

What you Need to Know About WFDSS - 2016

This document is a quick reference and review of recent enhancements, little known features, recommendations and things to consider that will help you use WFDSS more efficiently.

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New WFDSS Releases

The latest WFDSS release information, now available in both print and video, is located at the top of the WFDSS Training Page. The section located on the right side of the WFDSS Homepage previously called *Latest Information* is now called *Hot Picks*. This section contains links to those items most frequently accessed by users. [Release 5.3](#) (September 2015) and [Release 5.4](#) (October 2015) are the latest releases affecting users. Below are a few highlights from these releases.

Table 1: Summary of new WFDSS Releases

Feature	Description
WFDSS Login Screen, video link	A link to a short video describing the most recent WFDSS enhancements is available above the login fields on the Training and Production login pages. The video and link were created to efficiently deliver enhancement information to the widest audience possible. Release information and associated videos are available in the Hot Picks section on the right side of WFDSS Home. Links to videos are available at the bottom of the WFDSS > Training page.
Assessment Tab	The Assessment tab allows consolidated access to the relative risk and organization assessments, customized risk tables, and Benefits slider. Incorporating the Assessment tab into your workflow provides a more intuitive method for accessing these functions and developing inputs for a decision. See About the Assessment Tab for further information.

Feature	Description
<p>Creating and Editing Customized Risk Tables</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users can create and edit customized risk tables on the Assessment tab, or on the Risk vertical tab if editing a decision using the Default Decision Editor. • Values tables generated from drawing planning areas or completed FSPRO, NTFB, or STFB runs can be saved as custom tables, and then modified to display values information in a way that is meaningful and specific to an incident. You can add rows and/or columns to these tables, as well as modify existing fields, enabling you to align information from both inside and outside of WFDSS to help fire managers and line officers accurately assess and evaluate those influences on the fire that affect risk based decision making. You cannot create a custom risk table without a planning area or a completed analysis. See Creating and Editing Customized Risk Tables for further information.
<p>Organization Assessment Pages</p>	<p>You can access an Organization Assessment from the new Assessment tab.</p>
<p>Situation Map</p>	<p>The Situation Map page displays by clicking the Situation tab or the small map icon located on the right side of the page in the incident perspective. Accessing the Situation Map from the Situation tab embeds the map in the application's main window whereas accessing it via the map icon opens the map in its own window. Accessing it from the icon allows the greatest flexibility as you can both edit a decision and view the Situation Map simultaneously. In addition, within the Situation Menu, there is an option to set default map preferences so that the user can select only their preferred layers to be viewed when the map opens.</p>
<p>Accessibility Mode</p>	<p>Many WFDSS features are accessible as a default in WFDSS. However, some features in the WFDSS application such as the slide out menus are not. Users requiring assistive technology can enable the Enhanced Accessibility mode to remove or deactivate the features that are not compatible with assistive technology. This feature is available from the System Preferences option under the My Home tab.</p>

Feature	Description
Predictive Service Burn Environment Legend	In keeping consistent with the Predictive Services Significant Fire Potential product, Burn Environment has been added to the legend as an ignition trigger.
Documenting Fire Costs	You can now document that your fires costs were determined using e-ISuite. You can no longer document that the fire cost was determined using ICARS.
Hauling Charts	The surface fire characteristics chart, known as the hauling chart, now includes the wind speed and direction used in the simulation as part of the title of the chart. To access the hauling charts, a Basic or Short-term fire modeling run must be generated. Next, view the modeling run and under the results tab there is a link to the hauling charts.
New Set Incident Default Preferences Button	Allows users to set the default preferences for viewing incidents on the Situation tab. Users can now set defaults for which map layers they would like automatically displayed as well as if they want fire perimeters, planning areas, and Management Action Points to automatically display on the Situation tab. In addition, this feature allows the user to specify which map base layer is preferred for auto-generated maps.
Alpha Numeric Code Added to LCP Critique	Landscape critiques now include both the number and letter code for fuel models for easier use by those familiar with only one or the other.
New Fly Out Menus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The left hand menu slides in and out from the screen, providing more screen space for users. To use the menu hover your mouse over the menu tab and it will slide out onto the screen. To disable this feature navigate to My Home >Systems Preferences and check the box for Enhanced Accessibility. • The menus only work when using Internet Explorer 11. The feature may experience problems if you are using an older version of Internet Explorer.

New Data Layers

Table 2: Summary of New Data Layers

Data Layer	Description
MTBS Data	Monitoring Trends in Burn Severity (MTBS) data for the continental United States will be available later this spring as map layers by year. For a single year, burn area boundaries as mapped by MTBS will display as a red outline. Burn severities within each burn area boundary will display as a categorized image (thematic raster) color-coded according to burn severity. When available, users may have to manually add this layer to their available map layers (My Home>System Preferences>select the Disturbance>2010 Burn Severity dataset).

IRWIN Updates

Table 3: Summary of iRWIN Updates

Feature	Description
IRWIN	WFDSS & the IRWIN Data Exchange Service: Working in a Connected World is a document that explains the workflow and process of information exchange that occurs with the IRWIN system.

Training Aids

Table 4: List of WFDSS Training Aids

Training	Description
Quick video preview of What's New in WFDSS	A link to a short video describing recent WFDSS enhancement is available from the WFDSS login page following new releases (may be a short delay after the actual release date). Users can quickly preview recent WFDSS enhancements without leaving the login page and no longer have to search the WFDSS home page for a link. This option will be easy to incorporate into WFDSS refreshers for units nationwide. Previous release videos are available from the WFDSS

Training	Description
	home page in the What's New in WFDSS and Training > Videos menu options.
What's New in WFDSS menu option on the WFDSS Website	A new menu option has been added to the WFDSS Website called What's New in WFDSS . Here, users can quickly review notes from previous releases and short preview videos, if available. Links to the most popular items will be available in the Hot Picks column as well.
Example Decisions	Two example decision documents have been created to give users a point of reference when crafting a decision document (examples include the Gold Pan long duration incident and the Salt Cove Type 3 incident). These Example Decisions are located on the Reference & Guidance section of the WFM RD&A Website and are linked to the <i>WFDSS Website > Training > Decision Learning Resources</i> location as well.
2014 Incident Objectives Project findings	Examination of wildland fire incident decisions revealed that most incident objectives are written general enough that they could apply to any fire in the country. A systematic evaluation of wildfire incident decisions was undertaken in 2014, to better understand the situation and recommend solutions. This included site visits to 23 fires and interviews of agency administrators, incident commanders and WFDSS authors. An analysis of all objectives in the WFDSS database as of May 2014 was also conducted. Findings from this work are summarized in a briefing paper while more explanation and detail can be found in the white paper titled Improving WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements and Relaying Leader's Intent . Both of these documents are linked to the WFM RD&A Website and WFDSS Website > Training > <i>Decision Learning Resources</i> locations, and more is available on the WFM RD&A site > Reference & Guidance location as well. In addition, the document Creating Incident Specific Objectives in WFDSS outlines best practices when creating incident objectives and provides well thought out examples.
WFM RD&A Decision Support	Decision support information for a wide variety of audiences is available on the WFM RD&A website . Line Officers, WFDSS Geographic Area Editors, Data Managers and general WFDSS users will all find supporting information specific to their tasks and roles in incident decision-making.

Training	Description
WFDSS 101	This series of lessons are intended to be completed as a suite, and in numerical order, but can be used as stand-alone lessons to help guide your self-paced training in WFDSS. Each lesson contains one or more short exercises that will teach you how to use WFDSS tools, as well as ideas for incorporating the tools into your workflow. See the Training tab on the WFDSS home page.
YouTube WFDSS Support Videos Channel	WFDSS training videos that walk you step-by-step through many common tasks are available on YouTube. You can easily search for available offerings (WFDSS Support Videos) or subscribe to the channel to view new videos as they become available. http://www.youtube.com/user/WFDSSSupportVideos?feature=g-high-u
Decision Learning Resources section on WFDSS Website > Training	Decision Learning Resources are consolidated on the WFDSS Website > Training page. The Related References page also contains valuable reference information but core learning materials are now in one location on the Training page.

Little Known Features

Table 5: Little Known WFDSS Features

Feature	Description
Situation Assessment features	<p>The Situation Map allows access to a comprehensive set of incident-related data and information that can guide briefings and inform decision documentation. Here are some little-known highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can modify your map layers to display only what is relevant to your unit or incident. This will improve navigation during briefings and decision-making (My Home>System Preferences) and allow more efficient access to the most relevant information for an incident. You can display fire planning spatial data for a unit (if its been loaded) by turning on the Unit Fire Planning map layers. Depending on which planning process a unit has chosen for use in WFDSS, FMUs or Strategic Objectives and Management Requirement shapes are available for viewing in map displays. You can view specific information about individual Management Requirements

Feature	Description
	<p>by clicking the dropdown arrow beside its name in the LayerSwitcher, and then clicking the underscored Mgmt Requirements link.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A zone fire weather forecast for an incident’s origin displays by clicking Weather Forecast on the Situation Map>Info tab. To view fire weather forecasts for other zones in the fire area, turn on the Fire Weather and Danger>Fire Wx Zones map layer and use the ‘i’ tool to click in a different zone. When you open the Weather Forecast on the info tab, it will be for the zone you clicked. ● Similar to how you switch zones above, you can also choose to generate Fire Danger Rating Graphs for other RAWS in the fire area. The graph that displays on the Situation Map>Info tab is for the RAWS closest to an incident’s origin. Using the ‘i’ tool, click on alternate locations to display ERC-G data for alternate RAWS. These graphs show a 7 day ERC-G forecast in green. ● Predictive Service fire potential forecasts are available as spatial, daily map layers in the LayerSwitcher and as a 7 day forecast for an incident’s point of origin on the Situation Map>Info tab. ● Fuel Treatment map layers are available in the Disturbance History, but these layers must be added to your list of available map layers in My Home>System Preferences. ● Estimated Ground Evacuation Time, see below.
<p>Estimated Ground Evac Time</p>	<p>This data layer (Fire Environment and Safety map layers) displays estimated ground evacuation time and models the shortest ground transport time in hours from any point within the continental United State to a hospital. The layer has been designed for strategic decision making only. Its intent is to encourage thoughtful decisions about the risks being transferred to firefighters and how to mitigate those risks. See Help> Estimated Ground Evac Time Overview.</p>
<p>Hauling Charts</p>	<p>The surface fire characteristics chart, known as the hauling chart, now includes the wind speed and direction used in the simulation as part of the title of the chart. To access the hauling charts, a Basic or Short-term fire modeling run must be generated. Next, view the modeling run and under the results tab there is a link to the hauling charts.</p>

Feature	Description
Incident Groups	Need quick access to decision content for multiple fires in an area? Users can group incidents on the Incident Groups tab to enable viewing of more than one fire in their area, regardless of unit or ownership. This feature is helpful for units dealing with multiple active fires. Each individual incident has its own content; however, grouping incidents provides a way to manage multiple incidents at the same time. From the incident groups feature you can easily navigate to individual incidents and their decisions as well as download one KMZ that includes spatial data for all incidents. While complexing fires in WFDSS is not a recommended practice, the incident groups feature alleviates frustration that comes from managing/monitoring multiple incidents and related information sharing.
Reports	Need to quickly generate a list of MAPs and map locations for Operations? WFDSS enables you to create reports that are useful for conducting briefings and sharing published MAPs for active incidents, as well as post-fire for after action reviews and reclamation plans. You can pull information from WFDSS documentation such as text, maps, tables and images into a report format and both edit/publish the report as you would a decision. Want to create your unit's Delegation of Authority (DOA) in WFDSS? DOA templates are also available on the Reports tab; you can use existing templates or create your own for streamlining DOA creation for your unit.
View Section button in the Default Decision Editor	Allows users to preview the section in a new window, and without having to navigate away from the page. It is recommended that users use this feature to review their content for accuracy or gaps.
Hyperlinked Decision Requirements available in two Locations	Requirements that must be met before publishing a decision are available in two locations. In the Default Decision Editor, Decision Requirements are listed on the vertical tab located furthest to the right. The Decision Requirements are also listed on the Decisions tab.
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. The help information is being updated constantly to keep up with program enhancements and in response to user feedback, so check often.

Feature	Description
Smoke	The <i>Wildland Fire Air Quality Tools</i> link is available from the <i>Fire Related Links</i> in the menu. This link provides you with a suite of smoke modeling and forecasting tools. See http://firesmoke.us/wfdss/
WFDSS Lite	A mobile website available to all WFDSS users from their smart phones and tablet devices. This application has limited features compared to the full WFDSS application. For example you will not be able to view maps, Intelligence information, or Data management information. WFDSS Lite can be accessed from the WFDSS Home page under the <i>Sign Into Mobile Website</i> , or Mobile web sites can be found at: § Training: https://wfdss.usgs.gov/training_lite/faces/jsp/login/wLogin.jsp § Production: https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_lite/faces/jsp/login/wLogin.jsp

Recommendations

Table 6: WFDSS Recommendations

Feature	Description
Internet Explorer 9 and 10	These older versions of Internet Explorer may result the default decision editor or slide out menus not working properly. Recommendation is to use a different browser or use Internet Explorer 11.
Default Decision Editor Limitations	The default decision editor accommodates text, but does not allow the copying and pasting of tables, images, and bulleted lists. When using the advanced decision editor, create tables and lists manually using the text editor tools to avoid potential errors. All images should be uploaded, regardless of which editor is being used. The Default Decision Editor can accommodate up to 4000 characters per section. It is recommended that a plain text editor is used (WordPad or Notepad) when copying and pasting text into WFDSS. This will maximize character allowance.
Situation Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Situation Assessment map pop-up link opens the map its own window. Use of this feature will allow the user to maintain awareness of the spatial data to inform the decision process. • The Situation Map and its map layers is an excellent briefing tool with its comprehensive set of relevant, incident-related data and information.

Feature	Description
	<p>Use it to guide briefings for incident management teams, fire managers and Line Officers; inform decision making and approval, and share information when meeting with public, cooperators and other audiences. For additional information see Situation Assessment features in the Little Known Facts section of this document.</p>
<p>Delegation of Authority</p>	<p>An Incident Management Team should relate to the published decision in WFDSS. There should be a direct connection between the Course of Action (leader’s intent) in a WFDSS decision and the delegation of authority. Incident objectives, incident requirements, and the course of action should be used to frame the delegation of authority. Developing a decision prior to the team’s arrival helps to provide clear direction to the team through a meaningful delegation of authority. A Delegation of Authority template is available in WFDSS that pulls key elements from the decision to provide an editable Delegation of Authority letter. See About Report Templates. The Incident Objectives project (mentioned in Training Aids above) findings reveal that objectives and other agency administrator direction often differ and sometimes conflict between the WFDSS decision, delegation of authority, the briefing package, other documents and ad hoc discussions, which sometimes results in misdirection in managing risk and the fire. Incident objectives and incident requirements should cover what, where, and why and should be communicated consistently in incident documentation. See the WFM RD&A Reference & Guidance webpage for additional information and links to the USDA FS Briefing Paper and white paper titled Improving WFDSS Incident Objectives & Incident Requirements and Relaying Leader's Intent.</p>
<p>Decision Content Rationale</p>	<p>The decision rationale provides the opportunity to tell the "story" of the incident. Onscreen help on the Rationale vertical tab (default decision editor) is intended to help Line Officers develop rationale for their decision that is both informed and thorough. They should document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Their decision. ● Who are the cooperators that share the decision process and why. ● What the values of concern are and the likelihood of impact on them. ● What the relative risk assessment and organization needs indicate. ● What the current fire situation is. ● What triggers would indicate revisions to the decision or when a new decision is needed. <p>See WFDSS Help for content to consider when creating rationale.</p>
<p>Complexing Fires</p>	<p>There are advantages and disadvantages to complexing fires in WFDSS. Carefully consider the long term consequences of complexing two or more</p>

Feature	Description
	fires. One team managing two or more fires does not necessarily require combining the fires in WFDSS. Multiple fires can be managed under one financial code, and managed separately in WFDSS. Trying to un-complex fires as one fire is declared controlled, out or the situation changes significantly, can be a problem. Use of the Incident Groups feature in WFDSS allows users to view spatial information for multiple active incidents in an area and can help alleviate the desire to complex. Complexes entered into WFDSS have to be marked as Incident Type > Other in order to comply with the iRWIn project data feeds from WFDSS. See WFDSS Complexing.

Preseason Preparation Checklist (My Home tab)

Table 7: Preseason Preparation Checklist

	Feature	Description
✓	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 and more than 90 days have passed since your last log in, 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, as 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! Your WFDSS account is designed to stay with you throughout your career. See <i>Help</i> > Updating your Contact Information.

	Feature	Description
✓	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 may also reference <i>Help > Requesting Additional System Privileges</i> or WFDSS User Roles to learn more about user roles and privileges. User roles granted in Production are automatically carried over to Training but conversely, user roles granted in Training are exclusive to the Training site only.
✓	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 in System Preferences. Make sure that relevant map layers are listed in the right hand box and available for viewing in your WFDSS map displays. Map layers that are not needed should be moved to the left hand box so they are not available for viewing in WFDSS map displays. Check your system preferences occasionally to ensure your preferences are accurate. See <i>Help > Changing your System Preferences</i> .
✓	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. See <i>Help > Address Book</i> , or see the other WFDSS Help topics related to the address book such as, Creating a Group and Editing a Group .

Planned Future Enhancements

Currently there are numerous future enhancements being tracked. There will likely be no changes or enhancements for 2016 fire season.