

Multi-agency land management and emergency response: Cougar Creek Fire

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How do land managers respond when a wildfire burns across multiple jurisdictions, often with differing resource management objectives? Fire and resource management personnel have to work together at various levels within the organizations they represent to coordinate emergency response, decision support, and incident management and to account for cross-boundary fire effects to resources. Tools like the wildland fire decision support system (WFDSS) facilitate the decision making process and ensure management objectives from all agencies affected are considered. Specific incident management team roles, including the liaison, strategic operations planner, and long term fire behavior analyst, can help build relationships and inform strategies that enable the team to manage a fire for multiple objectives. Burned area emergency response (BAER) reports and rapid assessment of vegetation (RAVG) remote sensing outputs provide immediate post-burn information on fire effects to resources. The 2015 Cougar Creek Fire burned nearly 54,000 acres of Yakama Nation, USFS, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and private land and serves as a useful paradigm for multi-agency emergency response. Future considerations for restoration and forest management can use similar processes to achieve multiple objectives across jurisdictional boundaries.