

Northeastern Wildfire Risk Assessment

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Description: Each year, an average of 15,700 wildfires burn more than 175,000 acres of forest and grasslands in Northeastern and Midwestern States. With projected increases in population, extensive land use change, declining State budgets, and expected climate changes, wildland fire programs must continue to operate strategically and efficiently. A baseline geospatial assessment of fire risk is being developed. This identification of fire-prone areas will offer a critical decision support tool for Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry (NASPF), State Forestry agencies, and Federal land managers in the Northeast and Midwest. It will identify wildland-urban interface areas and communities at risk from wildfire, which will help managers develop effective fire suppression strategies.

Key Issues:

- Identify fire-prone areas in the Northeast and Midwest.
- Identify areas in each State where hazard mitigation practices would most effectively reduce fire risk.
- Identify and prioritize communities at risk from wildfire.
- Focus resources in the areas of greatest need within each State.

Accomplishments: A Steering Committee representing States in the compact areas; the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, Northern Research Station, and Region 9; Department of the Interior agencies; and The Nature Conservancy collaborated on project development. The group set project objectives and scope, determined an assessment methodology, and completed a needs assessment for State-level maps of communities at risk. The committee decided on a two-tiered assessment at the NASPF level and the State level.

A Geospatial Work Group (GWG) was convened in April 2009 to review data for the draft NASPF-wide and State assessment models. Participants included representatives from the Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources; the Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Compact; The Nature Conservancy; and the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station, Region 9 National Forest System, and Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry. The GWG reviewed data elements, reclassified selected data sets, and tested various scenarios to develop the NASPF-wide assessment model. The assessment product for Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry has been completed.

Future Direction: The Steering Committee will reconvene in 2010 to begin working on the second phase of the project—the development of a State wildfire risk assessment model. The state-level assessment products can be used for planning prevention and mitigation efforts, planning fire response, assessing preparedness, identifying hazards and communities at risk, and informing state-level plans.

Kathryn Maloney, Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
610-557-4103 (4177-FAX)
kmaloney@fs.fed.us

Billy Terry, Assistant Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
(610) 557-4145 (4154-FAX)
bterry@fs.fed.us

Maureen Brooks, Community Fire
Planner
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
(610) 557-4146 (4154-FAX)
mtbrooks@fs.fed.us



<http://www.na.fs.fed.us>

04/05/2010