

***Southern Area***

###### **Decision Support**

###### **Center (DSC)**

###### **Guidelines**

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Pete Kubiak

Southern Area MAC, Chair

# Executive Summary

The Southern Area Decision Support Center (DSC) can be utilized during periods of high fire activity in support of the Multi-Agency Coordination Group (SA-MAC) and fires in the Southern Area. The co-location of WFDSS technical experts, fire behavior specialists, and GIS specialists make it possible to assist with incident prioritization, resource allocation, and offer a common point of contact for all fire managers within the Southern Area.

The purpose of the DSC is to provide fire behavior analysis, decision documentation, and facilitate ordering appropriate decision support personnel to incidents. This allows for critical decision support in relatively short time frames. The DSC will:

* Work for the SA-MAC (as requested through SACC or by any Agency) to provide support).
* Provide fire behavior predictions, incident fire behavior analyses, and maps of fire activity for the SA-MAC.
* Ensure consistency with guidelines each Agency by working with Regional Agency contacts on policies and procedures.
* Initiate analyses on the request of local units for emerging incidents without regard to agency.
* Provide general WFDSS documentation expertise, as requested by local units.
* Facilitate ordering of fire behavior specialists for specific incidents, as requested by the local unit or their SA-MAC representative.
* Support the SA-MAC, as requested.

The DSC is be managed by an assigned Decision Support Lead who has broad knowledge of Decision Support tools (as available, a Geographic Area Editor). Staffing will scale up and down based on the Preparedness Level and the number and complexity of active incidents burning in the Geographic Area. When fully engaged, the group will likely include the DSC Lead, an FBAN, two (or more) fire behavior analysts, a WFDSS decision documentation technical specialist, and a GIS specialist. The DSC Lead will coordinate with the SA-MAC (or Agency representative during periods of less fire activity) and assign work among the group.

The DSC is expected to interface with SACC personnel on a regular basis, particularly Intelligence and Weather. The DSC Lead will work with SACC personnel to create products and outputs that are consistent, recognizing that as SACC capacity is reached, there could be a need for additional staffing in the DSC to avoid interference with SACC operations.

# Decision Support Center Roles, Responsibilities, and Qualification Requirements

(Depending on workload, one person may fill more than one role)

## DSC Lead

* Reports to the SA-MAC (when activated) or, during periods of less fire activity, an Agency representative.
* Coordinates policies and procedures with the Regional WFDSS/Analyst for each Agency.
* Supervises the rest of the DSC group.
* Coordinates staffing and ordering of resources for the entire DSC group
* Responsible for coordinating requests from incidents, assigning tasks, and overseeing timely delivery of products.
* Coordinates data needs and products with SACC staff.
* Recommended skills: broad knowledge of decision support tools (Geographic Area Editor, if possible), strategic fire operations, and ability to lead a team effectively.

## Fire Behavior Analyst (FBAN)

* This position is activated at the same time the MAC group is activated.
* Prepares a daily fire behavior forecast for the Southern Area.
* Coordinates with SACC on weather inputs and data needs for fire behavior analyses.
* Reviews and provides feedback to fire behavior specialists on products, as needed.
* Recommended skills: red card qualified FBAN or LTAN.

## Fire Behavior Specialist

* This position may be activated at any time workload demands.
* Responsible for completing specific technical analyses utilizing a range of fire behavior models, including BEHAVE, FARSITE, FLAMMAP, FSPRO, and others.
* Communicates with incident personnel on fire activity, fuels, and analysis needs.
* Responsible for completing appropriate documentation for every fire behavior analysis and filing each analysis.
* Trainees are encouraged, but any products they produce need to be reviewed by a experienced fire behavior specialist or a fully qualified LTAN/FBAN.
* Recommended skills: red card qualified FBAN, LTAN, or GSAN or other THSP for WFDSS. Fire Behavior Specialist qualification in WFDSS are required. Must demonstrate competency with fire behavior models (e.g., FARSITE (Near Term Fire Behavior) and FSPRO).

## GIS Specialist

* Coordinates with the FBAN and Fire Behavior Specialist to produce products for the SA-MAC, incidents, and Agencies (as requested).
* Provides data to update websites, web pages, and ftp sites.
* Completes tasks according to work priorities; files products in appropriate folders and notes updates.
* Recommended skills: red card qualified GISS.

## Decision Documentation Support

* Provides Federal Agencies with support in documenting fire decisions in WFDSS.
* Keeps track of decisions and notifies DSC Lead of fires that may need a decision or an updated decision.
* Summarizes fires to describe long-term implications.
* Coordinate with Fire Behavior Specialist to ensure products are available for Decision documentation.
* Recommended skills: experienced with WFDSS decisions and assisting others through the process. Ability to work with multiple Federal Agency requirements for decision-making.

# DSC Activation Procedures

The DSC will be activated anytime the SA-MAC is activated; the SACC Coordinator will work with the local Agency WFDSS leads to activate the group. It may also be activated by a specific agency as needed. The DSC will be identified and will be responsible for staffing the unit based on current and predicted workload.

# DSC Logistics Need

* Computer workspace for up to 8 personnel (desk, power, internet access for multi-agency employees).
* 3 phones, at least one with speakerphone capabilities.
* Color Printer.
* Plotter (if available).
* Copy machine (availability @ SACC or other office may work).
* Office supplies (pens, highlighters, staplers, 3 hole punch, copy paper, sticky notes, writing tablets).
* MAC/SACC phone list.

# DSC Work Requests and Prioritization

## Fire Behavior Analysis Requests

When a request for an analysis is submitted in WFDSS, there is no automated way to alert the Fire Behavior Specialists that a request exists. If a local Fire Behavior Specialist is not available, the local incident needs to contact the DSC Lead or Fire Behavior Specialist to ask for assistance. The DSC will monitor fire behavior requests in WFDSS and keep track of analysis needs.

If an incident is expected to be long duration and/or need extensive analysis for management of the fire, the DSC Lead will assist in finding a qualified analyst to work locally. Generally, if a fire is managed by a Type 1 or 2 IMT, local analyst capabilities are recommended (i.e., the analysis should be done by someone at the incident, not at the DSC).

## Prioritization of Requests

The DSC Lead will coordinate requests with the Jurisdictional Agencies. Approval of the prioritized list will be done by the SA-MAC group. The prioritization may include but not be limited to the following considerations:

* Emergent fires
* Fires in proximity to identified values
* Fires without obvious natural barriers
* Fires with long-term potential
* Politically or publically sensitive fires
* Fires with potential for high costs

## Ordering and Coding of Time

All resource orders will be coordinated through the DSC Lead. All DSC resources will be ordered on the MAC/SACC support code. Time, however, will be charged to specific incidents, as appropriate. Out of state resources may be ordered as virtual positions and work from their home unit.

# Appendix A: Decision Support Center Brochure

The DSC Support Brochure is available at the following link:

ftp://ftp.nifc.gov/Incident\_Specific\_Data/SOUTHERN/SACC\_Data/

# Appendix B: Organization Chart

# Appendix C: FBAN Operations

The FBAN serves two main functions:

1. Provide fire behavior services to the MAC and GACC. This is done through data analysis and coordination with field FBAN’s on current situation
2. Support the DSC Group by providing oversight to analysis.

The analyst needs to stay focused on the “BIG” picture and not get too localized. Products generated, briefings and analysis needs to remain broad in scale and kept simple for the intended audience (whoever that might be). If local fire behavior analytical services are not available, then the FBAN can provide support until sufficient local help arrives or conditions warrant dedicated analysis support.

The FBAN will be located at SACC to provide interaction with meteorologists, intelligence, and provide briefings. When the DSC is activated, the FBAN should provide oversight to the output of the fire behavior specialists (and could serve as the DSC Lead during quiet periods). Communications with the DSC Analysts is necessary to share what is being observed out in the field, how well models accurately depict observed conditions, and general information sharing. Co-location of the DSC and FBAN will promote this coordination.

**Daily Schedule** (duties will change, this is a starting point)

0700 Gather quick assessment of current events from Intel officer and/or MET

0800 Initiate information gathering from sources

0900 Begin development of daily outlook utilizing data sources and provide to Intel for post by

1000 SACC Floor Briefing

1030 Morning status check for WFDSS analysis products – provide feedback/brief

1300 MAC meeting

1400 Afternoon status check with Intel officers, Fire Behavior Specialists and MET

1530 Conduct field calls as necessary, not needed everyday unless conditions warrant

1600 MAC Support Group Team meeting

1700 SACC Floor briefing

1900 Status check of current conditions/issues and begin development of tomorrow’s plan

Products produced by the FBAN can be found on the Incident Specific Data ftp site: ftp://ftp.nifc.gov/Incident\_Specific\_Data/SOUTHERN/SACC\_Data/

# Appendix D: GIS operations

The GISS provides daily updated map documents pertaining to Fire Activity and the location of resources. This position works with the Fire Behavior Specialist and FBAN to produce map documents in support of on-going fires. Map documents will be provided for webpage posting and display in the Regional Forest Service office as well as SACC and other office locations for this reason; maps need to be clear, neat, and readable. Maps will also be shared with other agencies within the MAC.

The GISS needs to be able to work within time constraints to provide accurate and readable map documents in a timely fashion. Products are sometimes needed quickly and may require working longer than normal hours.

File management is essential – keeping records in an organized manner is important to quickly finding data and creating map.

**Daily Schedule** (duties may change at anytime depending on the need)

0700 – Gather updated information from the web and other sources to update the Fire Activity Map

0800 - Provide of copies Activity Map to the DSC for Stand-up meeting with the RF

0800 – Check the GACC website for the updated Aviation Summary and print MAC previous day briefing to update the Resource Maps

0900 – Update Resource Maps for IMT and Aviation and have them ready for the 1300 MAC Briefing

1100 – Process WDFSS maps as needed by the FBAN/Fire Behavior Specialist

1700 – Review web sources for updated information for Resource Activity Map to be attached to the SA-MACC-1900 Briefing paper

1900 – Provide PIO with updated Fire Activity Map

Duties are influenced by fire activity and priorities can be changed.

Products produced by the GIS operations groups are located either in the Incident Folder or in the SACC\_Data folder on the incident specific data ftp site:

ftp://ftp.nifc.gov/Incident\_Specific\_Data/SOUTHERN/

# Appendix E: WFDSS Operations (Analysis and Decision-making)

This position assists with both analysis and decision making aspects in WFDSS depending on skills and needs of the incidents. Fire behavior analyses are completed as needed for incidents. The fire behavior specialist can utilize: Google Earth, the situation report, field contacts, information from intelligence group, etc. to obtain information on which fires may need assistance. The analyst may obtain assistance from the FBAN to verify if outputs seem reasonable. There may also be an FBAN or other positions on site who may assist with additional information gathering and verification / validation that outputs are reasonable. The GISS may be available to produce maps for distribution as requested. Prioritization of assignments and requests for analysis will be coordinated by the Decision Support Center Lead.

Requests to review information contained within WFDSS may be received from incidents. Decision-making assistance may vary from a decision review to actual inputs. Ensure the “owner” of the incident provides proper access within WFDSS to complete the requested tasks. For decision-making support, each WFDSS specialist needs to become familiar with local Agency requirements to provide consistent support.

The threshold for incident analysis needs to be considered—if an incident is expected to be long duration, with significant analysis needs, an analyst should be embedded with the IMT to provide better support, with more local information on fire behavior and management actions.

The schedule for WFDSS operations needs to be flexible based on emerging incidents and their needs. Typically, the day starts with gathering information on current fires from Google Earth, Intel, FBAN, etc.

Ongoing – Coordination with field, receive and process requests, obtain information/feedback from FBAN, inform GISS of available data, monitor WFDSS for possible needs.

Be prepared to travel to an incident anywhere in the region to provide support to an incident.