



# Wildfire Mitigation Office

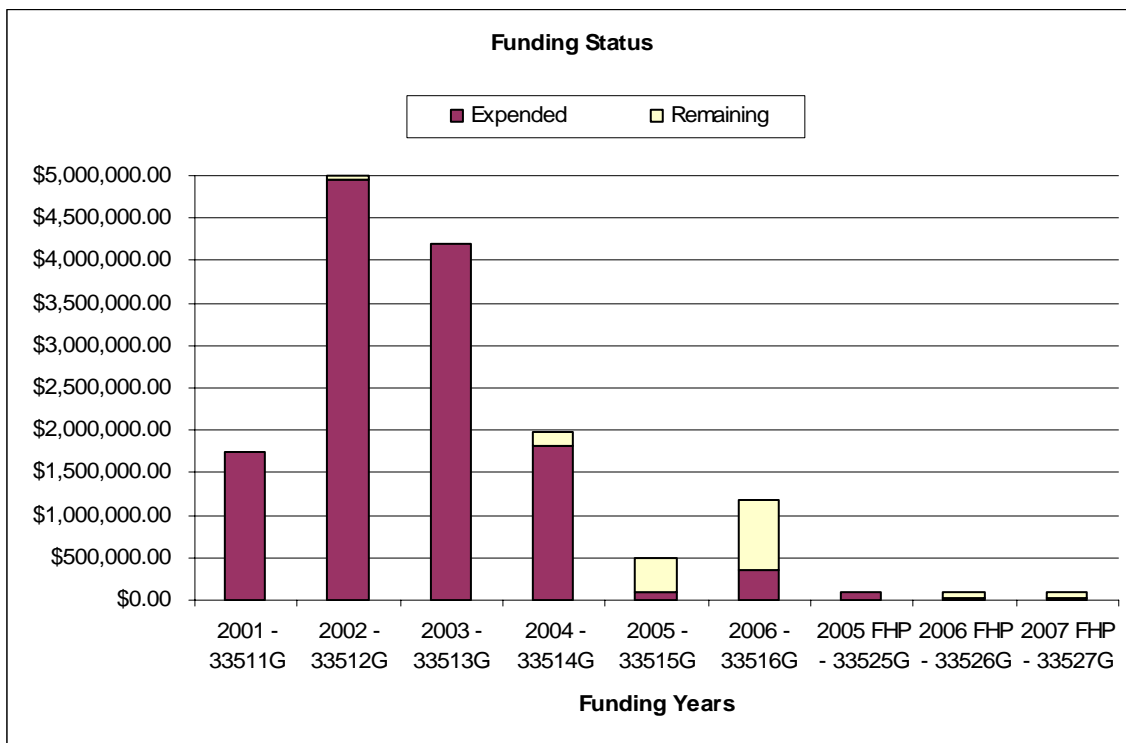
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# Financial Summary

## Wildfire Funding

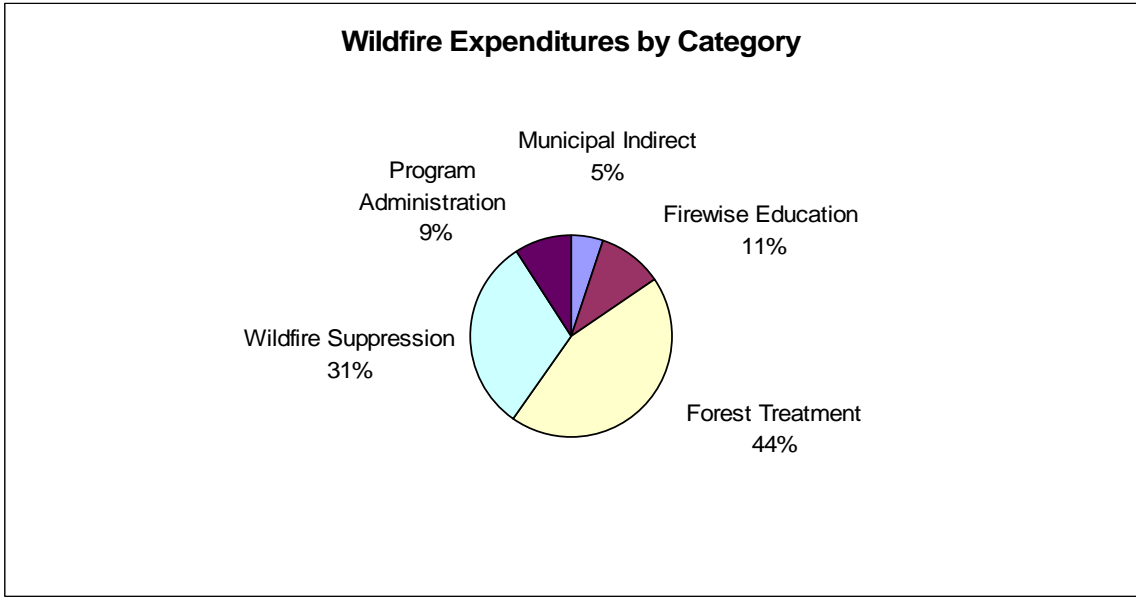
	Appropriation	Expended	Remaining	Description
2001 - 33511G	1,750,000	\$1,749,956.47	\$43.53	fire fighting equipment & response to wildfires
2002 - 33512G	5,000,000	\$4,964,215.62	\$35,784.38	reduce fire danger: mitigation & hazard tree removal
2003 - 33513G	4,173,000	\$4,189,143.12	(\$16,143.12)	hazardous fuel reduction
2004 - 33514G	1,975,000	\$1,814,541.04	\$160,458.96	remove dead & dying trees
2005 - 33515G	493,000	\$95,260.00	\$397,740.00	remove dead & dying trees
2006 - 33516G	1,182,000	\$357,733.67	\$824,266.33	remove dead & dying trees
2005 FHP - 33525G	100,000	\$100,000.00	\$0.00	Forest Health Protection grant - Rabbit Creek
2006 FHP - 33526G	100,000	\$12,410.38	\$87,589.62	Forest Health Protection grant - Eagle River
2007 FHP - 33527G	100,000	\$14,128.00	\$85,872.00	Forest Health Protection grant - Indian & Bird
	14,873,000	13,297,388	1,575,612	

To date, the Municipality of Anchorage has received \$14,873,000 in federal appropriations and grants to mitigate the risks and hazards of wildland fire in addition to supporting forest health. Of that, \$13,297,388 has been spent on Firewise education, forest treatment, wildfire suppression, program administration and municipal indirect. Through the US Forest Service, \$300,000 in matching grant funds further forest treatment projects to sustain green, vibrant forests in the wake of the spruce bark beetle epidemic. The remaining funds available to the program total \$1,575,612.



Wildfire Expenditures 2001 - 2008

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<b>FIREWISE EDUCATION</b>	<b>1,422,271</b>
<b>FOREST TREATMENT</b>	<b>5,862,094</b>
Fire Science	492,114
Homeowner Assistance Programs	1,930,615
Neighborhood Forest Treatment	2,894,013
Danger Tree Removal	545,352
<b>WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION</b>	<b>4,122,708</b>
Apparatus & Equipment	1,192,284
Infrastructure Improvements	141,994
Wildfire Training & Response	1,214,149
Pre-positioned Helicopter	1,574,281
<b>PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>1,227,161</b>
<b>MUNICIPAL INDIRECT</b>	<b>663,154</b>
<b>Total funding spent</b>	<b>13,297,388</b>

## Discussion

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Since 2001, each federal appropriation to the Municipality has been accompanied by legislative text guiding the operational activities and applicable expenditures. AFD anticipates that the remaining funds available to the program will sustain limited operations for three years through 2011 with several caveats.

Funding received in 2001 was designated for fire fighting equipment and response to wildfires. From this fund, apparatus and associated suppression equipment was purchased for the Anchorage, Girdwood, Chugiak and South Fork fire departments.

The funding received in years 2002 and 2003 was slated to reduce fire danger and hazardous fuels. AFD applies these funds to all four elements of the program that support the mission of reducing the community's exposure to wildland fire. This includes the salaries for the Wildfire Mitigation Office (WMO) staff, funding for the seasonal helicopter contract, and interagency wildfire simulation drills in addition to Firewise education and forest treatment projects.

Funding provided in years 2004, 2005 and 2006 was designated specifically for removing dead and dying trees resulting from the spruce bark beetle. AFD allocates these dollars to projects related to Firewise education and forest treatment. Forest Health Protection grants are matched by a portion of these dollars. Treatment supporting healthy forests is consistent with treatment that limits both fire spread and a future spruce bark beetle epidemic.

Considering the above guidelines for spending, remaining funds are projected for Firewise education and forest treatment projects that directly assist residents in reducing their exposure to wildland fire. Operations within these two program components are being scaled down to meet critical needs through 2011. No further funding is available for the helicopter contract in 2009 or beyond. There is no further funding for WMO staff salaries; AFD is proposing to use the interest from the cumulative appropriations to support the staff through December 2009.

AFD stated in its initial 10-year plan for the Anchorage Wildfire Program that the operations within it were expected to be self sustainable in the community by 2011. Examples of this include wood lots and brush disposal, maintenance of Municipal owned forest land and wildfire response training within AFD. Wood lot operations are being assimilated into private enterprise and opportunities exist to expand this concept further across the Municipality. The Municipal Parks & Recreation Department has expanded its operations to include more tree work in parks and greenbelts, thereby assuming a portion of the administrative and financial requirements to manage their respective forests for fire. Firefighters participate in annual wildland fire refreshers and simulation drills supported by the AFD operating budget to fine tune their skills in fighting brush fires. However, Firewise education and forest & fuels management will still be needed across the Municipality as these elements are interagency in nature. Managing wildland fire exposure must be coordinated between the local, state and federal agencies by the local fire suppression organization: the Anchorage Fire Department.

Through the evolution of this program, the community has adopted many fire mitigation activities into its lifestyle and the Municipality has adopted Firewise into its corporate structure.

Maintenance of treated forests, delivery of technical assistance to residents, and support for the helicopter as rapid fire response will continue to be critical in our boreal forest environment. Trees and grass grow vigorously here and a Firewise home needs annual upkeep. These elements that will likely challenge the Municipal budget may be supported through partnerships, grants and sponsorships, and dedicated funding directly from the Municipality to sustain a long-term Firewise Anchorage.

### **Phase I: 2001 - Initiate research & address primary mitigation and response**

- Evaluate and assess Municipal infrastructure for emergency preparedness – *Completed and receives regular review*
- Develop wildfire operations response plan – *Completed by AFD and receives regular review*
- Model fire behavior with local conditions – *Completed and receives regular review*
- Educate landowners about fire risk and defensible space – *On going program*
- Develop guidelines for reducing fuels in forested stands – *Completed and receives regular review*
- Continue hazard fuel reduction on public & private lands – *On going program*
- Initiate brush disposal system - *Completed*

### **Phase II: 2002-2006 - Fuels Mitigation & Fire Operations**

- Implement emergency preparedness plans for Municipal infrastructure – *Completed and receives regular review*
- Develop evacuation plan - *Completed*
- Establish monitoring program to evaluate and maintain low hazard fuel conditions for public and private lands – *Completed, field reviews done regularly*
- Continue Firewise education to landowners – *On going program*
- Facilitate Firewise Communities in neighborhoods – *WMO staff has attempted this concept repeatedly with minimal interest. Through a partnership with OEM's Emergency Watch, WMO has been able to implement Firewise Communities on a limited scale.*
- Continue hazard fuel reduction on public and private lands – *On going programs & partnerships*
- Monitor natural regeneration, plant trees where appropriate – *On going, annual field review*
- Develop long-term brush disposal program – *Private enterprise has taken on a portion of this task; continued effort needed to ensure long term, comprehensive program through the Municipality.*
- Develop an incident recovery plan – *In progress, partnership with OEM*

### **Phase III: 2007-2011 - Mitigation and Maintenance**

- Maintain sound emergency evacuation and operations plans for fire emergencies – *Completed and receives regular review*
- Continue Firewise education to landowners – *On going*
- Maintain Firewise Communities – *On going, planned expansion for 2009*
- Monitor and maintain low hazard fuel conditions on public and private lands – *Monitoring in progress, maintenance treatments need to be initiated*
- Continue brush disposal program – *In progress, developing partnerships for sustainable operations*

# Program Administration

## Operational Plan

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The Anchorage Fire Department is dedicated to being prepared for wildland fire by cultivating awareness in the community, reducing hazardous forest fuels, and maintaining its rapid fire suppression response capability. Through partnerships, AFD has developed and maintained a highly effective wildfire mitigation program. While the significant advances in Firewise education, forest treatment and fire response capability have resulted from federal funding and operational excellence, the challenge set forth to AFD and the Municipality is to maintain these functions and their effectiveness. This challenge is being met through diligent fiscal planning and continued pro-active programs that support self-reliance through technical assistance in the community.

AFD has gained community awareness and trust through continued communication and presence at community council meetings, through the media, at public events, and personal contacts. We have treated large acreages of forest land to develop critical shaded fuel breaks to slow fire's spread in many areas of the Municipality. We have visited with thousands of homeowners about the benefits of a Firewise home and residential preparedness for fire. Our partnerships extend to local organizations, the State of Alaska and federal agencies to implement strategies that improve our fire suppression response and homeowner assistance programs. The WMO staff maintains a high level of technical expertise through training and work performance to sustain operational efficiency at the ground level.

From 2001 through 2003, the program focused on basic awareness of the potential for wildfires at our wildland urban interface in Anchorage. Operationally, this meant that AFD treated hundreds of acres of public forest lands that were devastated by the spruce bark beetle in an effort to reduce the volume of fuel available to burn in a wildland fire. Firewise education was delivered on a broad scale with the intent to reach a large number of homeowners with the most basic messages about preparing the home. Student Conservation Association Fire Education Corps volunteers canvassed thousands of homes, provided Firewise home assessments and handed out the AWFCG Firewise Alaska guide.

In 2004, the program shifted to a greater focus on the individual home. By offering free Firewise home assessments along with a cost share tree removal program, we provided a convincing financial reason to remove dead trees (fuel) from the home ignition zone. During this time, we continued forest treatment projects on public lands where dense stands of spruce imposed their potential fire behavior on adjacent neighborhoods. AFD increased its requirements for all firefighters to attend the annual wildland fire refresher while substantiating its training regimen to include wildland fire tactical response and leadership in the wildland urban interface. Through this systematic approach to change behavior within the community, we have focused on wildland fire awareness, preparedness and self reliance.

For the final phase of the wildfire program's 10-year implementation timeline, the WMO will increase its role to foster neighborhood planning. By building on the foundation of the past years' efforts, we can now facilitate a community approach to Firewise and self reliance where neighbors coordinate their energy and resources to fight fire, survive, and recover while protecting their lives and property. As delineated in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, the WMO will implement this approach through OEM's Emergency Watch template with the focus on Firewise Communities/USA. This nationally recognized program supports a long-term alliance within neighborhoods through facilitation by WMO staff.

The Anchorage Fire Exposure Model provides an objective evaluation of a neighborhood's exposure to the risks and hazards of wildland fire. The WMO forester and fuels specialist will use this model to prioritize the list of community councils that have extreme and high exposure to wildland fire. For each council area, the WMO will complete a community fire risk assessment, based on national guidelines, to address fuel loading and reduce the potential for loss due to fire. This process will involve field review, analysis of forest stand structure and consideration for variables such as distance to a fire station, water resources and access.

Each fire risk assessment will be provided to the respective community councils for review and discussion to address additional local concerns from the residents. At that point, groups of homeowners will have the opportunity to implement the plan through the Emergency Watch template. The WMO staff will facilitate the development of neighborhood plans that address fuel load reduction (forest treatment) and Firewise homes. The WMO's Firewise education specialist will play a key role in supporting residential involvement through Firewise home assessments and continued facilitation of the neighborhood planning process. The forester and fuels specialist will also continue their involvement with the respective homeowners by coordinating forest treatment projects. All WMO staff members will support this process by drawing upon the expertise of AFD firefighters during the planning and implementation stages of a neighborhood emergency plan.

Additionally, the WMO staff will continue to monitor previously treated forest project sites through fuel load analysis, forest stand structure inventory, and maintenance through additional thinning and fuel load reduction methods, where applicable.

AFD will continue to judiciously apply existing funds to carry out forest treatment projects on public lands and support homeowner efforts to create Firewise neighborhoods.





## Staffing

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AFDs Wildfire Mitigation Office and operations are fully supported by the department's firefighters, administrative and support staff. Program operations and successes are consistent with AFDs mission to protect life and property. Through focused objectives and guidance, true mitigation of the risks and hazards of wildland fire have been addressed throughout the community with respect to education, forest treatment and emergency preparedness.

In the WMO, there are three staff members who deliver the program to the residents of the Municipality of Anchorage. The team cooperates on projects throughout the year, supporting the technical and logistical tasks of each others' duties. Each member serves on statewide and national committees to support AFDs partnerships in forestry, fire and education. They all attend continuing education conferences and training to maintain their expertise.

The forester for the program, Sue Rodman manages wildfire program components and submits reports, grants, and funding requests. She administers the forest treatment projects and contracts on public lands in addition to contracts for fire behavior modeling, brush disposal and other technical functions. She is the liaison to the community for forest treatment and preparedness. Sue produced and coordinated the contents of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan with assistance from other AFD personnel. She facilitates strategic and operational planning within the WMO.

The wildland fire fuels specialist and aviation manager, Jason Kohler administers the helicopter contract, manages its flight crew and monitors the wildland fire danger in the Anchorage area. He applies his extensive experience from the Malheur Rappel Crew, an initial attack wildland firefighting crew that accesses fires via helicopter, to support the safety of the aviation program and wildfire training needs for AFD staff. Jason monitors daily and seasonal fire danger with respect to fuels and weather. He maintains the department's four Remote Automated Weather Stations and applies the Fire Weather Indices to the daily fire danger assessment for the MOA. He conducts field reconnaissance in coordination with the forester to evaluate forest treatment projects.

The fire education specialist, Jen Klugh delivers Firewise education to the community and often serves in the role of public information officer as the liaison to the media. She conducts Firewise home assessments for residents throughout the summer supporting the protection of life and property from brush fires through preparedness. She performs many support functions for the WMO and the Anchorage Fire Department in daily operations and special events. She is often the department spokesperson for AFD in communicating fire safety and fire suppression news to the community. She maintains the AFD website and facilitates educational projects.

Funding for the program covers salaries and benefits for all three WMO team members. It supports the office functions and operating supplies. In the past, seasonal employees have been hired to augment AFDs ability to provide Firewise home assessments and conduct educational outreach activities. As part of the Municipality, the WMO is supported by the finance, purchasing, human resource and other departments.



## Relevance to the National Fire Plan

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The National Fire Plan is an interagency plan that addresses the firefighter response needs to wildland fires and fire's impact on communities across the country. Primary partners to this effort are the USDA Forest Service and the Department of Interior. Funding for the wildfire program in Anchorage comes from National Fire Plan dollars, as sponsored by the Alaska Delegation to Congress. Development and implementation of the Anchorage program are modeled after the National Fire Plan and fit to our local community.

Five key points form the basis for the National Fire Plan in providing technical, financial, and resource guidance and support for wildland fire management in the United States.

- Firefighting: Assuring that necessary firefighting resources and personnel are available to respond to wildland fires that threaten lives and property.
  - AFD supports tactical and leadership training for its firefighters and administrative staff. The department has augmented its apparatus and equipment cache with wildland specific gear that is integrated into the existing structural firefighting resources.
- Rehabilitation: Conducting emergency stabilization and rehabilitation activities on landscapes and communities affected by wildland fire.
  - AFD's WMO rehabilitates burned areas by seeding in grass and tree seedlings, in addition to removing large fuels that could support another fire in the future. Rehabilitation applies to both mitigation treatment sites where slash piles are deliberately burned to reduce fuels and to brush fire sites.
- Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Reducing hazardous fuels (dry brush and trees that have accumulated and increase the likelihood of unusually large fires) in the country's forests and rangelands.
  - WMO coordinates projects with neighborhoods and local contractors to remove dead, spruce bark beetle killed trees and thin densely growing trees and brush on public lands adjacent to subdivisions.
- Community Assistance: Providing assistance to communities that have been or may be threatened by wildland fire.
  - WMO staff work with individual homeowners and community groups to provide technical and financial assistance in preparing the home ignition zone for wildland fire. Additionally, the WMO supports neighborhood preparedness through Emergency Watch & Firewise Communities.
- Accountability: Committing to the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, an interagency team created to set and maintain high standards for wildland fire management on public lands.
  - AFD follows national standards and research in applying wildland fire mitigation strategies for fuel reduction, homeowner assistance and improving AFDs wildland fire response capability.