

Department of Natural Resources

Division of Forestry & Fire Protection Overview

Natural Resources House Finance Sub-Committee
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Presented by:

- Helge Eng, Division Director & State Forester
- Norm McDonald, Deputy Director and Chief of Fire & Aviation
- Alison Arians, Deputy Director, Forestry
- Theresa Cross, Administrative Services Director



Missions: Division of Forestry & Fire Protection



The division has three primary missions:

1. Wildland fire protection
2. Reducing hazardous fuels by creating fuels breaks
3. Managing state forests and providing timber to the industry



Missions: Division of Forestry & Fire Protection



Protect Alaskans from Wildfire

- Division protects the lives and property of Alaskans on over 150 million acres
- The demand for fire suppression has increased dramatically due to
 - Increasing length and intensity of fire seasons
 - Alaskans' desire to live in the wildland/urban interface

Missions: Division of Forestry & Fire Protection



Reduce Hazardous Fuels

- Division works proactively to prevent fires from threatening communities by building fuels breaks
- Fuels breaks around communities reduce risk and are a cost-effective and efficient way to fight wildland fire





Missions: Division of Forestry & Fire Protection

Sell and Manage State Timber

- Plan and implement timber sales to support industry, providing:
 - Economic opportunities statewide
 - Road access to state land
- Conduct timber sale inspections to
 - Protect fish habitat & water quality
 - Ensure reforestation



FY2023 Additions to Fire Program Budget



Increased Protection of Alaska from Wildland Fire \$3,300.0 UGF, 24 PFT and 6 PPT

- The FY2023 operating budget was the first step to an increased firefighting capacity, which will increase public safety, protect Alaskan values, and decrease spending on fire suppression
- These new positions make up the first half of what the division requires to be self-sufficient at Preparedness Level 3
- Building this capacity will:
 - Enhance aggressive and efficient initial attack, and
 - Reduce the need for importing expensive, often delayed or unavailable Lower 48 firefighting personnel
- These new positions, including lead firefighters and fire support staff, have been hired or are in the hiring process



FY2023 Reinstatement of Fire Academy



Reinstated Wildland Firefighter Academy \$1,000.0 UGF, 1 PFT

- Rural Alaska fire crew numbers have declined drastically from 56 crews in 2010 to fewer than 8 crews in 2021
- Workforce development is key to rebuilding Alaska's wildland firefighting capacity
- 6 trainings are planned for FY2023 to train 216 students. One February training session will be virtual, while the other 5 will be in-person at McGrath, Tok, Fairbanks, and Palmer
- 47 non-permanent positions have been created to provide opportunities for new graduates to gain experience and qualify for permanent DOF firefighting positions



FY2023 Additions to Forestry Budget



Expanded Inspection and Implementation Capacity for Timber Sales \$460.0 UGF, 4 PFT

- New foresters will provide more timber sales to industry, creating and supporting well-paying jobs in Alaskan communities and providing revenue to the state with a renewable resource
- New equipment operator will increase access to state lands by building and maintaining roads
- New foresters will ensure compliance with Alaska's Forest Resources and Practices Act and Regulations to protect fish habitat, water quality, and ensure reforestation



Ongoing Changes to the Division



Division renamed / Deputy Directors added / Administrative section restructured

Completed:

"Fire Protection" was added to the Division's name to highlight the major role it plays in managing large portions of the DOF budget and staff. Phase 1 of operating budget increase is complete. The preliminary, Deputy Directors were added to separate the Division into two branches and the two branches of the administrative section restructuring is complete. Entry Level to Management career ladder completed with the administrative reorganization.



In Progress:

Dispatch Center Managers / Regional FMOs / Fire Operations Chief

Northern Dispatch Manager has been added and the Palmer Dispatch Manager will be in place in 2023. Dispatch restructuring will complete the Dispatch career ladder. The Regional Fire Management Officers (RFMOs) and the Chief of Fire Operation positions are in the Online Position Description system. Finalizing these positions is crucial to the reorganization.

Next Steps:

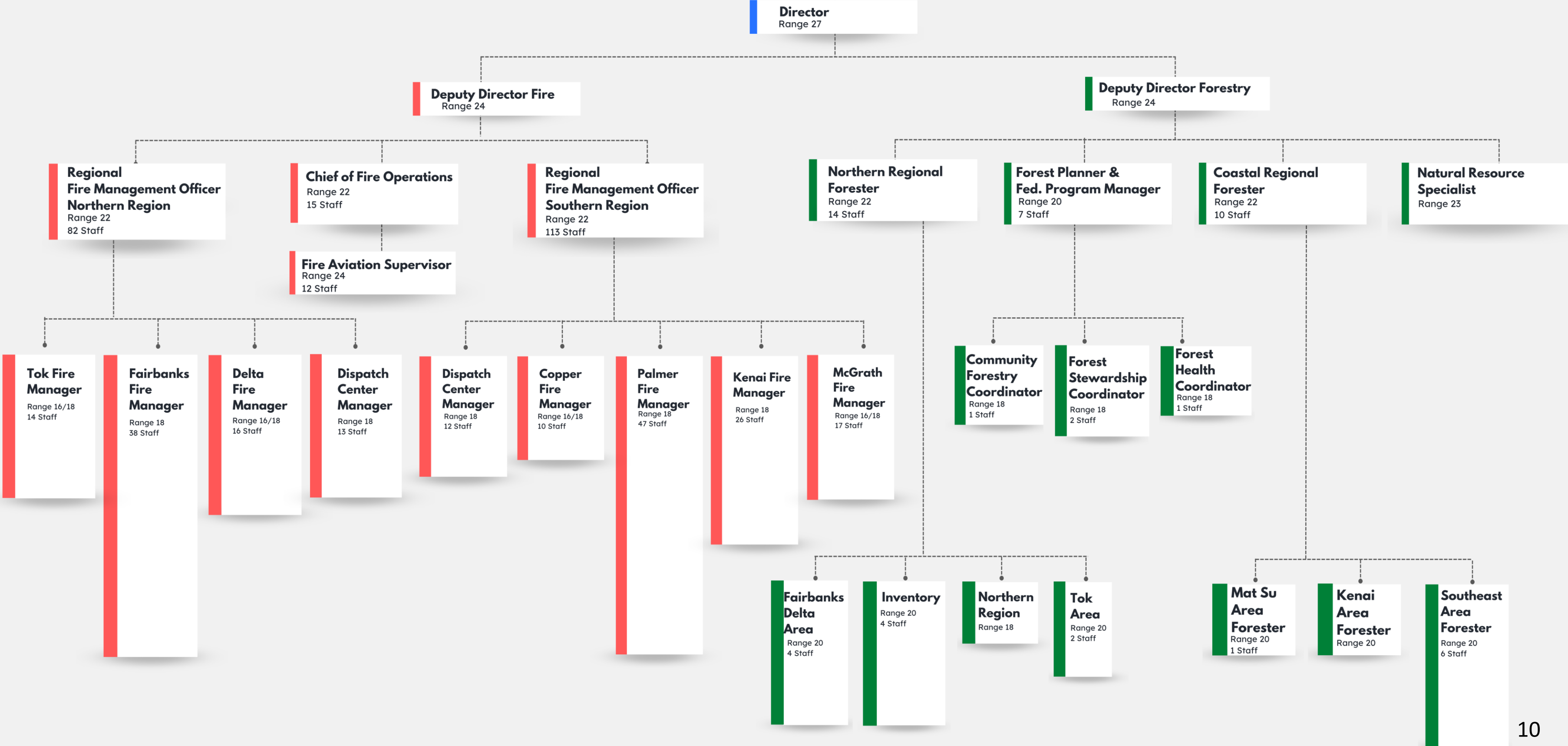
Create "Fire Management Specialist" series / Realign supervision structure / Phase 2 of operating budget

Management structure needs to reflect the shift in activity within the Division. Once the RFMOs and the Operations Chief are in place, line of authority will run from entry level firefighters through Fire Management Specialists to the Deputy Director of Fire. Creating a "Fire Management Specialist" series for the FMOs, RFMOs, and Chief will complete a career ladder for firefighters.

Functional Organizational Structure



Division Wide





Division Priorities

Building to Preparedness Level 3

- Recruitment and Retention
- Workforce Development

Future Infrastructure Needs

- Fairbanks Fire Center
- Fairbanks Tanker Base
- Eagle River Crew Facility
- McGrath Station

Reducing Fire Costs to State

- Reorganization
- Increase Initial Attack Capabilities
- Preventing Human Caused Fires
- Fuels Reduction
- Fire Plan Updates





FY2024 Governor's Amended Operating Budget

Sustaining State Parks Access and Maintenance

\$272.4 DGF

- Will allow for safe public access and state management of existing Park units in Mat-Su and Fairbanks funded by Park User Fees
- Will help maintain cleanliness, safety and public access to high use Park Units

Reverse Parks Concessionaire Incentive

-\$100.0 UGF

- Reversing the transaction included in the FY2024 Governor's Budget

Questions



Contacts

- Helge Eng, Division Director and State Forester
helge.eng@alaska.gov | 907.269.8474
- Norm McDonald, Deputy Director and Chief of Fire & Aviation
norman.mcdonald@alaska.gov | 907.863.2007
- Alison Arians, Deputy Director, Forestry
alison.arians@alaska.gov | 907.748.3712
- Theresa Cross, Administrative Services Director
theresa.cross@alaska.gov | 907.269.6398

