

Chapter – 2 Policy, Leadership and Guidance

Introduction

The following policies are endorsed by the departmental Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to provide consistent fire management practices among federal Wildland Fire Management (WFM) agencies.

The statutes which authorize and provide the means for managing wildland fire on or threatened lands under the jurisdiction of the DOI are identified in the Department Manual, Part 620. The information within this chapter describes the general types of wildland fire and respective standards and qualifications.

Federal Wildland Fire Policy

In 2001, an update of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy was completed and approved by the Secretaries' of the Interior and Agriculture. On April 21, 2004 the Secretaries approved the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy.

On May 2, 2008, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) issued a memorandum entitled Modification of Federal Wildland Fire Policy Guidance, which modified policy statements made in the 2004 strategy document. As directed by the WFLC, the modifications were tested in a number of field units in the 2008 fire season and then incorporated into this document.

In 2009, The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) issued a memorandum to the NWCG that: 1) affirms the soundness of the Review and Update of the 1995 *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (January 2001); 2) which reiterates the policy changes stated in the May 2, 2008 WFLC memorandum entitled Modification of Federal Wildland Fire Policy Guidance; 3) states that the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) will replace existing analysis and decision processes; and 4) confirms that the *Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (June 20, 2003) is replaced by the Guidance for Implementation of *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (February, 2009).

This guidance also calls for the increased dialogue and collaboration between federal agencies and Tribal, local, and State entities as plans are updated and implemented to manage wildfires in order to accomplish resource and protection objectives.

Guiding Principles

- Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity.
- The role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent will be incorporated into the planning process. Federal agency land and resource management plans set the objectives for the use and desired future condition of the various public lands.
- Fire Management Plans, programs, and activities support land and resource management plans and their implementation.
- Sound risk management is a foundation for all fire management activities. Risks and uncertainties relating to fire management activities must be understood, analyzed, communicated, and managed as they relate to the cost of either doing or not doing an activity. Net gains to the public benefit will be an important component of decisions.
- Fire management programs and activities are economically viable, based upon values to be protected, costs, and land and resource management objectives. Federal agency administrators are adjusting and reorganizing programs to reduce costs and increase efficiencies. As part of this process, investments in fire management activities must be evaluated against other agency programs in order to effectively accomplish the overall mission, set short and long-term priorities, and clarify management accountability.
- Fire management plans and activities are based upon the best available science. Knowledge and experience are developed among all federal wildland fire management agencies. An active fire research program combined with interagency collaboration provides the means to make these tools available to all fire managers.
- Fire Management Plans and activities incorporate public health and environmental quality considerations.
- Federal, State, Tribal, local, interagency, and international coordination and cooperation are essential. Increasing costs and smaller work forces require that public agencies pool their human resources to successfully deal with the ever-increasing and more complex fire management tasks.

Full collaboration among federal wildland fire management agencies; and between international, State, Tribal, and local governments and private entities result in a mobile fire management work force available for the full range of public needs.

- Standardization of policies and procedures among federal wildland fire management agencies is an ongoing objective. Consistency of plans and operations provides the fundamental platform upon which federal wildland fire management agencies can cooperate, integrate fire activities across agency boundaries, and provide leadership for cooperation with State, Tribal, and local fire management organizations.

Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

Safety

Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire management plans and activities must reflect this commitment.

Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability

The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve ecosystem sustainability, including its interrelated ecological, economic, and social components

Response to Wildland Fire

Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource management plans, then is applied on a landscape scale, and across agency boundaries as available. Response to wildland fires is based on ecological, social and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources and values to be protected, dictate the appropriate response to a fire.

Use of Wildland Fire

Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain, and enhance resources and, as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role. Use of fire will be based on land and resource management plans. Associated fire management plans and will follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

Emergency stabilization and rehabilitation efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.

Protection Priorities

The protection of human life is the single, overriding priority. Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be done based on the values at risk, human, health and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed to an incident, human resources become the highest value to be protected.

Wildland Urban Interface

The operational roles of federal agencies as partners in the wildland urban interface are wildland firefighting, hazard fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire suppression is the responsibility of Tribal, State, or local governments. Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural protection activities under formal fire protection agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the partners, including funding. (Some Federal agencies have full structural protection authority for their facilities on lands they administer and may also enter into formal agreements to assist State and local governments with full structural protection.)

Planning

Fire management plans must provide for firefighter and public safety; include fire management strategies; tactics; and alternatives. They should address values to be protected and public health issues. They must be consistent with resource management objectives, activities of the area, and environmental laws and regulations.

Science

Fire management plans and programs will be based on a foundation of sound science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Information needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be made available to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the development of land management plans, fire management plans, and implementation plans.

Preparedness

Interior agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective programs in support of land and resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment, and management oversight.

Suppression

Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected, consistent with resource objectives.

Prevention

Interior agencies will work together and with their partners and other affected groups and individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.

Standardization

Interior agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms, training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, values-to-be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire management activities.

Interagency Cooperation

Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression, fire use, restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, research, and education will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of cooperators and partners.

Communication and Education

Interior agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire management policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs. These programs will be continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of information among all affected agencies and organizations.

Agency Administrator and Employee Roles

Agency administrators will ensure that their employees are trained, certified and made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally, regionally, and nationally as the situation demands. Employees with operational, administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire program as necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and will be held accountable for making employees available.

Evaluation

Interior agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 and subsequent Federal Fire Policy revisions. The evaluation will assure accountability, facilitate resolution of areas of conflict, and identify resource shortages and agency priorities.

Guidance for Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

The following guidelines should be used to provide consistent implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy.

- Wildland fire management agencies will use common standards for all aspects of their fire management programs to facilitate effective collaboration among cooperating agencies.
- Agencies and bureaus will review, update, and develop agreements that clarify the jurisdictional inter-relationships and define the roles and responsibilities among local, State, Tribal and Federal fire protection entities.
- Responses to wildland fire will be coordinated across levels of government regardless of the jurisdiction at the ignition source.
- Fire management planning will be interagency in scope and developed on a landscape scale.
- Wildland fire is a general term describing any non-structure fire that occurs in the wildland environment. Wildland fires are categorized into two distinct types:
 - Wildfires – Unplanned ignitions or prescribed fires that are declared wildfires
 - Prescribed Fires – Planned ignitions

- A wildland fire may be concurrently managed for one or more objectives and objectives can change as the fire spreads across the landscape. Objectives are affected by changes in fuels, weather, topography; varying social understanding and tolerance; and involvement of other governmental jurisdictions having different missions and objectives.
- Management response to a wildland fire on federal land is based on objectives established on the applicable Land/Resource Management Plan and/or the Fire Management Plan.
- Initial action on human-caused wildfire will be to suppress the fire at the lowest cost with the fewest negative consequences with respect to firefighter and public safety.
- Managers will use the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) which is a decision-support process to guide and document wildfire management decisions. The process will provide situational assessment, analyze hazards and risk, define implementation actions, and document decisions and rationale for those decisions.

Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

Each of the wildland fire management agencies participating in the review will adopt the *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (February 2009) and review and revise, as appropriate, all manuals, handbooks, guidebooks, plans, agreements and other pertinent documents.

The NWCG will adopt the *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (February 2009) and review and revise, as appropriate, all interagency training courses, operational guides, standards, terminology, reporting requirements, skill/competency/ qualification/ certification requirements and other pertinent documents.

The federal fire directors, in collaboration with State, local and Tribal fire managers and public and non-government organizations, will communicate direction stated in the *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (February 2009) with internal and external audiences to foster understanding and support for the complexity of wildland fire management.

The Federal fire directors will revise or develop accountability standards, performance measures, and tracking systems to assess if resource and protection objectives are met during the course of management on all wildland fires.

Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Management Policy (1998)

The Department's Wildland Fire Management Policy is cited in the Departmental Manual, Part 620, Chapter 1.

Secretary of the Interior

The Secretary of the Interior through the Directors of the BLM, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), are responsible for WFM activities of the Department (including such activities when contracted for, in whole or in part, with other agencies or Tribes) under the statutes cited in 620 DM 1.1.

Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget (PMB)

The Assistant Secretary - PMB is responsible for coordination of strategic level inter-bureau, inter-agency, and inter-functional wildland fire policy development and oversight. Principle responsibility for these functions within PMB lies with the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC). Advice and recommendations on wildland fire policy and program issues are provided to the Secretary and other policy officials.

Assistant Secretaries for Land and Minerals Management, Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and Indian Affairs

The Assistant Secretaries for Land and Minerals Management, Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and Indian Affairs are responsible for wildland fire policy development and oversight within their respective bureaus; and for coordination of inter-bureau and inter-agency policy development with the Assistant Secretary - PMB.

Bureau of Indian Affairs Fire Management Policy

Policy and responsibility for the BIA WFM program is documented in the *Indian Affairs Manual* (IAM), Part 90, Chapter 1. This part identifies the authorities, standards, and procedures that have general and continuing applicability to wildland fire activities under the jurisdiction of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs.

Mission

To enhance the quality of life, promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, American Indian Tribes, and Alaska Natives. We will accomplish this through the delivery of quality services and by maintaining government-to-government relationships within the spirit of self-determination.

Wildland Fire Management Objectives

To provide for firefighter and public safety as the first priority in every WFM activity. To provide for effective wildland fire protection, fire use and hazardous fuels management, and timely rehabilitation on Indian forest and range lands held in Trust by the United States of America, based on management plans approved by the Indian land owner. Preparedness will be based on the most efficient level of meeting Tribal goals and objectives for the program, utilizing an interagency approach to meet local, regional, and national resource needs. Implementation of Tribal management of the program will be facilitated under Self-Determination, as requested by Tribal government.

Responsibility

The following positions are responsible for WFM activities of the Bureau (including such activities when contracted for, in whole or in part, with other Agencies or Tribes) under the statutes cited in 620 DM 1.1.

Bureau Director for BIA:

Responsibility for the implementation of an effective WFM program.
Responsible for implementation of policies and recommendations in the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

Director, Branch of Wildland Fire Management:

Responsible for the development of policies and standards for firefighter safety and training and for the prevention, suppression and use of wildland fires on Indian Trust lands.

Regional Directors:

Responsible for ensuring activities and/or plans reflect a commitment to safety and a state of readiness commensurate with values at risk to minimize wildland fire loss.

Agency Superintendents:

Responsible for ensuring every wildland firefighter, fireline supervisor and fire manager takes positive action to obtain compliance with established standards and safe firefighting practices.

Wildland Fire Program Leadership**Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC)**

WFLC is a cooperative, interagency organization dedicated to achieving consistent implementation of the goals, actions, and policies in the National Fire Plan and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

The WFLC consists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Undersecretary and Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, and the Chief of the Forest Service; the U.S. Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget, and the Directors of the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the U.S. Geological Survey. The Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration represents the Department of Homeland Security. In addition to the federal officials, the Council includes a State Governor representing the National Governors' Association, a State Governor representing the Western Governors' Association, the President of the Intertribal Timber Council, a County Commissioner representing the National Association of Counties and a Mayor representing the National League of Cities.

Federal Fire Policy Council (FFPC)

The primary purpose of the Federal Fire Policy Council is to provide a common national federal agency approach to wildland fire management. The Council sets strategic policy and program direction, provides coordinated recommendations to the Secretaries of Agriculture, the Interior, and Homeland Security and resolves inconsistencies among and between federal wildland fire programs. The Federal Fire Policy Council shall be composed of the USDA Under Secretary – National Resources and Environment, Deputy Undersecretary for National Resources and Environment, the Chief of the Forest Service and the Deputy Chief of State and Private Forestry, and for DOI the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Safety, Resource Protection, and Emergency Services; the Bureau Directories of the BIA, the BLM, the FWS, the NPS, and the US Geological Survey; the Administrator of DHS-US Fire Administration.

Fire Executive Council (FEC)

The FEC provides coordinated federal interagency executive level wildland fire policy leadership, direction, and program oversight.

The FEC is composed of the Director, USDA Forest Service FAM; Deputy Directors; Director, DOI OWFC; Director, Office of Aviation Services; Fire Executives from the BLM, National Park Service Bureau of Indian Affairs, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Fire Administration, Chief, Emergency Response Support Branch, National Fire Programs.

Interior Fire Executive Council (IFEC)

The Interior Fire Executive Council (IFEC) provides coordination interagency executive level wildland fire policy leadership, direction, and program oversight. IFEC is the focal point for discussing wildland fire policy issues that affect the DOI and provides a forum for gathering the interests of the DOI bureaus to formulate a DOI recommendation and/or position to be taken forward to the Wildland Fire Executive Council (WFEC). The IFEC is composed of the Director, Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC) the four DOI fire directors and their respective senior executive, and the Director, Office of Aviation Services.

National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)

NWCG provides a forum in which issues, both short and long-term; involving standards and program implementation can be coordinated, discussed, and resolved. NWCG initiates actions to improve coordination and integration of State, Tribal, and Federal wildland fire programs while recognizing individual agency missions. NWCG will provide national leadership and establish, implement, maintain, and communicate policy, standards, guidelines, and qualifications for wildland fire program management.

The NWCG Executive Board is composed of representative of the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, the National Association of State Foresters, the Intertribal Timber Council and DHS-U.S. Fire Administration.

Wildland Fire Coordinating Groups

Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC)

The OWFC is responsible for managing and overseeing and coordinating the Department of Interior's WFM program and policy.

National Multi-Agency Coordination Group (NMAC)

The NMAC consists of representatives from the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fire Administration and the National Associate of State Foresters. This group is located at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). The group establishes national priorities and provides national leadership and direction to wildland fire activities. Additional information on NMAC groups is documented in the *National Interagency Mobilization Guide* and local Geographic Area Operation Guides.

Geographic Multi-Agency Coordination Groups (GMAC)

A GMAC is activated at the local geographic area level whenever wildland fire activities are affecting more than one agency or there is competition for incident resources. There may also be a need for geographic areas to activate GMAC when the National Preparedness Level is at 5 enabling Area response to requests/direction from the NMAC.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Under provisions of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 93-233, as amended) and the Executive Order 12148, Federal Emergency Management (July 20, 1979, as amended) WFM agencies can provide assistance to Presidential declared disasters and emergencies nationwide. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the overall coordinator of the National Response Framework which guides 26 Federal agencies and the American Red Cross in response activities. In the Framework, the USDA Forest Service is the primary agency responsible for emergency support functions under firefighting.

National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC)

The NICC is located at NIFC, Boise, Idaho. The mission of NICC is the cost-effective and timely coordination of land management agency emergency response for wildland fire at the national-level. This is accomplished through planning, situation monitoring and expediting resources orders between the BIA Regions, BLM States, NPS Regions, FWS Regions, USFS Regions, National Weather Service Regions and other cooperating agencies. The NICC coordinates the movement of all resources across geographic area dispatch boundaries not covered by local operating plans or other direction found in the *National Interagency Mobilization Guide*.

Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACC)

The GACCs provide support to local-level fire management organizations when resource needs exceed a local unit's capability. The GACC is responsible for movement of resources within its geographic area of responsibility to meet the situational needs.

Wildland Fire Interagency Agreements for Coordination and Cooperation

Interagency cooperation is vital in attaining WFM program objectives. The ability of a single agency to implement a WFM program is limited without coordination and assistance from other organizations. Interagency cooperation and coordination of shared resources and common activities is imperative at all organizational levels. The following agreements and organizations provide program direction, coordination and/or support to the WFM program.

Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture Interagency Agreement

The WFM programs work cooperatively under an Interagency Agreement entitled "Interagency Agreement for Fire Management between the BLM, BIA, NPS, FWS of the DOI and the USFS of the United States Department of Agriculture". The Agreement Number for BIA is P00C141A9871.

International Agreements

Agreements are in place between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand that authorize the exchange of fire fighting resources. For more information, reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Memorandum of Understanding with Fire Departments

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a general framework for cooperation and coordination among DOI agencies, NASF, USFA, and the USFS in the delivery of wildland fire assistance to fire departments. (Reference agreement number K00441-3-194)

Interagency Agreement with US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service

This agreement addresses matters related to compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act related to the wildfire suppression, wildfire rehabilitation, and hazardous fuels treatment activities.

National Standards - Guides and Handbooks

National Interagency Mobilization Guide (NFES 2092)

The *National Interagency Mobilization Guide* identifies procedures which guide the operations of multi-agency logistical support activity throughout the coordination system. The guide is intended to facilitate interagency dispatch coordination ensuring the timeliest and cost effective incident support services available are provided.

Incident Response Pocket Guide (PMS 461)

The *Incident Response Pocket Guide* (IRPG) is a wildland fire operations guide that encompasses leadership, fire fighting strategies, safety, risk, aviation and other miscellaneous references.

Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide (PMS 310-1)

The *Wildland Fire Qualification Systems Guide* provides guidance to participating agencies and organizations for the establishment of standards for wildland fire personnel. Personnel meeting the established standards are qualified for mobilization beyond their geographic area. The qualifications system described in the guide is a performance based qualification system. Components of the qualifications system are: position task books, training courses, job aids, and agency certification.

Fireline Handbook (PMS 410-1)

The *Fireline Handbook* is a field reference guide for personnel of wildland fire agencies using the Incident Command System (ICS) in response to wildland fire incidents. The objective of this handbook is to provide an interagency pocket guide for wildland fire suppression personnel.

Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide

The *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide* provide standardized procedures, specifically associated with the planning and implementation of prescribed fire.

Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (PMS 902)

The *Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook* (IIBMH) is designed to aid participating agencies in working together in the business and administrative aspect of wildland fire. The handbook describes procedures for maintenance of financial records for personnel, equipment and supplies. It relates to emergency procurement authority to support the incident, cooperative agreements with other public agencies and the private sector, and claims against the US for property loss or damages and personal injury or death.

The Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response Guidebook and Interagency Burned Area Rehabilitation Guidebook

These guides describe the authority, administration, standards and implementation process for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation on burned-over lands.