

MyFireCommunity Center

How, Why, and When We're Doing This

The Knowledge Management System* (KMS) strategies, tactics and tools already in development provide an effective way to identify, preserve and distribute knowledge that already exists in the wildland fire community. Significant effort was expended by the Lessons Learned Center in surveying the end users, knowledge activists and subject matter experts in wildland fire about what their KMS should provide and how it should function. An extensive literature search of KMS design, development and implementation revealed that projects that **focused upon networks of people** were most often successful and sustained. In those successful projects, enabling technologies were not the focus but were used to support and promote community of practice networks.

The Lessons Learned Center's strategy to put the wildland fire community to work as a learning organization involves two simultaneous efforts:

- (1) In the pilot/prototype project, create a successful knowledge management system (KMS) prototype with the prescribed fire and fire use Community of Practice (CoP). The pilot KMS focuses on fuels reduction benefiting the wildland/urban interface in a single region. Longer term, we will continue this effort with additional projects to replicate the successful KMS prototype with CoP's in fuels and fire management (e.g., Suppression, Agency Administrators, etc.) in multiple regions.
- (2) Build CoP networks to improve the transfer and retention of information about: collecting intelligence, benchmarking, how to examine past experiences and learn from them, how to experiment with new knowledge applications, how to transfer knowledge through multiple venues, and how to do CoP problem solving in a systematic way. These specific practices and processes are required to ensure successful implementation and sustainment of learning organization principles.

Initial financial support for the KMS project was received in FY03 from the fuels reduction and wildland/urban interface (WUI) interests from the Department of the Interior land management agencies (NPS, USFWS, BIA, and BLM.) The "Fuels Reduction in the WUI Regional KMS Pilot Project" was awarded to KW Tunnell/Benchmark Research & Safety and the KMS prototype creation began in October 2003.

* Knowledge management can be defined as "a discipline dedicated to more intentional means of people creating and sharing knowledge--data, information, and understanding in a social context--to make the right decisions and take the right actions."