



## Interagency Partnerships Enable the U.S. Air Force to Address Wildland Fire Challenges

**The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy** is a national collaborative effort to bring a broad cross-section of stakeholders together to address wildland fire management challenges. The Strategy directs wildland fire planning activities and has three primary goals: restore and maintain landscapes, develop Fire-Adapted Communities, and improve wildfire response.

Activity	Impact
# acres burned annually at Eglin Air Force Base	100,000

Extreme wildfire behavior has escalated over the past two decades, accounting for more than \$15 million annually in Air Force claims and posing a threat to Air Force personnel and assets, as well as to neighboring communities and the landscape itself.

With the potential for wildfire ignitions resulting from Department of Defense training and test missions, effective wildland fire management and response is critical and high on the Air Force’s priority list. While Air Force installations have been participating in prescribed burn programs and other fire management activities for decades, installations have differed historically in the levels of training, equipment and capabilities that were available locally, making it apparent that a centralized approach was necessary in ensuring that the Air Force had the infrastructure in place to address fire management and suppression requirements.

As a result, the Air Force Wildland Fire Center (AFWFC) was established in 2012 at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, as part

of the Air Force Civil Engineer Center. Eglin was a natural fit for the center, as the base maintains one of the largest Air Force prescribed fire programs in the nation. The base manages approximately 100,000 acres annually with prescribed fire, reducing dense vegetation that increases wildfire intensity while also increasing habitat for several threatened and endangered species.

Partnerships are the cornerstone of the AFWFC’s management strategy.

“Through partnerships with agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we can maximize the use of shared resources to effectively mitigate fire risk, while achieving significant time and cost savings for installations and ranges across the Air Force,” said J.P. Smith, acting chief of the Air Force Wildland Fire Center.

Interagency partnerships help the Air Force and the nation as a whole meet these challenges by supporting the three overarching goals of the National

Success stories highlight regional wildland fire accomplishments that support implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy in the Southeast. The stories demonstrate how the Southeast is improving its “fire resiliency” through technology, education and outreach, forest management, collaboration, and more. Success stories also serve as a model for other communities to follow.

Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: to restore and maintain landscapes, protect communities from wildfire, and safely and effectively respond to wildfires when they occur.

One way the Air Force is promoting interagency collaboration is through the sharing of personnel and resources. The AFWFC is in the process of establishing regional offices at Vandenberg AFB, California; Peterson AFB, Colorado; and Eglin AFB, as well as a regional office at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, to centrally manage all overseas wildland fire programs. The four offices will manage twelve “Wildland Support Teams” situated at installations posing the highest fire risk to Air Force operations. These teams will provide fire prevention, hazard mitigation, prescribed fire and resource management in undeveloped forested or grassland habitats for the protection of threatened and endangered species, as well as wildfire suppression nationwide.

These Air Force teams will be staffed primarily with fire planners, ecologists, and wildland firefighters from partnering agencies, allowing both the Air Force and its partners to reduce overhead by co-funding key shared positions and facility costs, while simultaneously providing the Air Force with the expertise and capabilities of the most qualified personnel in the nation, Smith said.

“Extreme wildfires threaten national security,” he said. “By working side-by-side with our sister agencies, we are better poised to reduce risk and respond effectively.”



*Prescribed fire at Eglin Air Force Base. Credit: Civil Air Patrol.*



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*Prescribed fire at Eglin Air Force Base. Credit: Air Force Public Affairs.*

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**Partners:** U.S. Air Force, Eglin Air Force Base, USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



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