

Lesson 15 –Developing the Course of Action

Estimated time to complete: 45 minutes

In this lesson, you will develop a new Course of Action (COA) for your training incident. You will:

- Document a strategy for your training incident
- Develop action items to support the strategy
- Learn how to edit Action Items.
- Learn how to delete Action Items.

You created a pending decision for your incident in [Lesson 12](#), and will eventually publish the new COA in the completed decision document in [Lesson 19](#). The exercises contained in this lesson provide guidance to help you develop inputs for your training exercise or scenario.

Course of Action (COA)

In incident-level decision making, a Course of Action (COA) is an overall plan that describes the selected strategies and management actions intended to achieve Incident Objectives, comply with Incident Requirements, and are based on current and expected conditions. Ask, “How are we going to do this?” The purpose of the 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 those areas where 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.

In most cases, a planned COA exists for the landscape stemming from the units land and resource management plans. If it has been determined that a WFDSS decision is needed for an incident, move through the tabs in WFDSS to assess the situation, evaluate strategic objectives and management requirements, develop incident objectives and incident requirements, and then develop a new course of action for the incident.

Incident owners or editors create one or more Action Items that accomplish Incident Objectives and Requirements. You can also use the Strategy slider bar to describe how the incident will be managed on the continuum from Monitor to Full 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.

Managing Action Items

When an Action Item is published in a decision for the first time, it becomes activated and is time-stamped with decision's publishing date. Action Items can be reused in or excluded from future decisions. If an Action Item is excluded from a future decision, it is deactivated and is time-stamped with the date the decision is published with the excluded Action Item. Once you've excluded an Action Item and published a decision without it, the system deactivates it and the Action Item is not available for use

in future decisions. If you want to include a deactivated Action Item in a future decision, you must recreate it.

Developing a Course of Action

The Course of Action (COA) tab is where Incident Owners and Editors describe the overall fire management strategy and develop and document one or more Action Items that will accomplish the Incident Objectives and Requirements developed for an incident. The COA should express the leader's (Agency Administrator) intent, and should be aligned with direction provided in the delegation of authority. A COA is a required part of a decision and must contain at least one action item.

On the COA tab, you can:

- Set a Strategy slider bar to describe how the incident will be managed on the continuum from Monitor to Full Suppression (optional, image of slider bar appears in the decision if used).
- Write a comment describing the overall strategy for the incident as described by the slider bar. This content may be thought of as an overarching 'umbrella statement' on the strategy from which subsequent detailed Course(s) of Action are developed (optional).
- Develop and document Action Items to be included in pending decisions and manage Action Items that are included or excluded in previous, current or pending decisions.
- Filter the Action Item list to determine the active status for each or quickly identify which are included or excluded from a pending decision.
- Create a pending decision after you've developed your first Action Item (this option only available if you have not already created a pending decision from the Decisions tab).

Action Items are automatically included in the decision content whereas the strategy slider only appears if you choose to use it. Once a pending decision has been created, you can use the Decision Editor to add, as appropriate, supporting text, map images, analysis outputs or pictures to clarify the COA (decision editors are only accessible after you've created a pending decision).

Strategic Objectives	Incident Objectives	Action Items
<p>Measures for the protection of cultural resources from vandalism & natural destruction will include regular inspection and, where necessary, electronic monitoring.</p> <p>Allow fire to play a natural role in Wilderness.</p>	<p>Utilize MIST tactics on all parts of the District including Sandia Wilderness to reduce suppression-related impacts to ruins and cultural resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor fire and personnel activities around ruins to assess and document potential damage to cultural resources. • Utilize trail systems, changes in vegetation, and natural barriers where possible. • Monitor location of all active flanks of the fire, in and around the archaeological sites.

Strategic Objectives	Incident Objectives	Action Items
Protect public & private facilities to prevent loss through wildfire.	Prevent loss and damage to all private and public facilities within and near the fire area that include the Visitor’s Center and Cedro Campground.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect structures, modify & improve fuel breaks & roads in preparation for the fire leaving the military withdrawal area. • Monitor incident from aircraft to determine timing and need for structure protection.
Management Requirements	Incident Requirements	Action Items
Mechanical equipment in Wilderness must be authorized prior to use.	Get approval from District Ranger before using mechanical equipment in Sandia Wilderness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a qualified field Resource Advisor to monitor mechanized equipment use and oversee rehab needs.
Limit access to military withdrawal area to existing maintained roads.	To reduce risk to firefighters, do not leave maintained road system (roads 22, 41, and 44) in the withdrawal area	
Air quality and smoke management requirements and reporting procedures will be met.	Smoke management & air quality requirements & reporting procedures for Bernalillo County & NMED will be followed, and are found in the <i>Southwest Region Smoke Reporting Guide</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up smoke monitoring station in Tijeras. • Appoint advisor to NMED and coordinate with NMED daily.

Examples of Objectives and Requirements and associated Action Items

Note how the Action Items, Incident Objectives/Requirements, and Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements relate to one another.

If the planning area is modified or new Incident Objectives and Requirements are added to a pending decision, the proposed COA should be modified, as needed, to ensure it still accomplishes Incident Objectives and Requirements. A new COA, and a new decision, is warranted if the current, published COA no longer accomplishes Incident Objectives and Requirements.

Estimating Final Cost

On the Costs tab, Incident Owners and/or Editors can:

- Document the estimated final cost for an incident,
- Document the Cost Estimation Method used,
- Add comments about incident cost, and
- Create/Edit and Accept/Copy/Delete SCI runs.

The Estimated Final Cost is a required component of any decision and may be used to determine the signing authority for an incident. The [2015 Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations](#) contains additional Agency-specific information regarding WFDSS.

To estimate a final cost for your incident, you can use:

- The cost estimate spreadsheet (available for download on the COA tab and from WFDSS Home > Related Resources > Tools)
- Stratified Cost Index
- Historic costs for incidents of similar size and complexity
- ICARS Projections
- Spreadsheets
- Other methods

You can publish a decision without selecting a cost estimation method. If you choose a method not listed on the Costs tab, document the method and reasoning in the Cost Comment text box. You can also use a decision editor to add supporting text or images if you choose.

To document an Estimated Final Cost for an incident:

1. From the Incident List, select the incident that you would like to document the Estimated Cost for.
2. Click **View Information**. The Incident Information page appears.
3. Click the **Costs** tab.
4. Develop an Estimated Final Cost using a method listed, or one of your choosing. The Cost Estimation spreadsheet may be a good method for this particular exercise.
5. Enter the **Estimated Final Cost**.
6. Select the **Cost Estimation Method** used to determine the Estimated Cost for the COA. If the method isn't listed, select **Other**. (If you selected **Other**, you would describe the method used in the COA section of the decision using the Decision Editor. This will be covered in Lesson 18.)
7. Add Cost Comments if you choose.

Editing an Action Item

Incident Owners and Editors can edit Action Items until a pending decision has been submitted for review. Submitting a pending decision for review locks the decision content to prevent further editing. Once published in a decision, Action Items cannot be edited and can only be excluded from a pending decision.

To edit an Action Item:

1. From the Incident list, select the incident you want to edit Action Items for.

2. Click View Information. The Edit Incident page appears.
3. Select the Course of Action tab. The Course of Action page appears with a list of Action Items near the bottom of the page.
4. Select the Action Item you want to edit.
5. Click Edit. The Edit Action item page appears.
6. Edit the Action Item. Be as specific as possible. Remember, this information will appear in the published decision and will guide the actions of incident management teams and resources assigned to the fire.
7. Click Save.

Deleting an Action Item

Incident Owners and Editors can delete Action Items that have not been included in a published decision.

To delete an Action Item:

1. From the Incident list, select the incident you want to delete Action Items for.
2. Click **View Information**. The Edit Incident page appears.
3. Select **Course of Action**. The Course of Action page appears with a list of Action Items.
4. Select the Action Item you want to delete.
5. Click **Delete**.
6. When asked if you are sure you want to delete the Action Item, click **OK**. The Action Item has been removed from the list.

Search for these related topics in the help:

- [Course of Action](#)
- [Developing a Course of Action](#)
- [Deleting Action Items](#)
- [Adding Text to a Decision](#)
- [Adding an Image to a Decision](#)
- [Adding Incident Content to a Decision](#)
- [Estimating Cost for a Course of Action](#)