

Chapter - 2

Program Policy, Leadership and Guidance

A. Introduction

The following policies are accepted and endorsed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior. They provide for consistent fire management practices among federal WFM agencies and the foundation from which to develop and guide BIA wildland fire operations.

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

B. 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*. This document directs the agencies to work together to develop common language, unified guidance and direction for all agencies and bureau manuals, handbooks and guidelines to complete final implementation of the policy.

1. Elements of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy

a. Safety

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

b. 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.

c. Response to Wildland Fire

Fire is a critical natural process and as such will be integrated into land and resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, and across agency boundaries.

CHAPTER 2 - POLICY

d. 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 approved Fire Management Plans and will follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.

e. Rehabilitation and Restoration

Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, and safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.

f. 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 based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection.

g. Wildland Urban Interface

The organizational roles of federal agencies as partners in the Wildland Urban Interface are wildland firefighting, hazardous 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.

h. Planning

Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire Management Plan. Fire Management Plans are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fire based on the area's approved land management plans.

i. Science

Fire Management Plans and programs will be based on a foundation of sound science. Information needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency fire science program.

j. Preparedness

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

k. Suppression

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

l. Prevention

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

m. Standardization

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.

n. Interagency Cooperation and Coordination

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.

o. Communication and Education

Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of WFM policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs.

p. 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.

CHAPTER 2 - POLICY

q. Evaluation

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

2. Operational Clarification for Consistent Wildland Fire Management Policy Implementation

- a. Only one management objective will be applied to a wildland fire. Wildland fires will either be managed for resource benefits or suppressed. A wildland fire cannot be managed for both objectives. If two wildland fires converge, they will be managed as a single wildland fire.
- b. Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.
- c. Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives.
- d. The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the AMR includes a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to aggressive suppression). The AMR is developed by using FMU strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.
- e. The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) process is used to determine and document the suppression strategy from the full range of responses available for suppression operations. Suppression strategies are designed to meet the policy objectives of suppression.
- f. Wildland fire use is the result of a natural event. The Land/Resource Management Plan, or the Fire Management Plan, will identify areas where the strategy of wildland fire use is suitable. The Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is the tool that examines the available response strategies to determine if a fire is being considered for wildland fire use.
- g. When a prescribed fire or fire designated for wildland fire use is no longer achieving the intended resource management objectives and contingency or mitigation actions have failed, the fire will be declared a wildfire. Once declared a wildfire, it cannot be returned

to a prescribed fire or wildland fire use status.

3. Implementation Procedures Reference Guide

This guide represents an effort by Federal WFM agencies to establish standardized procedures to guide implementation of this policy.

C. Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Management Policy (1998)

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

1. Responsibilities

a. Secretary of the Interior

The Secretary of the Interior through the bureau Directors of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Park Service (NPS), and Bureau 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

D. 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.

1. Mission

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

2. Wildland Fire Management Objectives

To provide for firefighter and public safety as the first priority in every WFM activity. We will 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.

3. 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.

- a. 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*.

b. Director, Branch of 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.

c. Regional Directors:

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

d. 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.

E. Wildland Fire Program Leadership

1. 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 Department of Agriculture's Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment and the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service; the Department of the Interior's Directors of the NPS, FWS, and BLM; the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs and the Chief of Staff to the Secretary of the Interior; the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Fire Administration; the Intertribal Timber Council; the Western Governors Association; the National Association of State Foresters; and the National Association of Counties.

2. Fire Executive Council (FEC)

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

3. 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 National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) is comprised of federal, tribal (through ITC), and state representation. NWCG assumes the responsibilities of the now defunct National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB)

F. Wildland Fire Coordinating Groups

1. Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC)

The OWFC is comprised of representatives from the DOI WFM programs. OWFC is responsible for managing and overseeing the Department's WFM program and policy.

2. National Multi-Agency Coordination Group (NMAC)

The NMAC is comprised of the WFM Fire Directors, National Association of State Foresters, National Interagency Coordination Center, National Weather Service and the military at Preparedness Level 3 and above. 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 MAC groups is documented in the *National Interagency Mobilization Guide* and local Geographic Area Operation Guides.

3. 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.

4. 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 Federal Response Plan (FRP) which guides 26 Federal agencies and the American Red Cross in response activities. In the FPR, the USDA Forest Service is the primary agency responsible for emergency support functions under firefighting.

5. 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, USFWS Regions, USDA Forest Service Regions, National Weather Service (NWS) Regions and other cooperating agencies. 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*.

6. 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.

G. 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.

1. 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 Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior and the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture". The Agreement Number for BIA is P00C141A9871.

2. 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.

3. Memorandum of Understanding with Fire Departments

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a general framework for cooperation and coordination among DOI agencies, National Association of State Foresters, United States Fire Administration, and the USDA Forest Service in the delivery of wildland fire assistance to fire departments. (Reference agreement number K00441-3-194)

4. 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.

H. National Standards - Guides and Handbooks

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide (PMS 310-1)

The *Wildland Fire Qualification Systems Guide* (PMS 310-1) document 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.

4. Fireline Handbook (PMS 410-1)

The *Fireline Handbook* (PMS 410-1) 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 *Nuts and Bolts* pocket guide for wildland fire suppression personnel.

5. Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (PMS 902-1)

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.

6. Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response and Rehabilitation Guides

The *Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response Guidebook* and *DOI Burned Area Rehabilitation Guide* describe the authority,

CHAPTER 2 - POLICY

administration, standards and implementation process for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation on burned-over lands.