

# Lake States Fire Science Consortium

## A JFSP Collaborative Project

### Operating Guidelines and Governance

#### I. MISSION

The mission of the Lake States Fire Science Consortium (hereafter Consortium) is to accelerate the awareness, understanding, and adoption of wildland fire science information by federal, tribal, state, local, and private stakeholders in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

#### II. VISION & VALUES

The Consortium's vision is to provide the "best available" information on fire and fuels for a variety of audiences. The Consortium aims to link managers, scientists, policymakers, and disciplines by providing information and tools to support management of fire-dependent ecosystems in the Lake States region.

We subscribe to the set of core values outlined by the Joint Fire Science (JFSP) Governing Board when establishing the regional fire science networks or consortia. These include:

- 1) Being **inclusive**, striving to make sure that all relevant partners have the opportunity to be involved.
- 2) Serving as **neutral** science partners, not as an advocate for a certain type of management.
- 3) Ensuring activities are **end-user driven**, both in how they are structured and how they function.
- 4) Operating **collaboratively**, working to foster joint management and science communication.
- 5) Striving to be **innovative**, pursuing new and creative ways to disseminate knowledge.
- 6) Working to **facilitate** the flow of fire science information, the dialogue of new science findings, and the needs of resource managers and policymakers.

The guidelines outlined in this document are designed to promote sound management practices in all Consortium activities. It is designed to ensure that all user groups are represented in Consortium governance, and that Consortium operations are in accordance with national JFSP principles.

#### III. FUNDING

Funding for the Consortium is provided by the JFSP through the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 3). These funds are allocated via Cooperative Agreements to the other lead organizations, including The Ohio State University, Seney National Wildlife Refuge, and US Forest Service.

#### IV. REVISIONS TO OPERATING GUIDELINES & GOVERNANCE

This document is intended to help guide the Consortium. It is intended to be a "living" document, one that can be updated from time to time, and as needed. It is anticipated that the guidelines will be reviewed on annual basis and changes will be made to improve the

effectiveness and performance of the Consortium. Any changes to this document must be approved by a consensus vote of the Administrative Committee (see Section V).

## **V. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

### **A. Administrative Committee**

The Project Principal Investigators (PIs) form the Administrative Committee and are responsible for Consortium planning, implementation, effectiveness monitoring and reporting, and communication and coordination with target groups. The lead PI will serve as the chair of the Administrative Committee and act as Program Director.

### **B. Advisory Committee**

The Administrative Committee is guided by an Advisory Committee, which consists of senior personnel from resource management agencies, organizations, and universities. The Advisory Committee represents practitioner needs and the interests of Consortium members. The Advisory Committee will assist the Consortium with information dissemination within their own organizations and advise the Administrative Committee on Consortium direction and activities.

The Advisory Committee will be composed of representatives nominated by the following organizations: US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), US Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MIDNR), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR), Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR), State Departments of Military Affairs (MA), Tribal Nations, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Advisory Board members will serve an initial two-year term, with the possibility of being nominated by their respective organization for additional two-year terms of service. The Program Director will serve as the chair of the Advisory Committee.

### **C. Ad-hoc Committees**

The Administrative and Advisory Committees may establish ad-hoc committees to assist the Committees with specific activities related to the Consortium. Each ad-hoc committee should include at least one Administrative or Advisory Committee member, or the Program Manager, and will appoint its own chair.

### **D. Operating Procedures**

The Administrative Committee will communicate once a month or as needed for progress updates and decisions needed on Consortium activities. These meetings can occur in person, via the web, or through other electronic means of communication (e.g., email). Decisions will be made based on group consensus. The Advisory Committee will meet at least quarterly and a summary of these meetings communicated with the Administrative Committee following each Advisory Committee meeting by the Program Manager. At least one Advisory Committee meeting will be held jointly with Administrative Committee members.

### **E. Changes to Committees**

The addition or removal of Administrative Committee members, or changes in leadership roles, may be made with a consensus of the Administrative Committee. Advisory Committee members may be added or removed with a consensus vote by the Administrative Committee at the recommendation of the Advisory Committee.

### **F. Consortium Staff**

The members of the Administrative and Advisory Committees are non-Consortium funded positions, and are supported by their respective organizations.

The primary Consortium-funded position is the **Program Manager** who is responsible for coordinating the efforts the Consortium including: the creation and maintenance of a database of resource managers and researchers; development and promotion of experiential learning opportunities; preparation of research summaries, presentations, fact sheets that can be used in a variety of science delivery mechanisms; preparation and distribution of a monthly newsletter outlining Consortium activities; and preparation of quarterly and annual reports. The Program Manager reports to the Program Director and serves as a liaison between the end users and Consortium partners. The Program Manager participates in Administrative and Advisory Committee meetings, and coordinates both Administrative and Advisory Committee meetings.

Other Consortium-funded staff can be supported at the discretion of the Administrative Board depending of funding availability, including post-doctoral researchers, graduate students, research and technical associates, undergraduate students, and interns. Specific duties and reporting requirements of each position will be determined by the Administrative Committee.

## **VI. PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

### **A. Consortium Partners**

**Land management agencies (USFWS, USFS, NPS, BIA, state natural resource agencies, tribal nations)** set the agenda for the Consortium. They are engaged with the Consortium in on-going definition of their technical assistance needs and priorities. In collaboration with technical experts, the land management partners will apply and test scientific information when implementing land management activities and use adaptive management to reach land management objectives. They will contribute to developing syntheses of scientific and agency information, developing and maintaining a network of internal and external experts, and co-hosting field workshops and other science delivery activities.

**Research agencies (USFS) and universities** in the Lake States have numerous experts in fire science and related fields. The Consortium will draw from this pool to synthesize existing information around priority issues, populate cadres of managers and scientists, develop field workshops, and participate in other science delivery activities. These organizations, in conjunction with The Ohio State University, will work together to develop web-based training on focal fire science issues.

**Cooperative Extension Programs associated with land-grant universities (Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, and University of Wisconsin)** have community-based educators who produce and disseminate some fire science information. Because they collaborate with research scientists, end users of research products and the public, extension educators can help provide a bridge between researchers and science users. The Consortium will work to coordinate with existing extension programs in the Lake States to help ensure that science delivery activities and products are made available to staff in federal and state agencies, NGOs and the public through this traditional conduit of technology transfer in each state.

**Regional Research and Management Projects (e.g., USFWS Landscape Conservation Cooperatives)** develop information and provide syntheses, research applications and outreach activities closely related to fire management interests and issues. The Consortium will collaborate with each of these projects to leverage opportunities for science delivery and to enhance management applications for a variety of co-relevant topics.

## **B. End-user Communities**

The primary intended beneficiaries of the Consortium are those groups and individuals that are responsible for managing and restoring fire-dependent forest ecosystem types in the Lake States. This includes those individuals that set fire policy (policymakers), those that implement policy (managers), and those who are affected by and seek to influence policy (the general public and many NGOs). We also seek to be a resource for both industry and private forest land owners in the region. Through past communication with representatives of these groups several points were consistently raised. First, it is clear that many of the individuals associated with these organizations do not have the time or expertise to gather and interpret scientific research. The Consortium will function in this role, as a means to analyze, synthesize, and disseminate technical information related to fire ecology, fuel treatments, and fire-use policy. Second, many individuals indicated that they had no say in the process of determining what type of information was gathered and how it was interpreted, or the opportunity to provide feedback to those collecting the information. In order for this exchange of information to be successful, the Consortium will provide a participatory and interactive structure to facilitate this exchange. Finally, individuals from across the region indicated their awareness of fuels management and forest restoration practices were largely limited to their own agency; very few indicated an understanding of related efforts of other organizations. The Consortium will provide a forum that will help foster collaboration and encourage interagency communication.

## **VII. REPORTING**

Several types of activity and progress reports will be prepared to ensure all parties are aware of Consortium activities.

### **A. Annual Progress Reports**

The Consortium will submit an annual progress report to JFSP no later than June 1 that summarizes progress, planned activities, issues/concerns, and opportunities for new research or science delivery applications. The report is intended for general circulation and is posted on the

Consortium website. This report will also serve as an annual report to the USFWS, the primary federal cooperator affiliated with the Consortium (see section III).

**B. Quarterly Activity Updates**

An abbreviated summary of Consortium activities and progress in the form of email updates will be sent to Consortium members at least bi-annually.

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