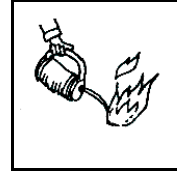


6 - Prescribed Fire



Introduction

Fire is an essential ecological process in many ecosystems. Prescribed fire is used to alter, maintain or restore vegetative communities, achieve potential future conditions, and to protect life, property, and values that would be degraded by wildland fire. Prescribed fire is only accomplished through management ignition.

Prescribed Fire is the application of fire as an ecological process, under specified conditions, in a designated area to achieve land management objectives. Prescribed Fires are defined as: Any fire ignited by management action to meet specific objectives. A written approved prescribed fire plan must exist, and NEPA requirements must be met, prior to ignition.

A complete reference for prescribed fire activities is the Prescribed Fire Management Handbook H-9214-1 issued 11/14/97. Additional information on prescribed fire operations can be found in the chapters on Safety, Training and Qualifications, Reviews and Investigations, and Administration.

Policy

All prescribed fire projects will have an written and approved burn plan prior to ignition.

All burn plans will contain measurable objectives, a predetermined prescription, and a contingency plan to be implemented in the event the fire escapes.

All prescribed fire projects will be in compliance with NEPA requirements.

Planning

The Bureau's prescribed fire activities function under the concept of one coordinated effort between Resources and Fire Management. All benefiting activities will coordinate their respective roles for the planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and funding, for prescribed fire projects. Resources Management is responsible for managing vegetation and Fire Management is responsible for managing ignitions.

All use of prescribed fire will support land and resource management plans. The RMP or other land use plans serve as the document to initiate, analyze and justify prescribed fire activities. The FMP serves as the implementation strategy document for the prescribed fire activities. The Prescribed Fire Plan serves as the project implementation document for an individual prescribed fire project.

Prescribed Fire Plan

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The Prescribed Fire Plan is a stand alone and legal document that provides the Prescribed Fire Burn Boss all the information needed to implement the project. Prescribed fire projects will be implemented in compliance with the written plan. At a minimum, consider each of the items below. The size and complexity of the prescribed fire project will determine the level of detail required and which sections are required.

Plan Approval	Technical Review	Complexity Rating
Risk Assessment	Physical Description	Map
Management Objectives	Prescription	Fire Behavior Calculations
Smoke Management	Notifications	Ignition & Holding
Organization	Cost	Contingency Plan
Safety Briefing	Public Safety	JHA
Go/No Go Checklist	Test Fire	Medical Plan
Communications Plan	Prescribed Fire Report	

There needs to be a clear understanding between Agency Administrators, fire management and the prescribed fire burn boss as to which parts of the prescribed fire plan (if any) may be changed on the site prior to implementing the project. This information may be included in the plan or it may be established as local policy.

Restrictions

Implementation of Prescribed Fires at National Preparedness Levels IV and V is restricted. (See the National Mobilization Guide.)

At National Preparedness Level IV concurrence by the State Fire Management Officer (SFMO) must be obtained before implementing the local Agency Administrator's recommendation for a prescribed fire. An evaluation of significant risk is made by the SFMO or representative in a presentation of the prescribed fire implementation proposal to the geographic multi agency coordinating (MAC) group prior to prescribed fire approval. A coordination/tracking function will be established to track prescribed fires and resource commitments at Geographic Area and National coordination levels.

At National Preparedness Level V a National level representative must concur with the SFMO's recommendation. The national level representative will present an evaluation of significant risk in a proposal to the national MAC group prior to prescribed fire approval.

Complexity & Smoke Management

Complexity Rating

A complexity rating will be completed for each prescribed fire project. The determination of prescribed fire complexity will be based on an assessment of **risk** (the probability or likelihood of an unplanned event or situation occurring), **potential consequences** (some measure of the cost or result of an undesirable event or situation occurring), and **technical difficulty** (the level of skills needed to complete the project **and** deal with unplanned events).

The complexity rating will be based on the Prescribed Fire Plan and the potential social, political, economic, biological, environmental, and legal consequences. Use the complexity rating to guide staffing levels, determine skill and experience requirements, and to determine the level of detail needed in the prescribed fire plan.

The Prescribed Fire Complexity System does not tie directly to the Prescribed Fire Qualifications System. The following guidance will apply. **All prescribed fire projects rated as complex will require a Prescribed Fire Burn Boss rated as RXB1 and an Ignition Specialist rated as RXI1.**

Smoke Management

As per public law 95-95 compliance with Federal, state, and local air quality regulations is mandatory and will require coordination with state and local air quality authorities. Personnel developing Prescribed Fire Plans must be aware of state and local regulations, and the impacts that a specific project may have on critical areas. Potential smoke impacts on critical areas such as Class I air sheds, restricted areas, and designated areas (often called non attainment areas) must be considered. Equally important are local features that could be impacted such as highways, airports, recreation sites and smaller population centers.

Prescribed Fire Plans need to identify sensitive areas and provide operational guidance to minimize the impacts from smoke. If potential negative impacts from smoke could occur, an assessment of potential down wind impacts using an appropriate smoke management model will be completed. Some states require that some type of smoke dispersion modeling be done before they will issue a permit for the prescribed fire project.

Project Financing

Prescribed fire projects will be funded by equitably cost-sharing. It is the responsibility of each program area to cover their own regular (base-eight) salaries and fixed costs. This applies to items such as preliminary site assessments, writing environmental assessments, developing Prescribed Fire Plans, obtaining clearances, training, and monitoring. Regular salaries for fire management staff involved in prescribed fire activities are programmed in Preparedness (2810).

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Funding for the implementation of prescribed fire projects must be identified and agreed to at the Field Office level. The Hazardous Fuel Reduction subactivity (2823) will provide funding for operational implementation costs. The "BLM Fiscal Fund Coding Handbook" provides specific guidance for the use of this funding. The primary focus of the 2823 funding is the on the ground implementation of prescribed fire projects. Additional guidance for the use of 2823 funds can be found in the Administration Chapter.

Current policy is that hazard pay will not be paid for any prescribed fire.

The Bureau can contract to conduct all or part of the prescribed fire operations and/or all or part of mechanical treatments for "Hazard Fuel Reduction" projects.

If a contractor is actively involved in igniting, holding or mopping up a BLM prescribed fire, a Contracting Officers Authorized Representative (COAR) or Project Inspector (PI) will be on the site (exceptions can be made for late stage mop up and patrol) to insure that the burn objectives are being met and that the terms of the contract are adhered to. The BLM representative (COAR or PI) must have prescribed fire and/or wildfire qualifications equal to what the BLM would require if a BLM Prescribed Fire Burn Boss were conducting the actual operations.

Cooperation and Assistance

Offices are encouraged to enter into agreements for the cooperative use of prescribed fire resources. Joint ecosystem based prescribed fire management programs are encouraged to accomplish resource or landscape management objectives when consistent with Resource Management Plans. These

partnerships are encouraged at both the programmatic and project levels to implement prescribed fire projects.

Any prescribed fire that involves Bureau employees or major equipment (engines or helicopters, etc.) will be supported by a Prescribed Fire Plan. In the absence of a Cooperative Agreement the Field Office Manager will provide a memo authorizing BLM participation. This memo will state the type and amount of assistance to be provided, identify safety, liability and other issues, and specify financial arrangements.

BLM and Other Federal Agencies

Assistance to other BLM units may be provided without formal agreement. If the assistance is related to the implementation of prescribed fire projects, the assisting unit may use the prescribed fire number assigned by the host unit.

Coordination with other Federal agencies will occur in the planning phase for joint prescribed fire projects. The BLM may provide assistance for prescribed fire that will be conducted on land administered by other Federal Agencies. The "Interagency Agreement for Fire Management," dated 2/20/97, provides for interagency assistance without additional agreements. Assistance is initiated by the issuance of "Task Orders" that provide the project specifics. Fuels management, "including prescribed fire" is specifically covered in the agreement.

There is **NO** additional prescribed fire funding for assisting other agencies. Funds must be spent out of existing program funds then offset, or donated.

Private Land Owners

Agency administrators should enter into agreements with private parties on intermingled lands when resource objectives can best be met through this approach. The agreements will specify the exact lands involved, the overall objectives, what actions will be taken by each party, and how costs will be shared. In most cases the private land owner must fund a proportional share of the project cost. However, this does not need to be a monetary exchange. The private land owner(s) may provide services (e.g., line construction), equipment (e.g., engines, water tenders or dozers), supplies (e.g., fuel), or personnel to fulfill their part of the obligation.

There may be occasions where a private land owner would allow the BLM to burn private land to facilitate a BLM project. For example moving a perimeter to a road or natural barrier on private land would allow the BLM to avoid constructing a significant amount of fire line. In such cases there is a clear benefit to the BLM and asking the private land owner to pay a share of the cost would not be appropriate.

Escaped Prescribed Fires

A Prescribed Fire becomes a wildland fire when the Prescribed Fire Burn Boss determines that an escape has, or is likely to occur, or environmental conditions and/or fire behavior exceeds the parameters in the prescribed fire plan and as such, the fire is no longer meeting the identified management objectives. Fire outside of the planned perimeter that cannot be contained with the holding forces identified in the prescribed fire plan is an escape and will be declared a wildland fire. This is not a "sloper" that crosses the fire line, but which can be contained by resources on-site. (No suppression charges will be used).

When a prescribed fire is declared a wildland fire, managers still have the full range of suppression options available under the concept of the "Appropriate Management Response." If a prescribed fire is declared a wildfire a "Fire Number" will be assigned and all suppression costs will be charged to the 2821 subactivity.

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The following actions will be taken on all Bureau prescribed fires that escape and are declared wildland fires:

- 1 Take prompt and reasonable action to control and suppress the fire. This could include the development of a "Wildland Fire Situation Analysis."
- 2 Notify the BLM Agency Administrator responsible for the area.
- 3 Notify the other Agency Administrator(s), and/or other land owners that may be affected, of the escaped fire. Coordinate suppression actions with the other affected parties.
- 4 Document the time and environmental conditions that existed when the escape occurred.
- 5 Document the incident, including all actions prior to and after the escape. Set up a file that includes all pertinent information, i.e., the prescribed fire plan, a chronology of events including the prescribed fire report and unit logs or individual statements, the fire investigation report, weather forecasts including any spot forecasts, Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) data and National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) data for the day of the escape for the nearest weather stations, photos, and any appraisal of damages.

All escaped prescribed will receive an administrative review. The level and scope of the review will be determined by the injuries, damage, and cost associated with the escape. See the Reviews/investigation Chapter for additional information.

Prescribed Fire Support

NPS Prescribed Fire Modules

The Prescribed Fire Modules provide the wildland fire management agencies with skilled and mobile personnel who are dedicated principally to prescribed fire management. As a national resource, the modules are available to all units throughout the prescribed fire season. The broad mission of the program will give equal emphasis to wildland and prescribed fire in 1998.

On an interagency basis these modules are available to: Ignite, hold, and monitor prescribed fires.

Organization Six modules are available for the 1998 season. They are located at:

- Bandolier National Recreation Area
- Whiskeytown National Recreation Area
- Yellowstone National Park
- Zion National Park
- These modules are normally available from late April to late September.*
- Buffalo National River
- This module is normally available from late February to late August.*
- Great Smoky Mountain National Park
- This module is normally available from mid-February to mid-August.*

The four western modules are composed of seven members; the eastern modules are composed of five members. The skills associated with these modules include:

- Prescribed Fire Analyst
- Prescribed Fire Specialist
- Prescribed Fire Monitor
- Ignition Specialist
- Single Resource Boss (Holding)
- Burn Boss

Mobilization All assignments will be scheduled and tracked by the Program Coordinator. To schedule modules contact: NPS Program Coordinator, NPS-NIFC, at 208-387-5219.

BLM Smokejumpers

The BLM smokejumpers at NIFC are available to provide assistance for prescribed fire and other fuels management projects.

The smokejumper unit can provide prescribed fire skills in the following areas:

- Prescribed Fire Monitor
- Single Resource Boss/Strike Team Leader (Holding)
- Crewmembers
- Ignition Specialist
- Burn Boss

The smokejumpers can also provide assistance in the areas of writing burn plans, performing site preparation work, and performing non-fire hazardous fuels reduction work.

Generally, the smokejumpers are available for prescribed fire or other management work from March 1st to May 20th and from September 15th to December 1st. Availability is contingent on management needs; specific assignments should be worked out with smokejumper prescribed fire coordinator.

Mobilization To schedule smokejumper support for prescribed fire or other fuels management projects contact: Smokejumper Prescribed Fire Coordinator at 208-387-5426.

BLM Interagency Hotshot Crews

The Bureau has seven Interagency Hotshot Crews that may provide support for prescribed fire or other fuels management projects. Depending on the personnel availability and the location of the project, it may be possible to get the assistance of part or all of one of these crews. Scheduling should be done through the sponsoring unit or Crew Superintendent.

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The BLM Hotshots and their locations are:

- Chena – Fairbanks, AK
- Midnight Suns – Fairbanks, AK
- Kern Valley – Bakersfield, CA
- Diamond Mountain – Susanville, CA
- Jackson – Jackson, MS
- Silver State – Carson City, NV
- Vale – Vale, OR

AD Hire Authority

The DOI has been granted the authority to hire personnel under the Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan for “fire use” work related to hazardous fuel reduction operations. The AD pay plan may be used to supplement regular personnel assigned to prescribed fire projects. The term of hire is restricted to no greater than the period beginning 24 hours prior to the planned ignition and extending through 24 hours after the perimeter is secured.

Complete guidance for the use of this authority can be found in the Administration Chapter.

Reports

All prescribed fires, will be assigned a “Prescribed Fire Number” and will be reported on the DI-1202. A “Prescribed Fire Number” should also be assigned to mechanical treatment projects to aid in tracking accomplishments and the

financial cost of the project. Prescribed fire and mechanical treatments reporting will be done electronically similar to wildfire reporting.

The acreage for the project should be the actual burned area or **Black Acres**, or the actual acres treated for mechanical treatments.

Should a prescribed fire escape and be declared a wildfire, two reports would be required. The acreage burned while the fire was considered a prescribed fire would be reported as prescribed fire acreage using the "Prescribed Fire Number." Acreage burned after the fire was declared a wildfire would be reported as wildfire acreage using the local "Fire Number."

Prescribed fire numbers may be assigned for other agency assists. Assist prescribed fire numbers **DO NOT** provide additional funding. The purpose of using assist numbers is to track funds spent to assist other agencies with Prescribed Fire or other Fuels Management projects. While "offset services" or billing is not required when providing assistance, using an assist number provides the basis for such actions. Assist Prescribed Fire numbers can be used with any subactivity code e.g. 2823, 2810, 5500, etc.

Assign one number per project where the cost must be tracked. Use the next available Prescribed Fire Number from the block assigned to your office.

Do not use an assist number for assists to other BLM offices; use the prescribed fire number assigned by the host unit.

Instructions for all reports can be found in the DI-1202 Fire Report Instructions.

Qualifications

A discussion of prescribed fire training and qualifications can be found in the Training and Qualifications Chapter.

Safety

A specific discussion of prescribed fire related safety issues can be found in the Safety Chapter.

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