

APPENDIX C: CHANGES TO THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND 1995 FEDERAL FIRE POLICY, WITH RATIONALE FOR CHANGES

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Rewrite the existing guiding principle on coordination and cooperation to add “international” coordination and cooperation.

POLICY

New Policies

a. Ecosystem Sustainability

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

Rationale: The concept of ecosystem sustainability was not fully considered in the original concept of fire management, as incorporated in the 1995 Federal Fire Policy. Using the full range of fire management activities is essential for achieving ecosystem sustainability, including ecological sustainability and socio-economic considerations. Under this policy, fuels management activities will be designed to support ecological and socio-economic sustainability.

b. Rehabilitation and Restoration

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

Rationale: Rehabilitation and restoration activities are essential components of achieving ecosystem sustainability when areas are not expected to recover through natural processes. Protection of community infrastructure, public health and safety, endangered species habitat, and other resource values must be considered in developing rehabilitation and restoration strategies and plans.

c. 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.***

Rationale: Scientific information is essential to develop and implement land and fire management programs and to evaluate their potential benefits and consequences. Information will be developed through an interagency, integrated fire science program. The fire science program should include federal science agencies, academic institutions, and independent research groups. The program needs to support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Science organizations must produce tangible, accessible, and useful research products that can be incorporated in Fire Management Plans and programs. It is incumbent on fire managers to actively incorporate and implement the results of scientific research.

d. Communication and Education

- ***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.***

Rationale: The 1995 Federal Fire Policy is not fully understood by internal and external audiences. Shortfalls exist in disseminating the information and integrating the policy into affected disciplines needed to implement the policy. The addition of more cooperating agencies into the wildland fire management mission makes coordinated and enhanced communication programs essential.

e. Evaluation

- ***Agencies will systematically evaluate the effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The evaluation will assure accountability, facilitate resolution of areas of conflict, and identify resource shortages and agency priorities.***

Rationale: There is no systematic method or program for evaluating federal fire policy and its implementation, especially across agency and program or discipline boundaries. No performance measures or other means exist to determine the status of implementation or the effectiveness of the policies. The review of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy found substantial actions that were not completed. There is no ongoing or established process for tracking status of policy implementation within or among agencies.

Modifications to the 1995 Federal Fire Policy Statements

These are explanations of changes to the 1995 Federal Fire Policy. The full text of the original 1995 and the new 2001 statements are in Appendix D.

- a. Safety:** No change.
- b. Planning:**

Rationale: This policy statement was changed to clarify the role and nature of Fire Management Plans as the fundamental strategic documents, based on land use plans, to guide the full range of fire management related activities in a unit or area. Fire Management Plans are supplemented by operational plans such as preparedness plans, dispatch plans, prescribed fire plans, and prevention plans. Resource management objectives and activities addressed in Fire Management Plans include activities to restore and sustain ecosystems or to protect communities or public safety. Fire Management Plans must address concerns and discuss consequences for air and water quality, endangered species, and similar issues. Fire Management Plans should be developed and implemented across agency boundaries to ensure consistent approaches to similar conditions.

c. [Response to] Wildland Fire:

Rationale: The policy statements for Wildland Fire and Use of Fire were modified to more clearly distinguish between the two. The Wildland Fire policy statement was re-titled as Response to Wildland Fire and clarifies and emphasizes that the context or circumstances of the fire are to dictate the appropriate response, based on an approved Fire Management Plan. This policy is intended to minimize the use of different personnel, qualification systems, dispatch and resource allocation protocols, and so on for different “types” of fire. Rather, emphasis is on pre-planning by agencies to determine the appropriate management response to the occurrence of fire, regardless of ignition source or location. The term “be based on best available science” was dropped from this policy statement since a new policy statement on science has been added.

d. Use of [Wildland] Fire:

Rationale: The use of Fire Policy Statement was re-titled to the Use of Wildland Fire. Along with the above change in Wildland Fire, this policy statement now clarifies and emphasizes the critical importance of Fire Management Plans and operational plans in determining the appropriate response to a fire, regardless of its source of ignition or location.

e. Preparedness:

Rationale: This statement was revised to include a reference to management oversight. There is no process for ongoing integrated, interagency oversight and monitoring of preparedness activities. This change clarifies and emphasizes the importance of oversight and monitoring to ensure that fire management preparedness activities are appropriate, especially across agency lines.

f. Suppression: No change.

g. Prevention:

Rationale: This statement was changed to clarify the intent of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy, not to change it substantively. The addition of the word “partners” makes the revised policy statement more inclusive.

h. Protection Priorities:

Rationale: This policy statement was revised to clarify policy related to human health and protection of structures. The 1995 Federal Fire Policy statement on

protection priorities provides a solid framework for decision making in fire situations. Conflicting protection priorities are resolved through the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) and through the process of allocating resources at the geographic and local levels. However, two significant protection considerations are not specifically recognized in the 1995 Federal Fire Policy. First, human health, including the potential effects of smoke, is not explicitly considered in either the WFSA process or the process for allocating resources. Second, the 1995 Federal Fire Policy does not distinguish between the concept of property and the concept of community and community infrastructure. Recent experience has dramatically demonstrated the threat that uncontrolled wildland fire poses to human communities. While property may simply represent isolated structures, communities and their associated infrastructure are the social and economic fabric that supports life in rural areas. However, the primary responsibility for protecting private property and rural communities lies with individual property owners and local governments. This responsibility is usually achieved through proactive pre-fire actions such as those promoted in the FIREWISE Communities program.

i. Interagency Cooperation:

Rationale: This policy statement was revised to highlight education, prevention, restoration, and rehabilitation in interagency cooperation. This highlights the importance of doing prevention and education initiatives in an interagency, collaborative environment.

j. Standardization: No change.

k. Economic Efficiency: Dropped

Rationale: This statement was dropped because it duplicated a Guiding Principle.

l. Wildland Urban Interface:

Rationale: This statement was changed to clarify the 1995 Federal Fire Policy, not to change it substantively. The revised policy more accurately distinguishes between the terms “structure protection” and “structure suppression.”

m. [Agency] Administrator and Employee Roles:

Rationale: This statement was changed to recognize that wildland fire management is not the sole responsibility of dedicated fire management personnel. In the past in federal land management agencies, wildland fire activities took precedence over all agency functions and activities except the safeguarding of human life. The notion that a broad cross-section of employees need to be trained, certified and available for wildland fire assignment has gradually diminished over time, both on the part of Agency Administrators and employees themselves. Further, because of the diminishing federal workforce, the need to mutually support each other for wildland fire activities—locally, regionally and nationally—is increasingly important. The intent of the policy is to require every employee to be available to support wildland fire if the situation demands. Also, the intent is to strike a common-sense balance between requiring *every employee* of any agency to be trained, certified, and available for wildland fire assignment, and the notion that *only fire management personnel* have any responsibility to respond to wildland fire activities.