

Association for Fire Ecology (AFE) Strategic Plan, 2022-2027



Our Mission

We are dedicated to improving the knowledge of fire ecology and uses of fire in resilient landscape management.

Common Values and Beliefs

- Wildland fire is a critical ecological process in most ecoregions of the world.
- Global ecosystems and their fire regimes show long-term evolutionary relationships with fire.
- Human uses of fire have been intimately interwoven with natural fire regimes for millennia and the use of fire is a core component of healthy human and ecological systems.
- Land management and stewardship practices should support fire's ecological role, whether by maintaining fire on the landscape or reintroducing fire to ecosystems with altered fire regimes.
- Fire ecology science and methods can productively inform policy and land management decisions in fire-adapted ecosystems.
- Land management and science benefit from including multiple perspectives and diverse teams of people.
- We foster a sense of belonging and respect for people representing different demographics, lifeways, disciplines, and professional roles.

Position

AFE is the leading international professional society for basic and applied fire ecology knowledge, management application, and informing policy and management.

Long-range Vision – 2050

The Association of Fire Ecology is going places! In our first two decades, we became firmly ensconced in wildfire science and management through hosting well-attended conferences and events, developing a respected journal, and growing our membership to more than 500 people. But we can and will do more!

By 2050, the open-source journal *Fire Ecology* will be a first-tier wildfire science journal, competing with *Ecosystems*, *Ecological Applications*, and *Ecology* for top-tier fire science papers. We will feature a broad slate of international contributors and subject matter editors each year to represent global disciplinary growth in fire ecology knowledge and applications. Journal impact factors, downloads, and viewing statistics will reflect top-tier status and influence, and the open-source contents will be freely available on websites, podcasts, at conferences, and in media blasts and interviews.

By 2050, our members will be 1,000 strong, coming from all corners of the globe and reflecting people who live in a diversity of ecosystems and represent various scientific disciplines and management solutions. Differing cohorts of age, gender, sexual preference, and ethnicities will be well-represented in membership, leadership, plenary and keynote talks, organizing committees, and board composition.

Over the next two decades, over 500 of our members will be professionally certified and over 20 universities will host tiered certification pathways. The Student Association for Fire Ecology (SAFE) will have chapters in most countries with a need for ongoing fire management, and our student members will be supported as they become the next generation of fire ecologists and managers.

Finally, wildland fire will be universally acknowledged as a fundamental ecological process and managed for across the globe, where networks of trained fire scientists and practitioners are available to inform policy and management on the importance and uses of fire.

Five-Year Goals and Objectives

Our intention is to weave objectives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) throughout the goals of this plan as the foundation for our interactions with our community and basis for accomplishing all work.

This plan is a living document, and therefore will be evaluated and revised as needed by the AFE Board of Directors.

Goal 1: AFE is the go-to source for international fire ecology events

Objectives:

- 1.1 All AFE events and resulting products provide content on fire ecology science and application
 - Expand the value of conferences, developing presentation libraries for AFE members
 - Develop at least one product from each event for AFE members (e.g., set of recorded presentations, articles, special journal issues)
 - Create an alternating conference schedule to include international events, North American events, and regional events to focus on specific issues
- 1.2 Conference attendance increases by 5% annually and represents diverse, international audiences
 - Employ hybrid and virtual events and track changes in diversity and attendance annually
 - Work with USDA and USDI meetings management to solve travel approval issues
 - Increase discounts, travel grants, and scholarships by 10% annually via partnerships
- 1.3 We represent diverse perspectives and include DEI topics and trainings
 - Ensure that speakers for plenaries, moderators, and those presenting on behalf of AFE represent a diverse cross-section of the wildland fire community
 - Ask session organizers to articulate diversity objectives in their proposals
 - Include workshops, special sessions, or standing tracks to address important topics and build DEI skills (e.g., supporting Indigenous fire and traditional ecological knowledge, removing barriers for women and other underrepresented groups, effective bystander training)
- 1.4 We enhance partnerships with other organizations
 - Co-host events with International Association of Wildland Fire (IAWF), Pau Costa Foundation (PCF), and others
 - Seek new partners (e.g., international organizations, tribal organizations, other professional societies)
 - Partner with the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) Fire Science Exchanges for events in the USA
 - Promote AFE events and programs at other non-AFE events

Goal 2: Fire Ecology is the go-to international, open-access fire science journal

Objectives:

2.1 Increase Fire Ecology's impact and ranking

- Increase impact factor to 4.0
- Increase H5-index ranking to 10
- Increase quartile rankings: Q1 in Forestry; Q2 ranking in ecology

2.2 Grow Fire Ecology's reputation as an international outlet for high-quality, fire-focused research

- Submissions increase from authors outside the U.S. by 10% annually
- One special collection led by non-US guest editors is invited annually by the EIC
- Diversity of continents with low submission rates increases by 10% annually
- EIC invites 5 articles annually on high-impact topics and waives publication costs

2.3 Fire Ecology develops a unique brand with strong author support disseminating cutting-edge research to cross-section of audiences

- Spanish language abstracts continue to be provided
- 5-10 publication waivers are provided annually to early career/underrepresented AFE members
- 5-10 articles/year promoted via podcasts, social media, and research highlights
- 5-10 articles/year invited in allied disciplines to broaden journal's scope
- Downloads from the website increases to 400,000 per year
- Review speeds increase by 5% per year

2.4 Fire Ecology is produced by an engaged, diverse Editorial Board

- AFE Board and Fire Ecology Editorial Board are encouraged to submit one article per year or suggest 1-2 authors or special collection topics per year
- Develop diverse Editorial Board with goals of increasing non-US Associate Editors by 10% annually with equal gender representation
- Editorial Board meets annually to report journal's standing and ensure Associate Editors are supported
- Annually review Editorial Board to maintain only active Associate Editors, determine deficiencies, and publish active and past Editorial Board on journal website
- Increase EIC honorarium as specified in the AFE contract with Springer

2.5 Fire Ecology is aware of Indigenous and First Nations erasure issues and works successfully to prevent their promulgation in the fire ecology literature.

Goal 3: AFE increases fire community engagement by 50%

Objectives:

3.1 We increase membership and audience engagement by 50% over 5 years (10% annually)

- Employ a content-driven membership model in 2022 and explore fees for additional services
 - Newsletters/social media drive people to AFE website, which invites membership and support
- Increase the number of international members and those from underrepresented groups by creating relevant content, events, and networks
- Continue sharing content through our newsletter, social media, and website including
 - Fire Ecology articles (all are open-source)
 - Highlighted research results in podcasts and webinars
 - Hosting information from other organizations, fire science exchanges

- Job opportunities on website
 - IAWF Wildfire Magazine articles
 - Enhance content for members by developing
 - Collections of recorded conference presentations
 - Topical working groups, which could be sponsored by an organization or agency
 - Members' work in blog posts, newsletters, social media
 - Membership directory and diverse and inclusive subject matter expert lists
 - Promote curricula for K-12 teachers (e.g., FireWorks, Fire on the Land, Project Learning Tree)
 - Explore membership and newsletter software and upgrade to more efficient system if needed
- 3.2 We track growth of membership, social media, and website engagement using the following metrics
- Social media shares/comments/followers
 - Website time spent, pages viewed, links clicked
 - Membership numbers, categories, renewals, demographics, and diversity data

Goal 4: AFE doubles participation in SAFE and the Mentoring Futures Program

Objectives:

- 4.1 We increase the number of SAFE activities and trainings being offered to student members
- National SAFE officers host at least 1 activity at every AFE event and develop opportunities for virtual trainings and networking
 - AFE board members/others offer to speak at local chapter events
 - Help create partnerships between NWCG and universities to expand trainings and host courses at events when possible
 - Create an AFE TREX event annually
 - Track and report growth annually
- 4.2 We double the number of members in SAFE and increase the number of active chapters
- Determine needs for international students and initiate 1 international chapter each year
 - Start chapters at colleges with historically underrepresented groups (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans)
 - Seek sponsorships for chapters to reduce any financial challenges
 - Increase communications between AFE and local chapters by holding 2 meetings annually with National SAFE Officers and 1 meeting annually open to all chapter leadership
 - Initiate a process to be an active SAFE chapter through an annual application
 - Track and report growth annually, including member demographics
- 4.3 We double the number of mentor program participants over 5 years, increasing by 20% annually
- Collect and integrate feedback from each cohort annually to improve programs
 - Create at least 1 professional development or career readiness activity each year – members
 - Continue offering Steve Pyne's short writing course, each year – members only
 - Offer mentors and mentees incentives to participate – members only

Goal 5: AFE doubles certifications and recertifications

Objectives:

- 5.1 We implement a mandatory 5-year recertification program
- Make it incumbent on certified individuals to recertify, notify with membership dues

- Attract candidates to recertify (revise website, track growth)
 - Automate online recertification and notifications (mesh with membership DB)
 - Expand the certification committee by 2 members by 2023 to handle additional tasks
- 5.2 We create a new fee structure for certification making it affordable to professional ecologists
- Ramp the fee structure to reflect rigor of evaluation, level of certification, ability to pay
 - Enforce and monitor the membership requirement for certification maintenance
- 5.3 We enhance the value of a certification
- Work with employment agencies to ensure certifications are part of their evaluation process
 - Advertise the certification process at conferences, in journals, magazines
 - Publish a readable/attractive certification guidebook in *Fire Ecology* every 2 years
 - Track demographic data for certified professionals conduct an analysis to determine their perceived value of certification
 - Expand the program internationally and ensure international applicants are competitive in the certification process
- 5.4 We investigate new certification pathways
- Evaluate and potentially add new pathways for certification
 - Add and update continuing education requirements
 - Create University certification levels (Instructor to Full professor)
- 5.5 We expand academic certifications
- Recruit colleges and universities to consider certification
 - Expand our academic certification to non-US universities and colleges
 - Include a lower level of academic certification to recognize potential grow into Fire Ecology
- 5.6 We conduct a review of academic and professional certification requirements every 5 years
- Create an ad hoc board and member committee every 5 years to review and revise guidebook

Goal 6: The AFE fire science expert community informs key policy and management decisions

Objectives:

- 6.1 We position AFE as key fire science experts to inform policy and management
- Create a diverse and inclusive subject matter expert (SME) database as a joint activity with IAWF
 - Review and publish protocols for developing and presenting positions
 - Create/adopt timely position papers as needed
 - Connect to agency policy offices providing SMEs for topics each year
 - Develop relevant policy briefs on ecological land management, as needed
- 6.2 We develop/maintain key connections with agencies, funding organizations, reliable media outlets

Goal 7: AFE assembles sufficient organizational capacity to implement this plan's goals

Objectives:

- 7.1 We create sufficient capacity to achieve all goals of this plan
- Diversify the board and committees by 2023 to include a broader range of domain experts and international members and to ensure representation in gender, race, ethnicity, and other demographic characteristics
- 7.2 We re-align committee structure with this plan by 2022
- Update committee charters as needed
 - Recruit new committee members and plan for succession of chairs as needed

- 7.3 We obtain a capacity building grant by mid-2023 to add fundraising capacity (staff or contractor)
- 7.4 We contract for external communications and bi-annual Congress support, as needed
- 7.5 We increase member engagement in key roles by 10% each year
- 7.7 We increase student volunteer and intern engagement by 10% each year

Goal 8: AFE achieves a sustainable financial trajectory

Objectives:

- 8.1 We double AFE funding for organizational/administrative expenses by 2024 and consistently have operating budgets that increase that amount
 - Estimate our annual budget from capacity-building successes in Goal 7
 - Create an annual operating reserve that is greater than 2-3 years of operating expenses + 5% per year
 - Develop and implement a long-range fundraising plan within 1.5 years
 - Expand the number of sponsors and average sponsor contribution by 20%/year
 - Solicit key NGO clients, land trusts, land management organizations
 - Expand relationships with agency, corporate sponsors, secure resources
 - Engage sponsors on wildfire, climate, forest management topics
 - Expand USDA, USDI, DOD connections, USEPA, western and SE States
 - Engage the Forest Carbon Climate Change Coalition & Fire Science Exchanges
 - Identify and secure funds for wildfire science education from NSF, others
 - Expand non-US sources and internationalization support (Foundations, UNEP)
 - Run a financial campaign every 5 years to expand the operating reserve or endowment
- 8.2 We ensure the pricing for event registration secures 5-10% annual growth
- 8.3 We create sponsor recruitment materials
 - Include a menu of organizational needs for donors
 - Include success stories stemming from sponsorships
- 8.4 We co-create with SAFE a fundraising tool kit for chapters

Goal 9: AFE acknowledges excellence in fire ecology research and practice

- 9.1 Increase nominations for achievement awards by 20-25 AFE members each year through improved board outreach
- 9.2 Increase by 10% each year the number of SAFE Awards by working directly with SAFE Faculty Advisors to obtain nominations.
- 9.3 Work with International Chapters to obtain at least 2 qualified nominations.