



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, DC 20240

JAN 16 2014

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors
Attention: Forestry/Fire Management

From: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Subject: Prescribed Fire Policy and Direction

Purpose: This memorandum issues guidance for implementing the September 2013 Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (Rx Fire Guide) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) supplements to the Rx Fire Guide.

Policy/Action: When planning and implementing prescribed fire operations, BIA and Tribes (when federal funds are being utilized) must adhere to the Rx Fire Guide <http://www.nwccg.gov/pms/pms.htm> in addition to the BIA supplements (Business Rules Handbook 2008 and Blue Book 2013) which identify additional prescribed fire planning and implementation applicable standards. Agencies/Tribes may choose to provide more restrictive standards and policy direction, however, they must adhere to the minimum standards identified in the guide.

All new prescribed fire plans and plans currently under development must meet the standards identified in the September 2013 RX Fire Guide and BIA supplemental standards. Prescribed fire plans approved before the issuance of this memorandum must, at a minimum, include the new *Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization (PMS 485)* and *Prescribed Fire Go/No-Go Checklist (PMS 486)* for use in fiscal year 2014. All prescribed fire plans will fully comply with the 2013 RX Fire Guide by October 1, 2014.

Background: The Rx Fire Guide has existed since September 2006 and provides policy, direction, and standardized procedures when planning and implementing prescribed fire for the five Federal land management agencies. It was updated in 2008 and in 2011, an interagency review of the guide was conducted requiring the following:

- Provide prescribed fire planning and implementation policy clarification without creating new requirements (where possible)
- Address agency concerns, and revision topics, while incorporating current research and best available science
- Incorporate risk management concepts in the Rx Fire Guide where appropriate
- Ensure consistency with new wildfire terminology and concepts where possible

- Address long-term/landscape scale prescribed fire without creating additional process

The updated September 2013 Rx Fire Guide defines minimally acceptable policy for prescribed fire planning and implementation; significant changes are identified in Attachment.

If you have any questions relating to this policy please contact Mark Jackson, Assistant Director of Fire Use and Fuels, at (208) 387-5041.

Attachment – Changes to the Interagency Prescribed Fire and Implementation Guide

Changes to the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide

The September 2013 Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide identifies the following changes to prescribed fire planning and implementation policy:

- Prescribed Fire Plans - Added allowances for programmatic prescribed fire plans.
- Element 2a - Changed the *Agency Administrator Go No Go Checklist* to the *Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization* and clarified its intent and use. Also, this checklist is now identified as an individual NWCG publication (PMS 485).
- Element 2b - The *Prescribed Fire Go No Go Checklist* is now identified as an individual NWCG publication (PMS 486).
- Element 4a - Description of Prescribed Fire Area, Physical Description: The template adds identification and description of ignition units.
- Element 4b - Description of Prescribed Fire Area, Vegetation and Fuels Description: The template adds description of the percent of the ignition unit composed of each vegetative type and the corresponding fuel model(s).
- Element 4d - Description of Prescribed Fire Area, Maps: The template identifies 2 required maps and provides for 3 optional but recommended maps.
- Element 7 – Prescription: Clarified that in some cases spatial fire behavior modeling may be needed or desirable to establish the prescription window, holding, and contingency plans.
- Element 17 - Contingency Plan: Replaces Trigger Points with Management Action Points (MAPS). Clarified intent and flexibility when using MAPs.
- Element 18 – Wildfire Conversion: Changed from Wildfire Conversion to Wildfire Declaration and revised the criteria for declaring a wildfire reflecting the changes to Element 17 and the 2009 Federal Fire Policy Implementation Guidance.
- Reviews - Provides re-write and review content requirements.
- Refreshers - Added a section on burn boss refresher requirements (per agency requirements)

The guide has also been updated to include the following:

- Removed the body of Appendix A: Prescribed Fire Plan Template and included it as a separate editable document.
- Lessons Learned - The lessons learned presented in the guide represent a synthesis of significant events, interactions and discussions with individual burn bosses and other subject matter experts. They are not policy requirements. The intent is to promote organizational learning and improve both organizational and individual performance in prescribed fire planning and implementation. They are included as reminders for consideration and discussion as the plan is being prepared or implemented on the ground.
- Risk Management - The guide now includes a section on Risk Management. This section describes the risk management process and how it should be incorporated into prescribed fire planning and implementation. However, this is not the BLM Risk Management Process.
- References - Updated references.
- Added Appendix B - Provides information on how to obtain Basic Smoke Management Practices (BSMPs) to help the plan preparer and implementation personnel mitigate the impacts of smoke to public health, public safety and nuisance, and visibility.
- Added Appendix C - Contingency Planning Aids as a complement to the changes in Element 17 and 18.