

August 18, 2009

ITEM NO.: Approval of a new National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis

THAT: In accordance with Montana University System Policy, the Board of Regents of Higher Education authorizes The University of Montana-Missoula to create a National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis.

EXPLANATION: Wildland fires are increasing in severity and frequency, fire seasons are growing longer, and the cost of managing wildfires continues to rise. Development of the wildland-urban interface combined with population growth results in fires that pose an ever-increasing risk to people and property. Today's fire managers must consider the issues of risk, cost, and safety when making decisions about an inherently unpredictable phenomenon. The scientific research community can help fire and land managers make better decisions about this growing challenge.

The University of Montana's National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis provides research, service, education, training, and technology and application development to help active, on-the-ground natural resource managers make more effective and safe fire and land management decisions.

The planned scope of practice for the National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis includes six primary goals:

1. Advance the effectiveness of fire management operations to improve firefighter safety, public safety, and natural resource protection;
2. Contribute knowledge and applications that can be used in planning and implementation of management outcomes to sustain ecological processes while providing socially desirable goods and services from forest and grassland ecosystems;
3. Develop assets and capabilities among natural resource professionals engaged in the administration and management of forests and grasslands;
4. Expand knowledge of remote sensing, social and economic concerns, and information technology systems. Promote the applications and utility of these systems in addressing fire and fuels management through research and educational programs at The University of Montana;
5. Develop education, training, and information delivery programs that meet the specific operational needs of the fire management community; and
6. Develop information and decision support for planning and management of wildland fires.