



Saguaro National Park News Release

For Immediate Release

August 8, 2007

Contact: Fire Management Officer Kristy Lund at (520) 733-5130

SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK NEW FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN APPROVED

Superintendent Sarah Craighead announced today the completion of a revised Fire Management Plan for Saguaro National Park. The new plan brings fire management in line with changes in national policy and includes new biological information. The plan covers both the Rincon Mountain and Tucson Mountain Districts of the Park, which covers 91,327 acres, 78% of which is designated Wilderness.

The plan will serve as the blueprint for fire management actions at Saguaro National Park for the next 10-15 years, with updates every 5 years. The primary objectives of the new plan include consider firefighter, employee, and public safety first; manage fire to minimize risk to property outside the park and to sensitive cultural and natural resources; and restore and maintain habitat through the ecologically appropriate use of fire.

Saguaro National Park was one of the first national parks to implement a natural fire program. In the early 1970's, park managers began managing naturally ignited lightning fires, provided certain weather and fuel moisture conditions were met. Fire managers may use a full range of actions to delay, direct, or check the spread of fire if it threatens sensitive resources, and/or to keep fire within predetermined geographic boundaries. This strategy of managing natural lightning fires to maintain ecosystem health is now called wildland fire use, and is included in the Park's new fire management plan.

The healthy habitats in the higher elevations of the Rincon Mountains have been maintained by continued application of progressive fire management policy over time. Wildland fire use and prescribed fire will help reduce fuels and perpetuate the natural role of fire above 4,500 feet. Non-fire treatments (such as manual thinning) may be used as pre-treatments for prescribed burns to help create fuel breaks and to protect specific resource values.

The lower-elevation vegetation in the Sonoran desert, however, is not fire-adapted. All fires below 4,500 feet, including the entire Tucson Mountain District of the park, will be suppressed.

Copies of the Park's Fire Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement are available at www.nps.gov/sagu or by calling Kristy Lund at (520) 733-5130.