



# Wildland Fire Management Strategic Plan

2008-2012



*The National Park Service manages wildland fire to protect the public, communities and infrastructure, conserve natural and cultural resources, and restore and maintain ecological health.*

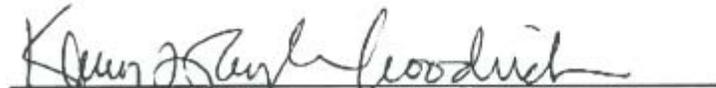
*Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota*

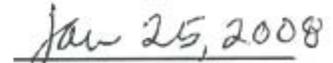
## Signature Page

*Approved By:*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Division of Fire and Aviation

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Executive Summary**

Responding to and managing wildland fire in today's environment requires a significant change in many aspects from the traditional approach of the National Park Service (NPS) and our partner agencies. The present environment, which includes hotter, drier, and longer fire seasons; along with poor ecosystem health and an increasing number of homes in the interface, has resulted in the need to re-evaluate our wildland fire management options and business practices. We cannot continue to do business today as we have done in the past.

This plan represents input from all levels and disciplines within the NPS wildland fire program, from parks to the national office, as well as the NPS natural resources program and our interagency partners. The format used identifies the relationship between goals, objectives, critical success factors, barriers and strategies. Action plans will be developed and updated on an annual basis to carryout strategies that support the objectives.

This strategic plan will be reviewed each year to validate its goals and strategies. At that time, revisions may be made to keep the strategic intent current and in line with program direction. The purpose of the annual review is to continue to ensure that this document provides current national strategic direction for the NPS wildland fire program.

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# National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Strategic Plan

Version 3.0

## Introduction

The *2008-2012 National Park Service (NPS) Wildland Fire Management Strategic Plan* is a revision of the *2003-2008 NPS Wildland Fire Management Strategic Plan*. The strategic plan was revised by the Division of Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) in conjunction with the NPS Fire Management Leadership Board (FMLB). This document reflects not only NPS mandates, policies and regulations, but also interagency and interdepartmental collaborations. The Federal Fire Policy, National Fire Plan, A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment - *10-year Strategy Implementation Plan*, U.S. Department of the Interior Strategic Plan, and the NPS Strategic Plan, provide overall policy and strategic direction for the wildland fire program.



Acadia National Park, Maine

The NPS Wildland Fire Management Program is organized within the Division of Fire and Aviation Management. The Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection, oversees FAM. The division staff is primarily based at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), Boise, Idaho. This staff provides national direction and support to the NPS Wildland Fire, Aviation Management and Structural Fire Protection programs. The co-location with other state and federal fire program cooperators provides an excellent opportunity for interagency communication and collaboration.

The Chief, Division of Fire and Aviation commissioned the Fire Management Leadership Board (FMLB) to provide leadership for the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management program through strategic planning and by providing expertise and consultation in wildland fire management to national, regional and park management. The board is comprised of the NPS National Fire Director, national fire program leaders for Operations, Science and Ecology, and Program Planning, and the regional fire management officers.

## Purpose

This plan is intended to establish key strategies that should be applied at all levels of the NPS Wildland Fire Management Program to achieve critical management objectives in support of the mission. The strategies should be reflected in fire management plan updates and annual work plans in order to provide a common focus for NPS wildland fire programs. This common focus will help guide budget initiatives and priorities to make future programs more efficient and effective. The strategic plan should also be used to guide interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration efforts, and guide program analyses linking landscape-scale planning, budget and

performance measures. Implementing this strategic plan will position the NPS to successfully respond to increasing fiscal and performance accountability.

## Process

The revision to the strategic plan used a collaborative process that included Division of FAM program staff, regional fire management officers, input from the National Park Service 2006 Wildland Fire Workshop, and input from NPS Division of Natural Resources. The format, relationship and strategic planning definitions used to facilitate the development of this plan are described in Figure 1.

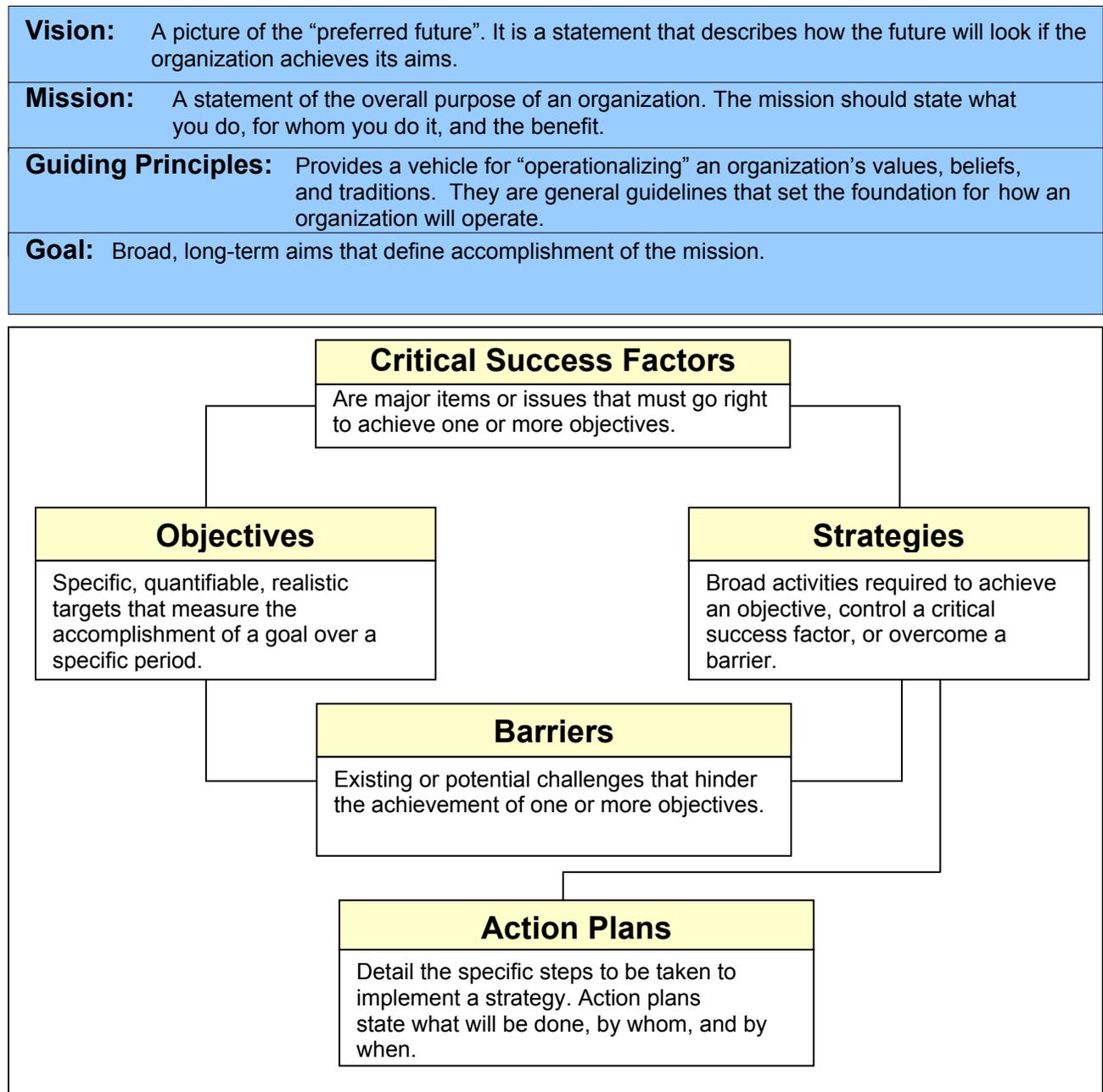


Figure 1: Format, relationship and definitions for strategic planning process.

## Vision

Park resources and values are preserved, protected, and enhanced through the appropriate response to wildland fire and application of fuels treatments.

## Mission

The National Park Service manages wildland fire to protect the public, communities and infrastructure, conserve natural and cultural resources, and restore and maintain ecological health.



*Natchez Trace Parkway,  
Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee*

## Guiding Principles

**Safety:** Safety is our core value; therefore firefighter and public safety is the first priority in all wildland fire management activities.

**Leadership:** Excellence in leadership is required at all levels for effective wildland fire management; therefore we provide, develop and encourage leadership throughout the National Park Service.

**Cooperation:** Cooperation is essential to the effective and efficient use of fire management resources; therefore we promote relationships with all NPS disciplines and interagency partners.

**Science Based:** The best fire programs are based on sound science; therefore we promote research and incorporate scientific findings into all aspects of our fire management programs.

**Progressive:** Progressive fire management seeks excellence and is innovative; therefore we utilize adaptive management to improve and refine the wildland fire program.

**Communication:** Open and honest communications is critical to the success of our people, programs and organizations: therefore we provide an inclusive environment that is open to new ideas, constructive debate, and collaborative decision making.

**Accountability:** Wise and cost effective use of appropriated funds and resources; therefore we make decisions and manage allocations to support the wildland fire mission and goals.

**Tradition:** The fire program is based on the NPS Mission of stewardship; therefore we base our actions on protecting, restoring, and maintaining park values.

## **Goal 1 – Protect Values Through Effective Risk Management**

Protect life, communities and resources from adverse effects of wildland fire without compromising safety.

### **Objectives**

1. Improve safety, cost effectiveness, and efficiency through adequate staffing, equipment, and appropriate response to wildland fire.
2. Implement emergency stabilization and burned area rehabilitation in a timely manner to prevent further resource degradation and promote recovery.
3. Enhance wildland fire safety through development of and compliance with interagency, departmental and service-wide policies, guidelines and best management practices.
4. Promote a culture that emphasizes safety awareness.
5. Develop the appropriate response to wildland fire to reduce the risk of wildland fire to communities and resources.



*Pea Ridge National Military Park, Arkansas*

### **Critical Success Factors**

1. Knowledge of policy and standard operating practices
2. Know level of risk, location of risk, and values to be protected
3. Agency administrator support for high risk decisions
4. Adequate staffing and equipment (including militia)
5. Educating park staff and stakeholders on the need to have fuel reduction projects
6. Culture where questions can be asked and there can be refusals to do perceived unsafe things
7. Accurate, accessible safety reporting program

### **Barriers**

1. Numerous and diverse opinions by stakeholders
2. Lack of process and incentives for Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)
3. Shortage of resource management staff to participate in Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) planning
4. Limited integration between NPS and interagency wildland fire safety programs
5. Insufficient safety leadership from line officers

## Strategies

1. Clarify and communicate management options and actions related to the response to wildland fire.
2. Within each NPS unit, establish the relative importance and location of values to be protected and use these in analyses to evaluate safe and cost-effective response to wildland fire. This strategy includes the evaluation and implementation of adequate staffing and resources to provide protection of values.
3. Develop strategies to enhance safety in wildland fire management policies, guidance and action plans. This strategy includes promoting safety through leadership and management practices such as the use of existing safety reporting systems.
4. Review the response to wildland fire for lessons learned and develop improvements to program management.
5. Expand the knowledge base of park managers to assess post-fire threats.
6. Participate in collaborative efforts to enhance community protection through community planning, and hazardous fuels mitigation.

## Goal 2 – Restore and Maintain Fire-adapted Ecosystems

Maintain and restore fire adapted ecosystems using appropriate tools and techniques in a manner that will provide sustainable, environmental and social benefits.

### Objectives

1. Achieve resource objectives and desired conditions by restoring and maintaining fire's appropriate role in ecosystems.
2. Balance ecosystem restoration and maintenance goals with park protection and visitor use goals to establish desired conditions that are achievable.
3. Reduce risk of wildland fire to communities and resources through hazardous fuel treatments.
4. Develop the appropriate response to wildland fire to achieve ecosystem restoration and reduce the risk of wildland fire to communities and resources.



*Dinosaur National Monument,  
Colorado, Utah*

### Critical Success Factors

1. Must identify desired condition
2. Have an approved Fire Management Plan (FMP)
3. Support and involvement from all park programs/management
4. Sufficient resource and staff capacity and capability to implement program defined in FMPs

5. Sharing of fire management resources within the National Park Service and other agencies to support use of wildland fire.
6. Knowledge and support of the appropriate response to wildland fire by NPS agency administrators, fire management personnel and other NPS employees.

## Barriers

1. Lack of integrated resource and fire management planning
2. Air quality regulations
3. Delays in the endangered species consultation process, i.e. Title 7 process
4. Inconsistent interpretation, process, and expense related to Cultural Resource compliance including State Historical Preservation Office's (SHPOs)
5. Difference in policies and priorities across jurisdictional boundaries

## Strategies

1. Develop and implement fire management plans that establish proactive, sustainable long-term management strategies.
2. Develop and implement an adaptive management process to evaluate fire management activities for improvement.
3. Develop in each NPS unit where appropriate, a sustainable strategy for restoring or maintaining desired conditions. This strategy should include monitoring movement towards and maintenance of the desired ecosystem condition.
4. Develop and implement opportunities to include restoration and maintenance of fire adaptive ecosystems in collaborative community planning.
5. Review and communicate compliance requirements for wildland fire management.

## Goal 3 – Science Based Management

General and park-specific science and research guides the wildland fire program.

### Objectives

1. Incorporate the best available research and scientific findings into NPS fire management programs.
2. Use the best available technologies and practices to support NPS fire management programs
3. Meet program management and reporting needs through data collection, management and accessibility to accurate data.



Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks,  
California

## **Critical Success Factors**

1. Data standards, data integration and data archival is identified, maintained and accessible
2. Successful interpretation of the data for incorporation into programs
3. Access to appropriate technical skills
4. Engagement in the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) process to propose, review and assure NPS opportunities
5. Encourage and seek research/management partnerships
6. Assure synthesis and distribution of fire science
7. Desired conditions are identified for all park fire adapted ecosystems.
8. Identify knowledge gaps and address through targeted research.

## **Barriers**

1. Limited staffing and non-prioritized demands by the organization
2. Overwhelming number of technological systems and models, and lack of coordination and integration
3. Lack of understanding of why we need the science
4. Low priority of science related programs such as research, fire effects monitoring, etc.

## **Strategies**

1. Increase the collaboration with Resource Management to develop a common understanding of terms, identify resource goals, research needs and objectives related to wildland fire management.
2. Assure fire effects monitoring and data analysis support adaptive feedback on resources management goals and objectives relating to wildland fire.
3. Identify and document desired conditions for ecosystems in fire management plans that are tied to land and resource management objectives.
4. Use scientific data, modeling and best technology to increase the probability that programs will achieve desired outcomes
5. Educate agency administrators to apply the best available science in fire planning and analysis for improved decision making.
6. Participate in the development of scientific research and interagency monitoring standards.
7. Identify, establish, and recruit for technology support positions.

## **Goal 4 – Integrate Wildland Fire With Other NPS Programs**

Fire management programs are responsive to Service-wide and park priorities and are integrated with other NPS programs.

### **Objectives**

1. Improve efficiencies and develop synergy through collaboration with appropriate NPS programs.
2. Improve the understanding between Service-wide and park fire management programs.
3. Effectively accomplish core NPS program elements through prioritization and support from the wildland fire program.
4. Have an effective, efficient and accountable fire program that supports Park and Service-wide program priorities.



*Noatak National Preserve, Alaska*

### **Critical Success Factors**

1. Fire programs are integrated into main park operations and planning.
2. Employees from other division are involved and competent in the full spectrum of fire management, consistent with skills and abilities
3. Support from management to foster collaborative environment between NPS programs
4. Thorough understanding of fire business and planning priorities throughout the NPS organization
5. Core program elements are identified, prioritized and adhered to.

### **Barriers**

1. Demands of specialized skills in the non-fire workforce preclude development of fire skills
2. Increasing fire skill requirements are difficult for NPS staff to achieve
3. Non-productive or misallocated programs
4. Lack of formalized process to set fire's priorities

### **Strategies**

1. Program reviews are used to assess the success of integration into other NPS programs.
2. Identify and implement opportunities for Fire Management to participate in other Park activities.
3. Develop and provide opportunities and incentives to involve other NPS disciplines in wildland fire management.

## **Goal 5 – External Audiences Understand and Support Wildland Fire Programs**

NPS fire management will communicate and coordinate with interagency organizations and other stake-holders to pursue common goals, programs and projects.

### **Objectives**

1. Have an NPS fire management program that clearly defines responsibilities and contributions of cooperators and partners to meet wildland fire program needs.
2. Have a fire management planning process that includes collaboration and input from stakeholders.
3. Have a communication strategy that includes collaboration and input from stakeholders.
4. NPS fire management will promote stakeholder participation in projects and activities to meet wildland fire program goals and priorities.



*Crater Lake National Park,  
Oregon*

### **Critical Success Factors**

1. Wildland fire personnel form partnerships and work with cooperators
2. Stakeholders understand and support wildland fire efforts
3. Contracting staff and solicitor's office are available to complete agreements

### **Barriers**

1. Unclear NPS fair share contribution and responsibilities
2. Dependence of NPS in some areas on other agencies to provide critical services – infrastructure support that should be provided by NPS
3. Inconsistent formulas and process for cooperative sharing
4. History, interaction and personalities of involved parties

### **Strategies**

1. Support continued participation and collaboration with the interagency community to select wildland-urban interface (WUI) treatments and activities and support to communities.
2. Improve the collaborative review process for fire management plan (FMP) updates.
3. Expand internal and external support, understanding, collaboration, and participation to support management decisions.
4. Improve stakeholder participation in local, regional, and interagency workshops to quantify resource goals by park and/or by ecosystem.

5. Develop and implement safe and appropriate opportunities for visitors to understand fire management through observations, communication and education.
6. Revise and implement a process to improve relationships with contracting and solicitor for agreement development and maintenance.
7. Review all NPS fair share agreements and requests to establish and implement the appropriate NPS level of involvement and funding.

## **Goal 6 – Build and Promote Organizational Effectiveness**

Fire management programs achieve desired outcomes by building program capacity, leadership and effective management.

### **Objectives**

1. Promote effective leadership and management practices to achieve the wildland fire mission.
2. Have an effective and efficient budget formulation and allocation process that supports wildland fire program needs.
3. Have program capacity that meets organizational needs through the development of a competent, qualified, and motivated workforce
4. Establish park superintendent advocacy network to support the long-term success of an integrated fire management strategy.



*Team-building exercise.  
Fire Management Program Center, Idaho*

### **Critical Success Factors**

1. Capacity to provide training and mentoring
2. Clearly defined qualifications
3. Mentoring opportunities are available
4. Career ladders to meet organizational needs
5. Workforce that reflects the population in the area of the parks
6. Ability to recruit, retain qualified and diverse workforce
7. NPS is fully engaged in the revision of budget formulation process and the DOI budget formulation and allocation

### **Barriers**

1. Parallel and incompatible financial systems between the NPS and Fire Management and between the departments within fire management.
2. Stable or declining budgets
3. Potential lack of leadership due to position reductions

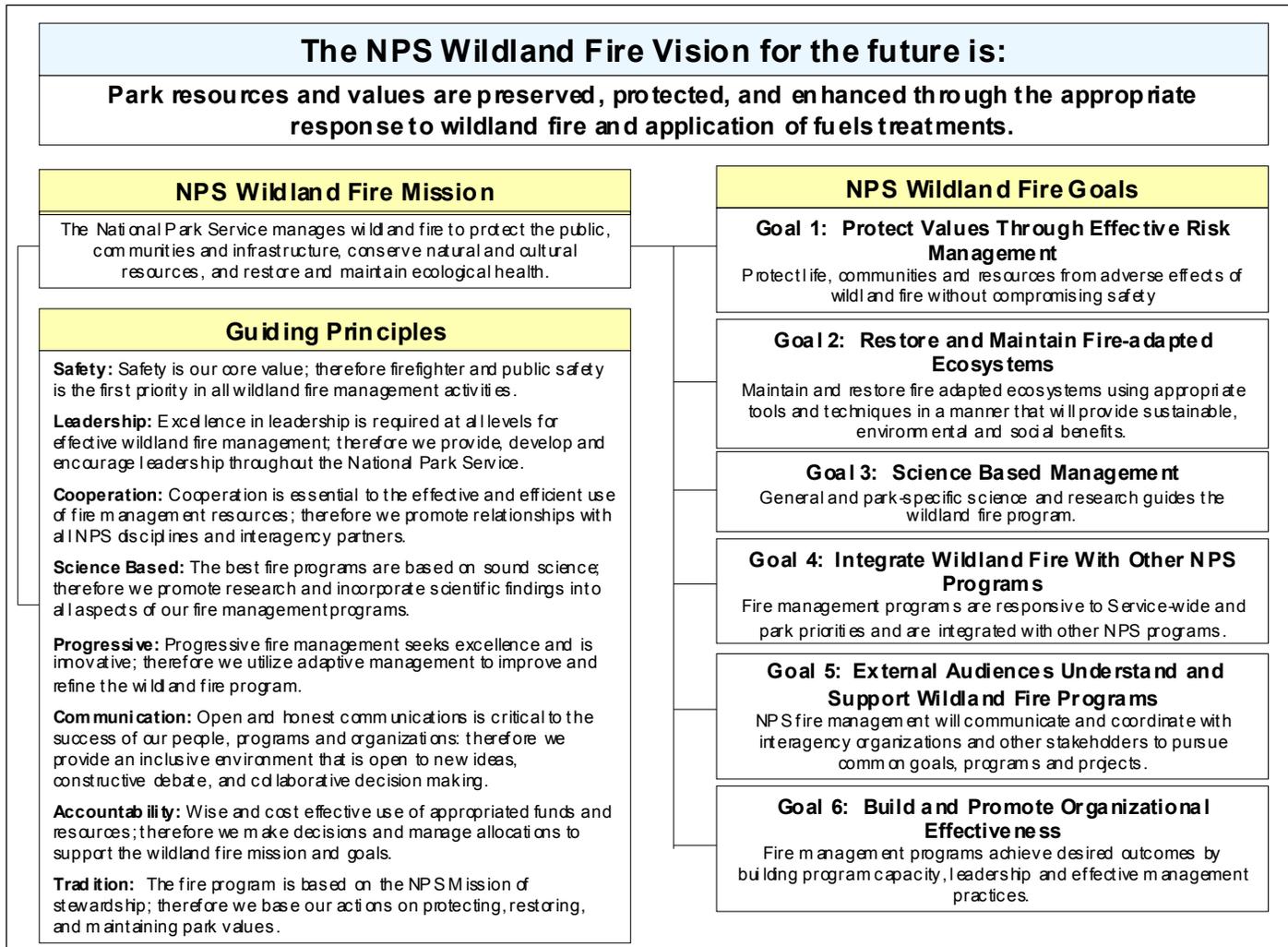
4. Insufficient line officer support
5. Complex requirements and rules – little incentive to do it right.
6. Lack of updated comprehensive training for fiscal systems
7. Lack of engagement and understanding of the budget process by the FMOs (lack of budgeting skills).
8. No current budget analysis model
9. Travel caps
10. Lack of mid-level management and career ladders
11. No capacity to implement FPA at the FPU level
12. Lack of information about ethnic and gender makeup of NPS fire workforce.
13. Fire Management Elitism – Specialization – cross function coordination.

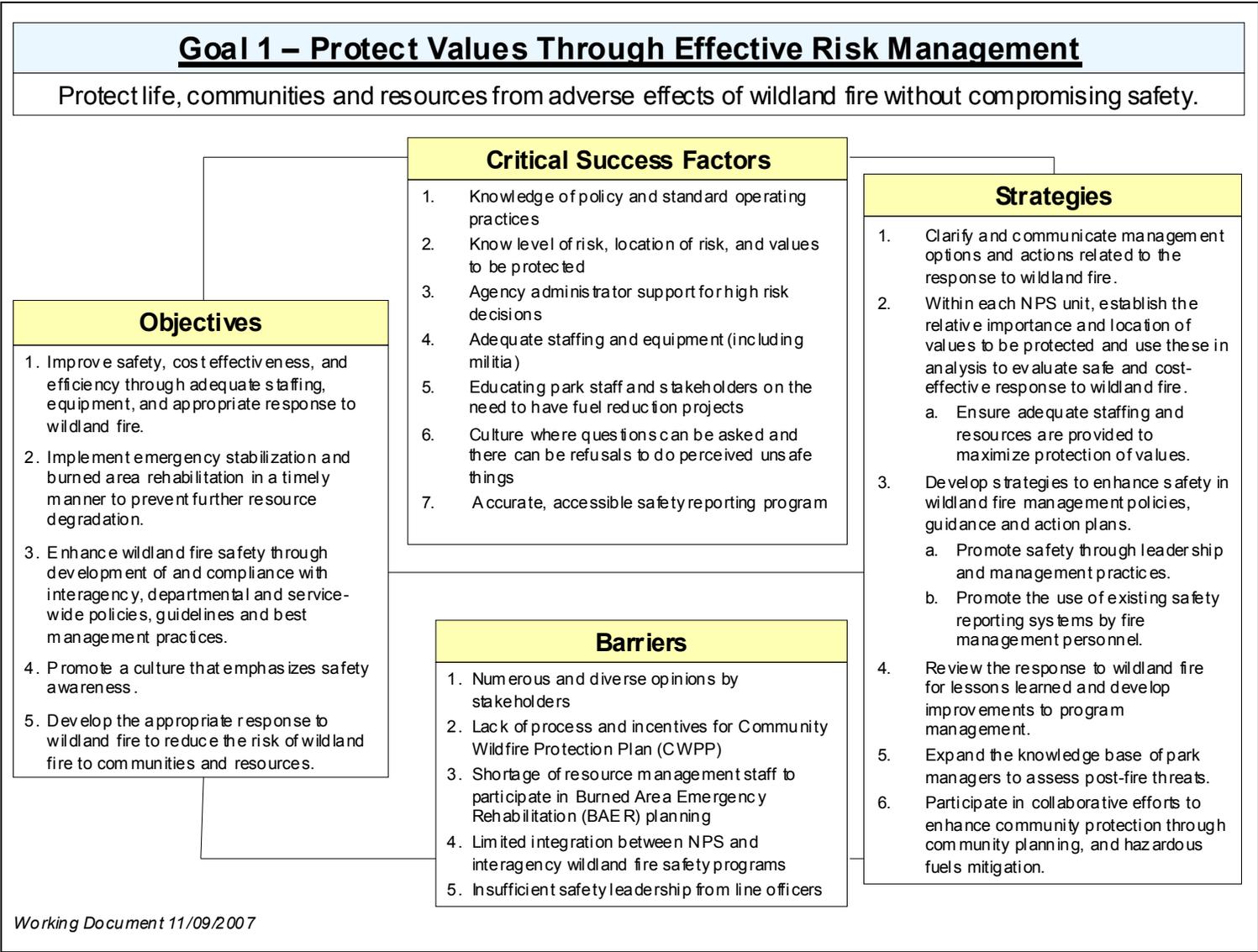
## **Strategies**

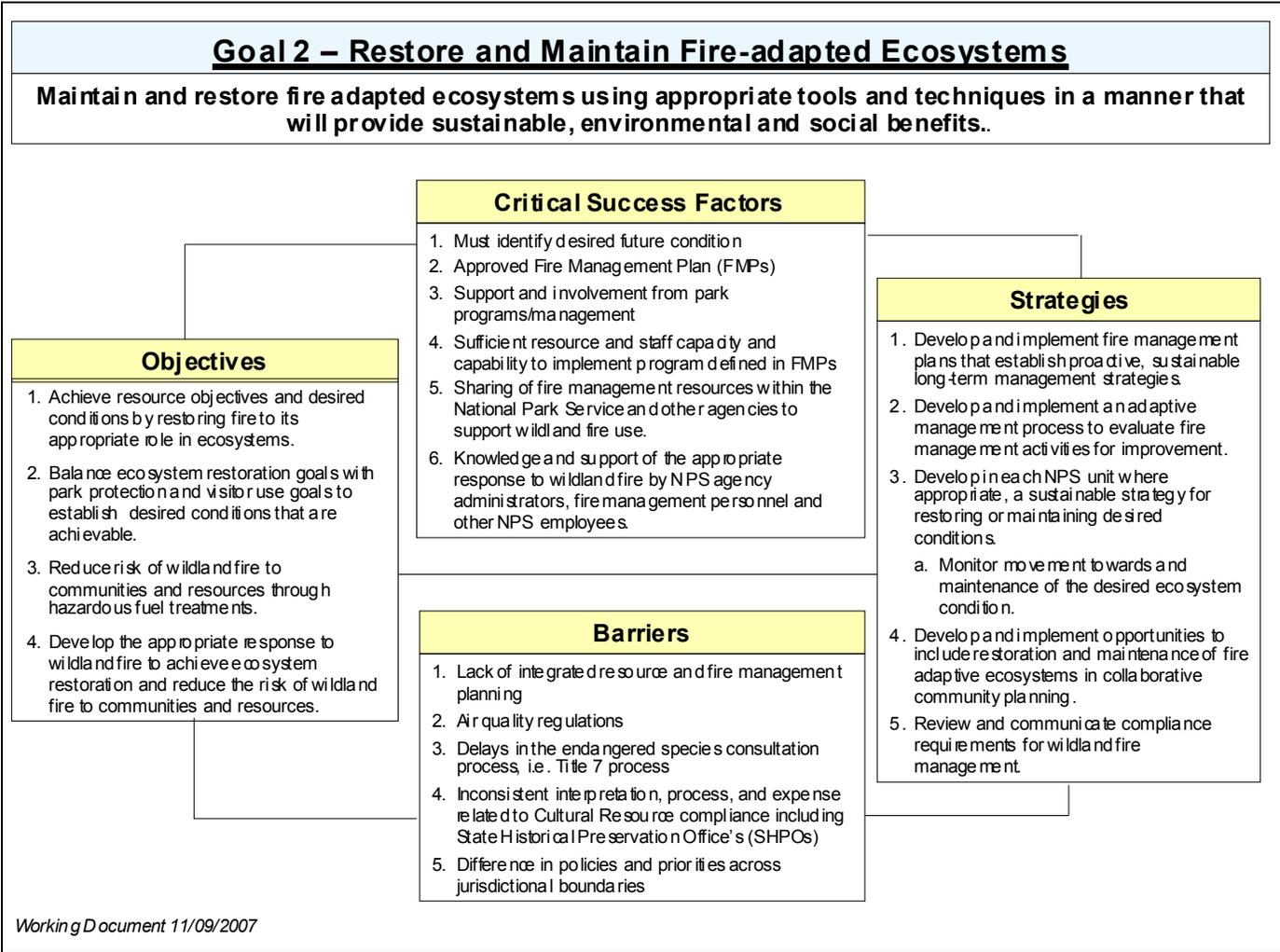
1. Review fire management programs to provide accountability, capability and guidance to improve program performance.
2. Fire funded personnel receive training and experience to achieve organizational needs and individual development goals.
3. Develop, justify, and defend out-year budgets. This strategy should include the development of effective budgets by implementing an interagency budget process and the development of supplemental applications to meet the needs not covered by an interagency budget processes.
4. Promote teamwork and leadership development.
5. Collaboratively develop training materials and applications to meet fire, aviation, and incident management needs.
6. Develop and implement a program to improve risk management decisions by line-officers.
7. Develop a program to recruit and retain the most qualified employees.
8. Identify key managers in parks and regional offices to provide support and peer to peer communications to validate fire management strategies.
9. Increase capability of non-fire personnel to participate in the wildland fire program through education, training and incident experience.

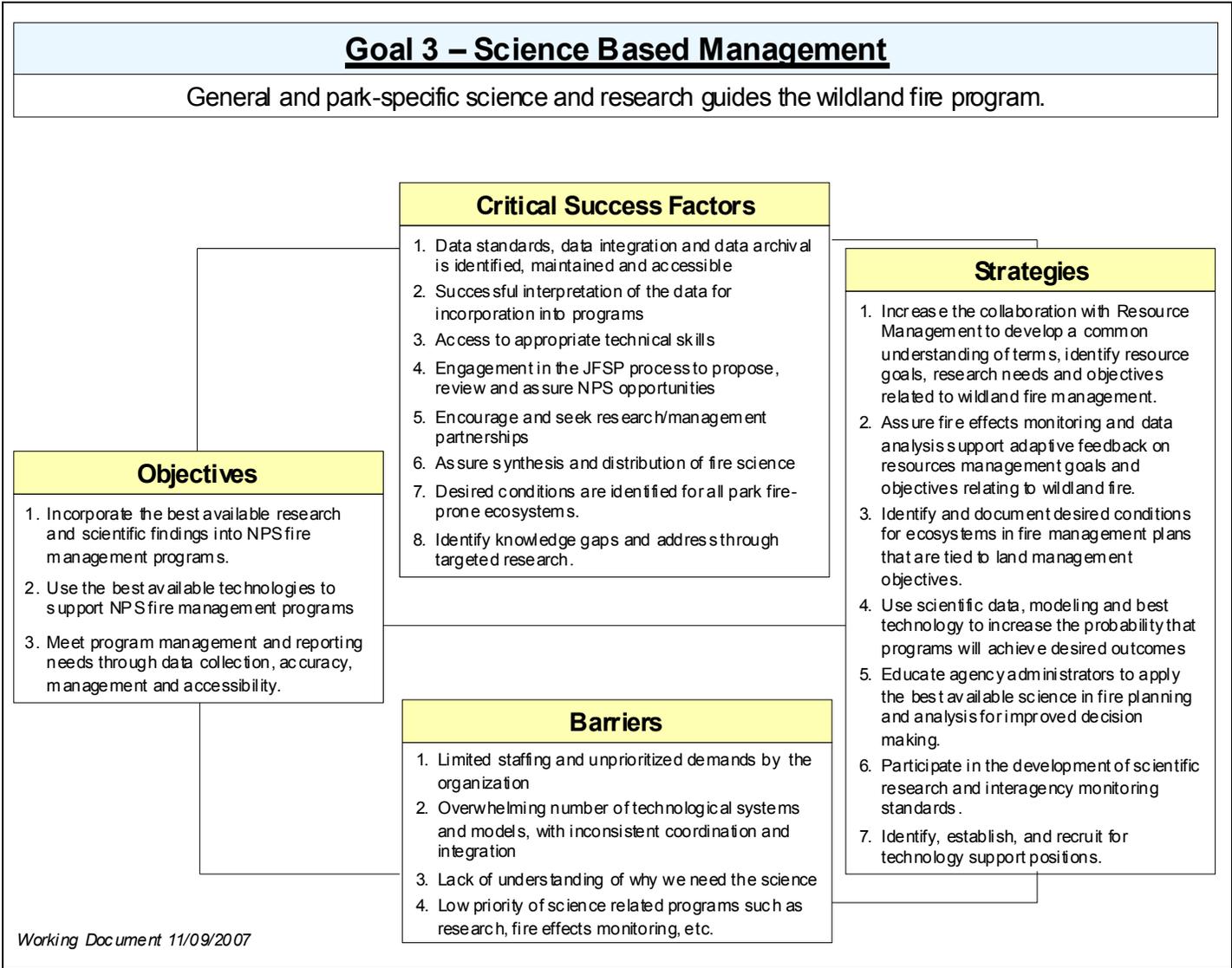
## APPENDIX A

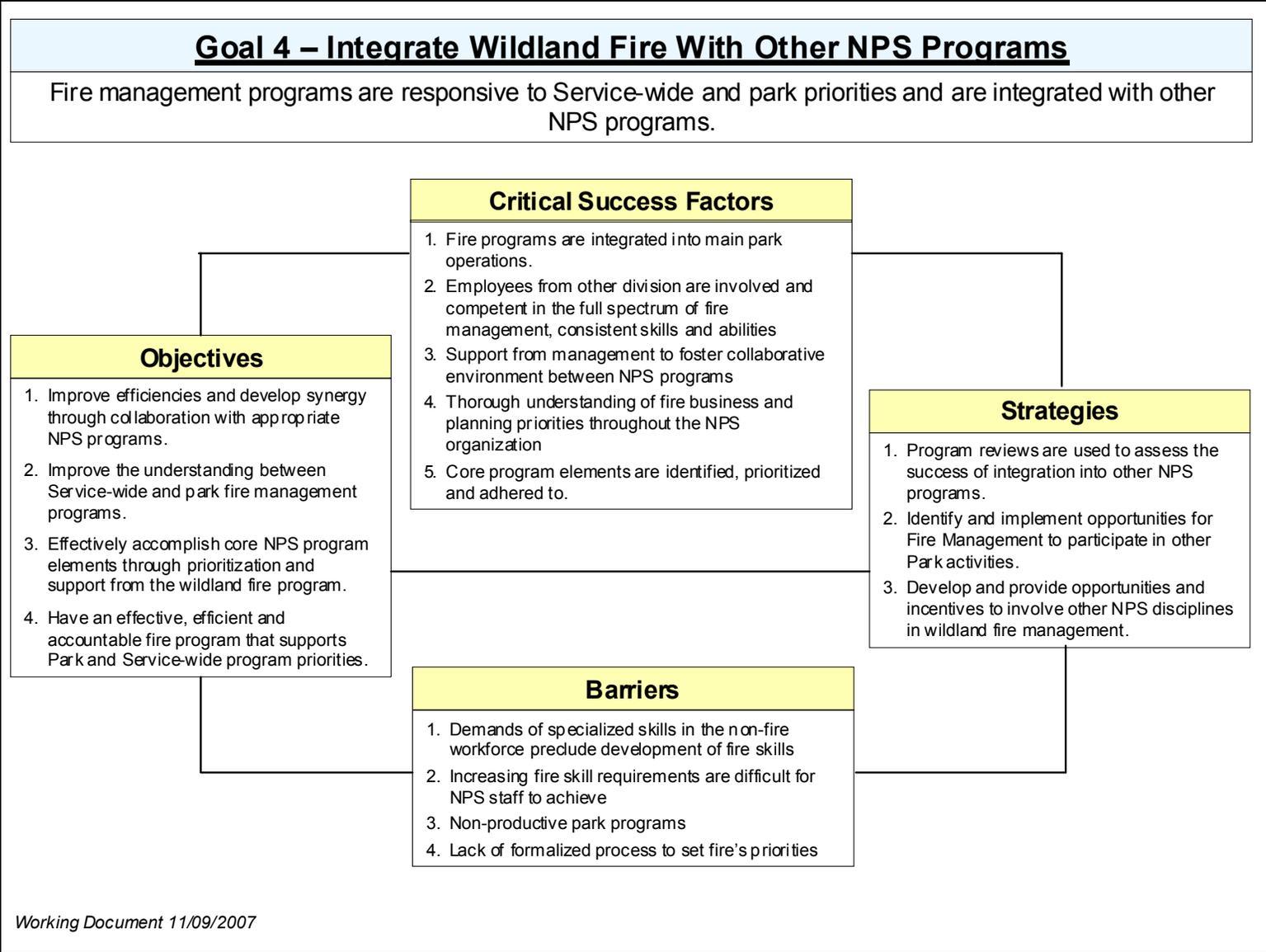
### Strategic Planning Worksheets





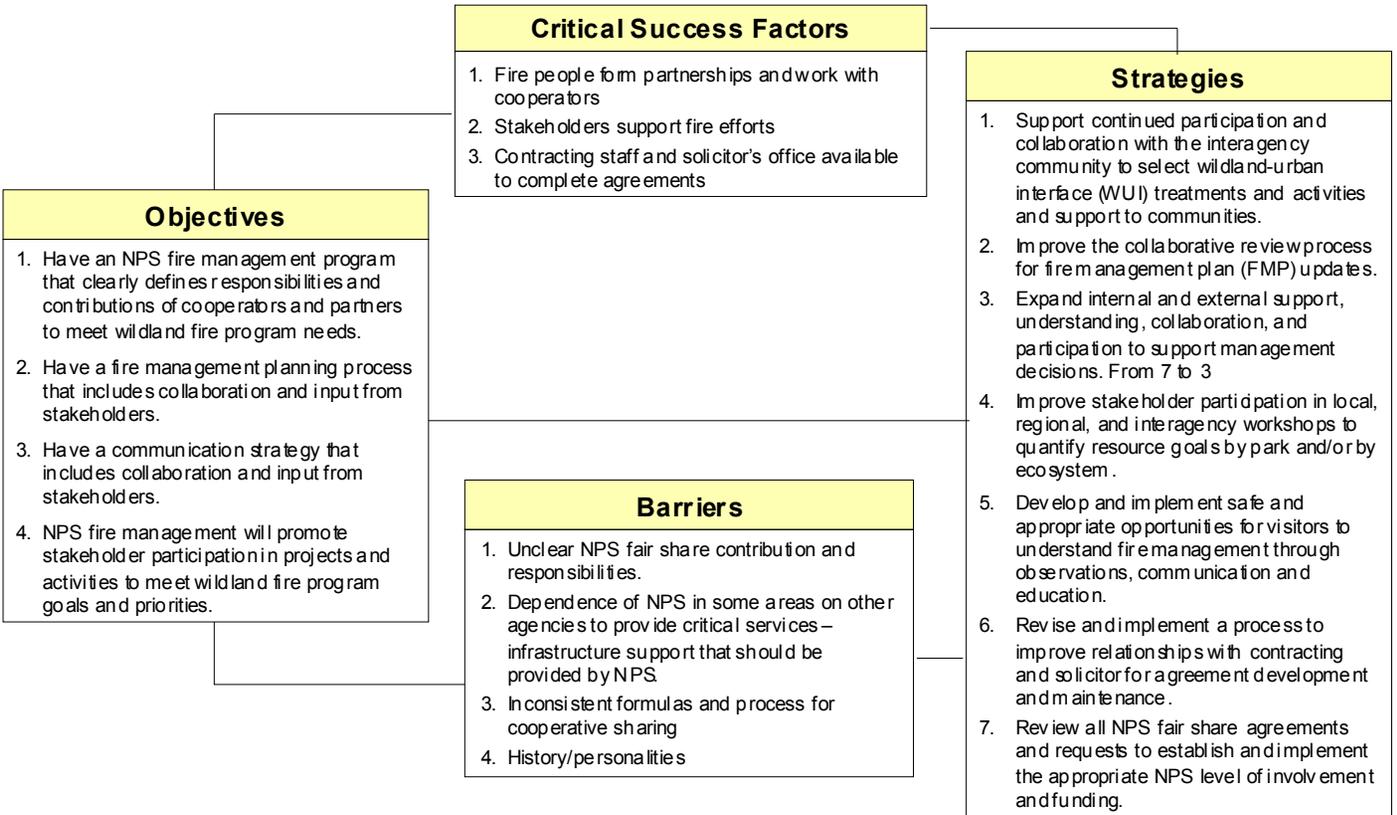




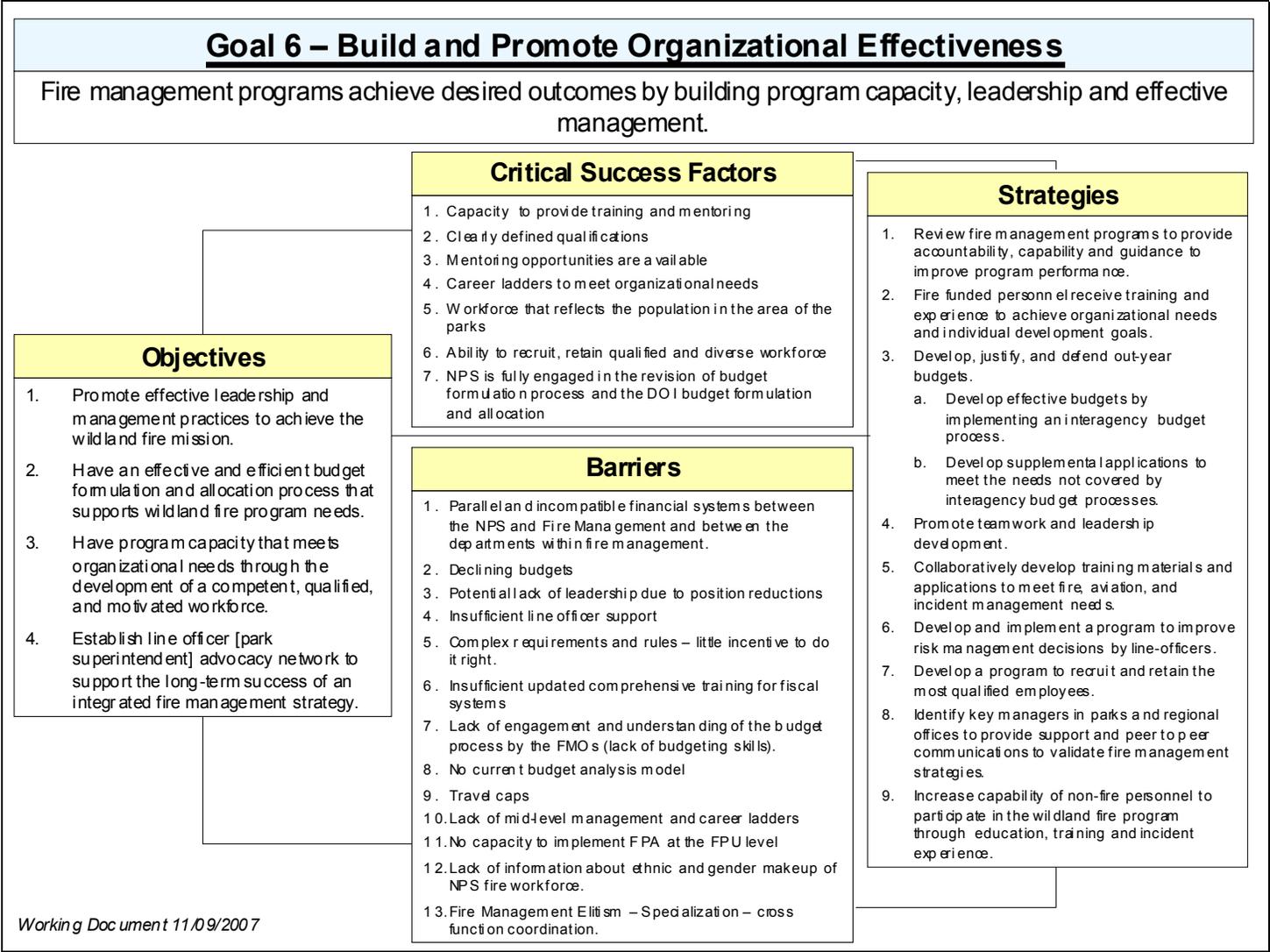


**Goal 5 – External Audiences Understand and Support Wildland Fire Programs**

NPS fire management will communicate and coordinate with interagency organizations and other stake-holders to pursue common goals, programs and projects.



Working Document 11/09/2007



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**Action Plan  
Strategic Goal #:**

**Strategy #:**

Action #	Action Description <sup>1</sup>	Assigned	Status	Due Date <sup>3</sup>	Investment <sup>4</sup>			Dependencies on other Strategies <sup>5</sup>	Objective Reference <sup>6</sup>
		Lead <sup>2</sup>			FY-XX	FY-XX	FY-XX		
1									
2									
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<sup>1</sup> Short Description of the specific action to be accomplished including a description of the deliverable  
<sup>2</sup> Identify the lead working team or individual's name  
<sup>3</sup> Date of action completion  
<sup>4</sup> Total Dollars needed per fiscal year for the task in \$1000's  
<sup>5</sup> Identify what strategies impact or affect this task  
<sup>6</sup> Identify which Objective, Critical Success Factor or Barrier this action supports

