term Fire Behavior** (NTFB) mentioned above under WFDSS enhancements and **Fire Spread Probability** (FSPro) are also fire behavior models, but require more complex inputs and are available to Fire Behavior Specialists and Super Analysts only. These models are helpful for looking at longer range fire potential. If you feel the longer range modeling will be useful and don't have a Fire Behavior Specialist locally, contact your WFDSS Geographic Editor, or if he/she is not available, contact the National Fire Decision Support Center (NFDSC) 208-473-8107.
- **ERC Graphs (Fire Danger Graph):** There are many ways to obtain ERC graphs in WFDSS. When Fire Danger is selected from the Info tab of the Incidents Situation page, WFDSS selects the nearest Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) that has the data to support generating the graph. This station may or may not be representative of the fire area. Some tricks are available to help you obtain a graph from another station:
 - Click the  button at the top of the map screen and then click a point on the map. This creates a temporary point. Now, when Fire Danger is selected, WFDSS will select a RAWS nearest that temporary point.
 - From the Map tab, expand the Fire Related list (layer switcher tree) and select RAWS Stations. Now, by selecting a particular RAWS label, WFDSS brings up an information window. In the upper right of this window, select the Fire Danger Graph to obtain an ERC Graph for that station.
- **Smoke Dispersion:** Basic atmospheric smoke dispersion point forecasts can be obtained from the Info tab on the Situation page. This feature gives you forecasted smoke dispersion information at 3-hour intervals for the first 3 days and 6-hour interval for days 4 - 7. These data display basic mixing height, transport wind information, ventilation rate, etc.
- **Air Quality Tools** are available from the Menu tab under Fire Related Links. Selecting the air quality tools link takes you to a web page containing a whole suite of air quality assessment tools.

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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 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.