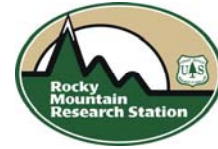




Briefing Paper

TOPIC: Key Decision Log (KDL)



Date: December 1, 2008

Background and Intent

The KDL concept was developed in a collaborative effort between the Rocky Mountain Research Station and the Northern Rockies Coordination Group. Originally expected to be piloted in the Northern Rockies, the effort was included and further developed as part of Forest Service's Accountable Cost Management Action Plan for FY08.

The KDL is founded on concepts of high reliability, organizational learning and high performance. It was intended to facilitate organizational performance, real-time and post-incident learning on fires by stimulating collaborative decision-making and facilitating consistent capture of key decision processes. Incident management teams and agency hosts were asked to document decisions, alternatives considered, decision rationale, factors affecting the final decisions, costs of alternative actions, and consequences for decisions having a significant impact on costs, social/political relations, or resource allocation. As such, it creates a near real-time trail of decision-points and reasoning useful for 'during action' reviews and discussions, final fire narratives, and After Action Reviews. Use of an electronic and web-based system allows accessibility and evaluation at all levels of the organization.

2008 Use

The KDL was available for download on both an internal FS website and the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, as well as for web-based data entry on the FS site. KDLs were submitted for 27 incidents including: Type 1, 2, 3 events, WFU, Area Command, Theater of Operations, NIMO, and NMAC on NFS (Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), USFWS, BIA, and unified command fires. For most of these, only one team completed a KDL, so that there are relatively few instances of a complete incident log.

This new process was viewed with both enthusiasm and skepticism. Line and Fire Managers moved forward with the KDL pilot, some by choice and others by direction. Users tested, tweaked and populated the central database, and provided feedback - summarized below.

Feedback

- Transparent documentation of decisions provides value, offering a way to view decisions in real-time, identify trends, and make course corrections. Useful for creating final fire narrative, tracking large and small decisions, communicating between Agency Administrator and Team, providing upper echelons with more transparent view of commitment to cost management. Decisions collected in the KDL are valuable during post season reviews, during the season to provide insight into consequences of alternatives, and as a tool to capture C&G staff decisions.

- Decisions made at National, Regional, Forest and IMT levels directly impact resource availability, strategy, tactics, duration, and costs of incidents. To meet objective of improving organizational 'SA', KDL must capture full spectrum of perspectives.
- Useful for smaller fires (Type 4 and 5) as well as larger fires.
- There was too little direction provided as to what kinds of decisions to document. KDL objectives need to be more clearly articulated
- KDL should link to WFDSS and document implementation decisions. KDL should avoid duplicating information captured in other required documents.
- The current KDL system needs to be stream-lined and allow entrants edit access.
- Need to provide access to the inter-agency community. Provide a user's guide, more training and outreach.
- Including the KDL in Letter of Delegation helped to create a complete incident log.
- Key decisions were most often discussed and identified during evening planning meetings with C&G, with one person given responsibility for data entry.
- KDL efforts initiated during 2008 were sometimes pre-empted by higher priorities.
- Need follow-up on the 2008 KDL decisions. The Agency needs an analysis of our progress with working relationships, innovation and learning, financial management and other intended outcomes of the KDL process.

KDL 2009 - Next steps

A steering committee comprised of representatives from RMRS, NIMO, Forest Service Line Officer Team, NRCG, and inter-agency partners is working to incorporate feedback and lessons learned from 2008 into a revised version.

Implementation Priorities

- Obtain clear national guidance.
- Provide hard copy, PC-based, and web entry and submission alternatives.
- Provide user's guide and pre-season training.
- Host on an interagency website (FAMWEB).
- Stream-line, simplify (for instance, use drop-down menus where possible; allow generous narrative boxes to capture context and additional information), provide security and edit-ability.
- Build as a stand-alone implementation extension to WFDSS's strategic documentation.
- Develop full suite of reports to provide results immediately to the field.

Planning Priorities

- Work towards full integration with WFDSS.
- Build insights gained from KDLs into pre-season training.

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