

International Cooperation as a Key Strategy to Address Increased Difficulty in Managing Wildfire

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Abstract

Fire and land management is being increasingly challenged around the world by a changing wildland fire environment. The reasons for this include increasing wildland fuel loads under previous fire exclusion policy, expanding wildland-urban interface, increasing human-caused fires as population increases with greater access to wilderness areas, and climate change-altered fire regimes that are characterized by longer fire seasons, higher fire intensities, greater severity of fire impacts, and increased lightning fires.

Every other year the Forest Fire Management Group (FFMG) of Australia and New Zealand and the North American Forest Commission-Fire Management Working Group (NAFC-FMWG) participate in a study tour of each other's fire management and research agencies. Most recently, the NAFC-FMWG participated in a study tour of Australia and New Zealand. In May 2014 an International Symposium on bushfire management was held in Canberra, Australia to facilitate participation by the study tour members. The FFMG convened the symposium bringing together senior bushfire managers and researchers from the USA, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand and Australia. The symposium focused on the current state of knowledge, both scientifically and operationally, the identification of emerging issues in bushfire management, as well as ensuring the development of bushfire management networks on a global basis, and to identify areas for improvement and collaborative research and development interests. The North America study tour group recommended such symposiums continue in a similar format in the future.

The NAFC-FMWG has recently developed a draft International Fire Strategy to promote increased international fire management cooperation and technology transfer in the Americas and globally. The objective is to support enhanced international cooperation in training, information and resource-sharing, and science and technology; and to build high-level support by senior decision-makers through fire management strategy and policy development to maintain long-term program continuity.

Increased international collaboration within North America continues to be the priority of the NAFC-FMWG, as well as increased international cooperation within the Americas and globally. Both of these priorities will be supported through development of the new NAFC-FMWG International Fire Strategy, resulting in greater collaboration in training, science and technology exchange, and information and resource-sharing.

Key words: *Wildfire, North American Forest Commission – Fire Management Working Group, Forest Fire Management Group, International Fire Strategy*