An Author's Guide to WFDSS Decision Making

Contents

Owners, Authors, and Editing Introduction

The focus of this section is to provide general process guidance for individuals responsible for drafting WFDSS decision documents. This individual can vary from a fire manager, line officer, or resource specialist depending on Agency or Unit. In general, incident Owners are automatically assigned Editing Privileges, but WFDSS users with other roles can be assigned editing privileges as well. The Author role must be requested and WFDSS users must be Authors to have the ability own incidents. The Viewer role is a generic WFDSS Role that is given when a user's profile is initiated.

What is My Role as Author?

The Author role with editing privileges is oftentimes responsible for drafting decision content and button-pushing in WFDSS. The Author is not responsible for drafting all decision content, nor the reviewing/approving of a WFDSS decision. The Author role can complete any of the following tasks:

- Enters information for a new WFDSS incident. Authors own the incidents they create until they transfer ownership to someone else.
- Edits incident information for incidents they create, unless incident ownership has been reassigned, or while a decision is being reviewed.
- Can receive incident ownership when someone transfers an incident to them.
- Grants incident privileges to other users for incidents they have created, or own.
- Uploads shapes and other files.
- Runs simple (automated) fire behavior analyses.
- Requests an analyst's assistance for fire behavior modeling.
- Creates and edits decisions.
- Assigns incident editors, reviewers, and approvers to the incident.
- Requests decision reviews.
- Closes an incident (incident owner only)

What is required in a WFDSS Decision?

A WFDSS Decision Document is a comprehensive application of risk based assessments, land management direction, and incident specific concerns that create a foundation on which Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Courses of Action and incident Rationale can be cohesively organized to support an incident management decision. A WFDSS Decision Document is composed of eight requirements:

I) A Planning Area

2) A Relative Risk Assessment
3) An Organization Assessment
4) A Decision Approver (Agency Administrator or Approving Official)
5) A Strategic Objective from land management direction (and optimally, incident-specific objectives)
6) An Action Item to be completed on the incident
7) An Estimated Final Cost
8) A Decision Rationale crafted by the Agency Administrator or Approving Official

WFDSS was designed to be a scalable risk assessment and decision document process for any given incident. The requirements listed above consist of the minimum components necessary to publish a Decision. Many incidents will require more assessments and documentation. It is up to the local unit, approving official and interdisciplinary team to determine the appropriate level of documentation for each incident. For additional decision documentation recommendations and example decisions go to the Wildland Fire Management RD&A Website.

When do I Create a Decision?

You must create and publish a decision in the following circumstances:

- The incident has escaped initial attack and is escalating into extended attack or a long-duration event.
- The situation requires a change in the level of oversight, significant changes to resource requirements, or increased costs require escalation to the next level of authority.
- The Incident Objectives include both protection and resource benefit elements consistent with land management planning documents.

What goes into the Creation of a Planning Area?

A Planning Area is an area an Incident Owner or Editor defines on the landscape that includes all the land a fire might burn during the life of the current decision; it includes the area used for analysis and planning to manage the fire. Planning Areas establish an area of interest around an incident and accomplish two things:

- They determine which FMUs/SOs are contained or partially contained by the planning area, and subsequently, which pre-loaded Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements will need to be addressed when developing Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements, and
- They generate a Values Inventory, a list of known values that are located in the Planning Area. These values should be considered and/or addressed when developing a relative risk assessment and Incident Objectives.

Planning Areas are required for documenting a decision and are different from a WFSA boundary or WFIP Maximum Manageable Area, two outdated and no longer used concepts. By limiting the Planning Area to just where you think a fire might go, you are limiting the decision support capability of the application.

How large should a Planning Area be?

Planning Areas need to be large enough to include:

- Where actions are planned (e.g., firelines, evacuation points, protection points.)
- Contingency plans (MAPs.)
- Fire behavior modeling outputs.
- Values you are concerned about.
- Where you want to contain the fire.
- The physical reality of where the fire could burn during the life of the current decision (even if you don't want it to burn there.)

Drawing a large planning area may incorporate more FMUs or Strategic Objectives, which in turn may require you to address more Strategic Objectives, Management Requirements, and values at risk, but if your Planning Area is too small, you will have to create a new decision each time management actions occur outside of it. It's helpful to use an FSPro long term probability output as a general guide when trying to determine an appropriate size; the outputs can help inform you of where the fire may try to move as well. Doing this ensures that the Values at Risk identified by an FSPro output are included in the Values Inventory (a product of the planning area), addressed in the Incident Objectives or Incident Requirements and subsequently through the Course of Action. If your FSPro outputs are larger than your Planning Area, your Planning Area is likely too small.

No ramifications result from drawing a large Planning Area. If you are currently developing Management Action Points or contingency actions outside of your Planning Area, it should be larger to include those areas.

Who is Involved in the Creation of a Planning Area?

When developing a Planning Area for an incident, it is important to include input from various fire managers, agency administrators, and potential resource specialists or other staff. Proper sizing of a Planning Area is important to identify the area of potential incident impact. Local Fire Managers (i.e. Incident I.C., Incident Operations, and Duty Officer) can help identify the area of expected actions, Management Action Point (M.A.P.s), and containment boundaries. In the absence of local guidance, fire behavior modeling outputs can also help inform the creation of a realistic Planning Area.

What goes into the Assessment?

The Assessment tab allows consolidated access to the Relative Risk and Organization Assessments, both required parts of a decision. The customized Risk Tables and Benefits assessments provide an additional level of decision support, as do the Weather, Risk, and Benefits sections of a decision which are accessible when editing decision content. Fire behavior analysis results, such as STFB, NTFB, and FSPro are also a necessary assessment element and if available, can be added to a Decision using the decision editors. Collectively, these assessments frame the risk associated with an incident and help guide development of Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements and an appropriate Course of Action.

NOTE: If using the Default Decision Editor, fire behavior analysis results can be added to a decision on the Risk vertical tab. If the Advanced Decision Editor is used, fire behavior analysis results must be added via the Text Editor, which is accessible when editing a decision.

Using the Assessment tab and Weather, Risk and Benefits vertical tabs, you can add detail to support decision-making and document what was considered in assessing risk: You can:

- View or calculate relative risk
- View the Organization Assessment or assess the organization
- Create customized risk tables from existing tables such as planning area values inventory or those derived from modeling outputs.
- Use the benefits slider to show the amount of benefit expected from a fire and add supporting comments.
- Add fire behavior analysis to support the decision made.
- Add fuels/fire behavior information to support the decision or provide understanding of the situation.
- Document what weather and climatological information were considered.

How do Assessments Inform a Decision?

A risk assessment is the process of identifying values and analyzing the probability that hazards may negatively impact them. WFDSS provides many features that inform this process (Situation Map data layers and fire behavior models for example), but there are also many other valuable resources outside of WFDSS that should be considered such as historic weather, long-term climatological data, fuel moisture data, fuel conditions, fire danger, seasonal severity, and satellite imagery. While initial information may have adequately supported the initial response to the fire, changing conditions and more in-depth analyses may either validate the effectiveness of the initial direction or indicate that a more effective Course of Action exists.

Relative Risk

The Wildland Fire Relative Risk Assessment is required before publishing a decision for an incident. It represents Part B of the Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment (RCA) Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment that was implemented by NWCG in January 2014. The purpose of the Relative Risk Assessment is to assist you in planning for, assessing, and managing your incidents. Incident owners and editors can perform the assessment, which provides the Agency Administrator with a quick but comprehensive assessment of the relative risk of the fire. This is a qualitative process that can be completed in less time than a quantitative long-term risk assessment.

Relative risk is comprised of three aspects that each need to be addressed when calculating the overall risk for an incident. The aspects are:

- Value
- Hazard
- Probability

The Relative Risk Results and notes for each of the aspects appear in the Risk section of the decision. WFDSS will list recommendations for additional assessment, analysis or documentation depending on the result of the Relative Risk assessment.

Organization Assessment

The Organization Assessment (OA), Part C of the Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment (RCA), Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment guides. Agency Administrators in their management organization selection, both in escalating and moderating situations (i.e., this process can be used to go up or down in organizations) and is used for all incident types. The OA can be completed by an incident owner or a user granted incident editing or approving privileges. Relative Risk must be assessed before completing the OA, as its inputs feed directly into the OA. Each of these must be completed before a pending decision can be published.

The Organization Assessment is based on the following elements:

- Relative risk
- Implementation difficulty
- Socio/Political concerns

The final part of the OA displays assessment results and an accompanying bar chart to help inform organization selection. Users choose an organization for an incident and document their reasoning in the Organization Notes text box.

The IMT type needed to manage an incident will change over time but changing levels of complexity does not warrant a new decision if the Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements and Course of Action remain the same. The Relative Risk and OA can be updated as needed and are visible to the approver when completing the periodic assessment.

Fire Behavior Assessment

WFDSS houses four fire behavior tools that can help fire managers assess fire behavior and growth potential for an incident. Each of these tools are used to answer specific fire management questions. In other words, the question being asked dictates which model will provide the best answer. Modeled results inform and support Relative Risk and Organization Assessments, as well as Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements and the Course of Action.

If you are coordinating development of a Decision, you can request fire behavior analysis for an incident directly in WFDSS, contact the local GA Editor for assistance, locate a fire behavior specialist locally, or work directly with the FBAN, LTAN and/or SOPL assigned to the incident. Using the model descriptions and examples below for guidance, determine which tools will best meet the incident's needs based on the types of questions being asked, and then work towards locating an analyst to generate some modeled outputs.

- *Basic Fire Behavior:* provides a very simple way to get 'snapshot in time' fire behavior outputs for every cell of an analysis area. This model is used when there are specific questions about fire behavior potential for an area such as "given today's forecasted winds, how long will flame lengths be and is passive or active crown fire expected?" or "what are fine dead fuel moistures across the analysis area and what effects do these values have on fire behavior?"
- *STFB or Short Term Fire Behavior:* using one set of wind and fuel moisture conditions, it provides potential fire spread (arrival times and major paths) for a user defined length of time, such as a burn period. This model is used to answer questions such as "How far will a fire spread in a 6 hour burn period with steady 15 mph winds?"
- *NTFB or Near Term Fire Behavior:* using weather and wind inputs that change over the duration of a simulation, NTFB models fire growth for up to seven days although it's generally most appropriate for the 'near term' of one to three days. This model can answer questions such as "how far is the fire expected to burn to the east over a three day period given the current weather forecast?"
- *FSPro or Fire Spread Probability:* it is a long term tool that relies on climatological records to produce an ensemble of fire simulations. This ensemble allows you to see the variability as a probabilistic outcome. Use of this program can answer questions such as "What are the chances that the fire will reach Bear Cabin in the next 14 days?"

Who is Involved in the Development of Assessments for an Incident?

When developing Assessments for an incident, it is important to include input from various fire managers, agency administrators, and potential resource specialists or other staff. Informed inputs should be included to provide validity to the assessments. The Values section of the Relative Risk assessment may be best informed by local resource specialists or interdisciplinary team. The Hazard and Probability sections may be best informed by local fire managers, or FBANs, SOPLs and/or LTANs assigned to the incident. The Organizational Assessment inputs may be best informed by agency officials or line officers and fire staffs or duty officers. Often, the Assessment portion of the WFDSS Decision can be informed by the various layers within the Situation Map, the fire behavior analysis, and the weather/fuels assessments.

Individuals assigned the Fire Behavior Specialist role in WFDSS can run the fire behavior models and subsequently develop fire behavior assessments to support a decision. A 7 video series available on YouTube titled *Strategic-Level Risk Assessment for Fire Behavior Specialists* is an excellent resource that provides detailed information on this topic. WFDSS users assigned the role of Fire Behavior Specialist have incident qualifications that include LTANS, GSANs or sometimes FBANS or SOPLS. When these individuals are assigned to an incident, they can help you determine which completed fire behavior analysis results should be added to a Decision as well as determine (and likely provide) other types of information that should be added, either captured within WFDSS or uploaded from outside of WFDSS.

How do I Draft Incident Objectives and/or Incident Requirements?

Writing WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements that are relevant to the incident and relay leader's intent are fundamental to successful wildland fire management, setting the purpose for actions and intended outcomes. Avoid generic statements that could apply anywhere, and write clearly so that Incident Commanders can develop strategies and tactics to achieve the Agency Administrator's intent for managing that incident. Site-specific Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements should tier from the over-arching Land/Resource Management Plan guidance for your unit; which is conveyed in WFDSS through the Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements. When a unit develops clear, specific direction through Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements that stem from the Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements, those managing the fire can, in turn, develop strategies and tactics that are in alignment with planning direction and leader’s intent.

What needs to be done before Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements can be developed?

Before creating Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements, users must draw a Planning Area for the incident. Drawing a Planning Area will determine the land area the fire might impact, and subsequently, which pre-loaded Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements will need to be addressed when you develop the Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements.

The planning process chosen for an administrative unit, FMU Planning or Spatial Fire Planning, determines what Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements will require consideration when developing Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements. Learn more about FMU Planning and Spatial Fire Planning in the topic, Planning Processes available in WFDSS to understand the difference.

What should be addressed in the Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements?

When developing Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements, identify the types of values and/or resources that need to be addressed by doing the following:

- Review the Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements.

- Review the Values Inventory.
- Review the Situation Map (fuels, fire history, values, ground evacuation layer, etc.)
- Obtain local knowledge about values or events.

Who is responsible for creating Incident Objectives and Requirements?

Although Incident Authors, Owners and Editors can enter Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements in WFDSS, it is ultimately the Agency Administrator's responsibility to ensure the WFDSS Decision follows policy and guidance and reflects their intent.

When developing Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements, include input from various resource specialists or other staff. Informed input allows for the creation of better objectives, and can give resource specialists and managers the opportunity to express their concerns and associated mitigations that may be necessary. In the absence of an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists, the Author can utilize the above listed locations to inform Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements. For more information about Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements visit the Wildland Fire Management RD&A website.

Characteristics of Quality Incident Objectives

When developing Incident Objectives, adhere to the following set of characteristics and guidance:

- Does the statement provide clear Leader's Intent? For example, instead of "Protect Bald Eagle habitat", a better objective is, "Protect Bald Eagle habitat north of Rocky Ridge from high-intensity fire that kills overstory trees."
- Is the statement aligned with the Land/Resource Management Plan? For example, instead of "Contain the fire east of Black Swamp Road, south of Catfish Lake Road, and west of Wells Oaks Road" a better objective is, "Protect timber resource east of Wells Oaks Road by avoiding fire in this area, or limiting to low fire intensities if fire unavoidable."
- Are there relatively few Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements? More than five of each is typically difficult to use for informing risk tradeoffs or priorities.
- Do any of the statements conflict? For example, "Control fire at the smallest possible size." is very different from "Keep the fire east of Cold River, south of Granite Lakes, west of Johns Road, and north of Lily Lane." Firing off the whole box could be an acceptable way to meet the second objective, but may not be acceptable for meeting the first objective. Avoiding both these types of objectives is best, focusing instead on describing desired resources to be protected.
- Do the statements help the reader understand the overall sense of priority? For example, instead of "Protect infrastructure from fire" a better objective is, "Utilize point protection and/or tactical firing operations to protect the Wood Cabin, a highly valued resource listed on the National Register of Historic Places."

- Do the statements indicate What, When, Where and Why? For example, "Keep the road open <WHAT>, from the 4356/2234 junction <WHERE>, through Labor Day weekend <WHEN>, to allow public access to this highly valued recreation site <WHY>." Or, "Utilize moderate intensity fire in the Leafy Tree drainage (if protection objectives can be met) to promote aspen regeneration." Or, "Promote natural fire spread in the Aldo Leopold Wilderness as long as outlooks and predictions allow, so that fire can play a natural role."

Avoid developing Incident Objectives that are:

- Generic in nature or have vague terms that have different meaning to individuals. (e.g., keep the fire small)
- Based on unclear priorities that could jeopardize a sound risk management process that may result in needless firefighter exposure.
- In conflict with other sources of direction to include delegation of authority, the briefing package or ad hoc discussions.
- Definitive and without supportive information, such as defining a box without any explanation of why its boundaries are significant. (Why should we keep the fire north of Elliot Highway? Is there a town? Private property?)

For more specific information about writing good Incident Objectives, please read Creating Incident-Specific WFDSS Objectives (October 2015).

Guidance for Developing Quality Incident Requirements

Requirements are written in the same way, but are the "sideboards" that must be adhered to insofar is possible considering this is a wildland fire. They mostly stem from law, policy and NEPA-based guidance that should already be in WFDSS as Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements, but other examples are,

- "Avoid deploying firefighters for any ground-based operations in the Rough Creek drainage due to presence of steep terrain, heavy fuels, and no valuable assets."
- "Avoid retardant in Jenny Lake basin and within 1/4 mile of the Golden River corridor to protect …."
- "Avoid tactical firing and high (>8 feet) fire intensities in the Hamburg Meadow area to protect nesting owls.

What goes into the Incident Strategy and Course of Action?

The purpose of the Course of Action (COA) is to adequately mitigate or control the risk to values to be protected, and identify where fire may contribute to meeting land management objectives in areas where risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level. The COA should clearly reflect the decision maker's intent, be consistent with Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements, be cost effective and

logistically supportable, and have a reasonable probability of success given the fire environment and resource availability.

In WFDSS, the COA is comprised Action Items, and the optional Strategy slider and Management Action Points. Collectively, they describe the selected strategies and management actions intended to achieve the Incident Objectives and comply with Incident Requirements. Based on current and expected conditions, these inputs should answer the question "How are we going to do this?"

Action Items

The Action Items should outline how to adequately mitigate or control the risk to values to be protected. It should also identify areas where fire may contribute to meeting land management objectives and risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level. The COA should express the leader's (Agency Administrators) intent and should be aligned with direction provided in the delegation of authority.

Incident owners or editors create one or more action items intended to accomplish Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements. The COA may change during the life of an incident and action items will require management as some will carry over from decision to decision, some will require updates and some will need to be deactivated/excluded from future decisions.

Strategy

The Strategy slider bar can be used to describe how the incident will be managed on the continuum from Monitor to Suppression. A comment box is provided to document an overarching 'umbrella statement' on the strategy from which subsequent detailed Courses of Action(s) are developed. Use of the slider bar is optional but if used, an image of the slider bar and selected strategy will auto-populate in the Decision.

Who is Involved in the Development of the Course of Action?

The development of an incident Course of Action and Strategy should be heavily supported by Agency Administrator leaders' intent. This established Course/s of Action should also translate directly into the briefing package for incoming Incident Management Teams.

When do I include M.A.P.s?

Management Action Points (M.A.P.s) are clearly specified incident conditions that, when reached, prompt a predefined modification to existing fire management actions, or trigger the implementation of new strategies and/or tactics. M.A.P.s are usually spatial, but can also be temporal or otherwise tied to conditions that cannot be conveyed geographically using points, lines, or polygons. Incident conditions defined by M.A.P.s can be related to fire activity, smoke, weather, fuels, calendar dates, resource availability or an combination of any of these (and other) elements. If the incident conditions defined by the M.A.P. are met, timely implementation is generally critical for successful accomplishment of the incident objectives. The use of M.A.P.s is optional.

Examples of M.A.P.s:

- “If active fire approaches within 100 yards of MAP1 (the Fuego Canyon Road), burn out the grassy vegetation along the roadside. Use engines on standby to suppress any spot fires across the roadway.”
- “If Red Flag winds are forecast and if the fire is not contained, remove all ground forces from the MAP2 polygon. Monitor fire activity from the Red Bear Lookout and, as conditions allow, use aerial resources to pick up any spots across the M.A.P. boundary.”

How do I Estimate Final Cost?

The Estimated Final Cost is a required component of any decision and should be determined when Course of Action (COA) is developed. It may be used to determine the signing authority for an incident (agency dependent) and/or prioritize incidents in a geographic area. See the annual Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations 2012 Red Book for additional Agency-specific information regarding WFDSS signing authority.

A variety of methods can be used to estimate final cost and two are accessible on the Cost tab; the Cost Estimator Spreadsheet and Stratified Cost Index (SCI). You can publish a decision without selecting a cost estimation method, but documenting how an incident's final cost was derived will likely inform future cost estimations. If you choose a method not listed on the Cost tab, select Other and use a decision editor to document the method and your reasoning. You can add supporting text or images to support the method(s) you chose to use.

Who Drafts the Incident Rationale?

Before the WFDSS Decision Document can be sent for Review/Approval, an Incident Rationale must be developed. Decision Rationale should be primarily drafted by the decision Approver, but may require the Author to provide direction, support, and/or resources. Rationale accomplishes three things, it:

- Documents why a specific course of action was chosen,
- Records the risk decision dialog that has occurred among agency administrators and incident managers, and
- Provides the opportunity to tell the "story" of the incident.

Rationale can only be entered using a decision editor, which you can access from the Decisions tab once a pending decision has been created. Supporting text, images, and other information can be added to help relate incident events, if necessary.

Additional content to consider when developing the Rationale:

- What caused incident owners to make this decision?
- What caused incident owners to choose the course of action?
- What are the opportunities to manage the fire to meet land management plan objectives?
- What alternatives (objectives, strategies and tactics) are being considered?
- What is the relative probability of success associated with the alternatives being considered?
- What are the causes and influences on the incident?
- What are the social and political concerns/pressures?
- Who are the stakeholders that should be consulted prior to making a decision?
- What does the Relative Risk tell the user?
- What is the exposure to responders for the alternatives being considered?
- What alternative provides for the best balance between the desired outcome and exposure to responders?
- What are the critical values at risk?
- What is the chance the critical values will be impacted, and if so what are the consequences?
- What are the possible low probability/high consequence events?
- Are there smoke concerns?
- What Fire Behavior Models informed the decision?
- Did you document your qualitative and quantitative decision support elsewhere in the document? If so where?
- How was the estimated final cost constructed?
- What are your concerns related to the cost?
- What are the critical thresholds that will trigger reconsideration of the proposed alternative and how will they be monitored?

How do I Edit Decision Content?

In order to view and/or edit content included in the WFDSS decision, a draft decision must be created via the Decision tab. From the Decision tab, editing a decision can be accomplished using either the Default or Advanced Decision Editor.

- With the Default Decision Editor, editing is accomplished in each individual section and previously uploaded images and content are quickly accessible for insertion. This editing option provides a simplified approach to creating a decision that is intuitive and meets the needs of most incidents, regardless of complexity.
- With the Advanced Decision Editor, editing is accomplished via the Text Editor; content is added from the Incident Content Tree (all incident content) to the Decision Content Tree (current pending decision content). This editor provides advanced editing features not available in the Default Decision Editor, and may be useful for complex decision documents with extensive text and images.

When do I Begin the Review/Approve Process?

Once the minimum requirements of a WFDSS decision have been met, it can be submitted for review/approval. In this process, Incident Reviewers and Approvers can view the decision and perform the appropriate action.

NOTE: Ensure that all optional incident content is completed before submitting a decision for Review/Approval. Once a decision is placed into Review/Approve mode, no decision content can be edited until a Reviewer (if one is assigned) or Approver has rejected the decision. When this occurs,

---

For a decision to be published, the following rules apply:

- Reviewers are optional, and do not have to review a decision before it can be published.
- All Approvers must approve the decision.

If any Reviewer or Approver rejects the decision, the decision is not published and it returns to an editable state. The Incident Owner(s) or Editors must make the necessary changes before resubmitting it.

When is a New Decision Necessary?

The decision approver periodically reassesses the Decision and current fire situation to determine if the approved Course of Action meets and will continue to meet Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements. The length of time before a new decision is needed should be based on predictions or changes in fire activity, and/or obtaining new information that will change the expected outcome of the current decision. As values and risks are identified over time, the fire environment changes or further analysis is completed, mitigations should be identified or other strategies considered to best achieve the Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements. Often this may require identifying a progressively larger Planning Area and revising the Course of Action and Decision multiple times over the life of the incident. This series of decisions is a normal occurrence in the decision making process and should not be viewed as a failure of the earlier versions of the Decision.

Progressive decision making is the continual process of staying ahead of the fire, by anticipating where the incident may burn within the Decision timeframe, prioritizing the values at risk within that timeframe, and making the best decision based on the information available at the time. As the more immediate incident concerns and threats are addressed and mitigated within the current Decision and the fire behavior predictions indicate continued growth, the Planning Area can be expanded to incorporate larger areas in the subsequent decision.