



## The Obama Administration is here, and change is happening!

To prepare for the new opportunities to promote policy changes in federal fire management, FUSEE conducted a survey of its members and supporters to help us prioritize our education and advocacy work.



The survey asked people to select their top three policy areas for FUSEE to focus our work with policymakers in the Administration and Congress. (See below for more in-depth explanations of the policy areas we used in the survey.)

**Thanks to all who participated in the survey!** Responses are still coming in and it is not too late for you to still participate in the survey. Here are the survey results to date:

- The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) policy was selected as the top priority: more than 91% of all respondents selected it as one of their top-three policy areas, and 41% of respondents picked it as their top priority.
- The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) was the second priority: 82% of all respondents selected it as one of their choices, however, only 23% selected it as their top priority.
- Fire Management Plans (FMPs) was the third priority: 55% of all respondents selected it, and surprisingly, 27% picked it as their top choice.
- The federal fire budget was the fourth priority: 41% of all respondents selected it, and 23% chose it as their top priority.
- The federal fire management workforce was the fifth ranked priority: 32% of respondents selected it, but surprisingly, only 5% listed it as their top priority.

These results genuinely surprised us! Since most of our members are federal employees, we had assumed that fixing the fire management budget, and boosting the staffing and training of fire management workers would be the top two choices. Instead, the new AMR policy was overwhelmingly selected as the highest priority. That is encouraging to us, because FUSEE engaged in extensive education and advocacy work on AMR policy last year, so it seems like we're on the right path. It is also clear that there is still lots more work to do to refine the AMR policy and get all the elements in place to fully and appropriately implement it.

In our view, the five policy areas we offered as choices are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, effective AMR policy depends on high-quality FMPs and getting WUI areas prepared for fire. Thus, our education and advocacy work this year may emphasize AMR policy, but will also involve promoting policy change in all the other areas needed to effectively implement AMR on the ground.

We are already moving ahead in our outreach to members of Congress who have been our champions on fire-related legislation in past years, but now enjoy majority party status and sit on critical committees that

provide essential agency oversight, authorize new legislation, or appropriate funds to wildland fire management agencies.

FUSEE was founded, in part, to advocate policy changes on behalf of federal workers who cannot legally lobby Congress or publicly challenge their own agency's policies. With our close relationships among political leaders in Washington, D.C., FUSEE is well poised to educate key members of the new 111th Congress and the Obama Administration who were both elected with a strong mandate for change in social, economic, and environmental policies.

Check out our [website](#) for updates on our education and advocacy work, or better yet, join FUSEE and subscribe to our E-Newsletter, *Spotfire!*, to receive the latest information and analysis on policy changes emerging in the Obama Administration and 111th Congress.

### Policy issues explained:

**#1 Appropriate Management Response (AMR) Policy:** Next fire season, agencies will end the division between wildfire suppression and wildland fire use/fire monitoring. Instead, wildfires will be managed for multiple objectives (e.g. protection and restoration), and managers can use all available strategies and tactics as part of the AMR. FUSEE will urge the Obama Administration to focus on developing planning tools, training, and communications to best implement AMR policy.

**#2 Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) issues:** Fire suppression costs are rising in large part because of increased private development adjacent to fire-prone wildlands. This inhibits fire use on public lands and compels full suppression on private lands. FUSEE will ask the Obama Administration to clarify the federal role in private property protection, and invest in programs to help communities live with fire.

**#3 Fire Planning:** Many of the Forest Service land and fire management plans are based on outdated information or do not reflect the Federal Wildland Fire Policy. FUSEE will urge the Obama Administration and 111th Congress to direct appropriated Fire Preparedness funds to update land and fire management plans in order to incorporate the latest fire research findings and federal fire management policies.

**#4. The Fire Budget:** For the past several years, the cost of fire suppression has exceeded budget allocations. The Forest Service has repeatedly had to obtain funds from other, non-fire programs to cover budget overruns in fire suppression. With global warming, fire is now dominating the budget and the work priorities of the Forest Service. FUSEE will urge the Obama Administration and 111th Congress to concentrate on investments in fire management to contain suppression costs and avoid budget overruns.

**#5 Workforce Development:** Federal agencies are experiencing a high degree of retirements from fire positions, and at the same time, there is increasing use of private contract labor. FUSEE will support efforts to develop a well-trained, professional, year-round federal fire management workforce.

[Top of Page](#)

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