



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Washington, D.C. 20240

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Y14 (9560)

**April 9, 2009**

## Memorandum

To: Regional Directors  
Attention: Park Superintendents

From: Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection /s/ **Karen Taylor-Goodrich**

Subject: Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

On March 24, 2008, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) modified the guidance in the 2004 document entitled “Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy,” contingent upon favorable counsel review.

The proposed modifications or “revised direction” was tested in a limited number of field units during the 2008 fire season. The results from the testing were evaluated and resulted in the approval by the Fire Executive Council (FEC) of the 2009 *Guidance for Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (attached), which ensures consistent implementation of Federal fire policy as stated in the *Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2001, attached)*.

The following elements in the 2009 guidance document will direct the implementation of Federal wildland fire policy:

- The *1995/2001 Federal Fire Policy* is affirmed to be sound, and the Guiding Principles and Policy Statements provide clear direction for the Federal wildland fire management program.
- Any management response, guidance, clarification, implementation direction, or decision support processes provided in an existing Land/Resource and/or Fire Management Plan, including those developed under the earlier 2004 document, “Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy,” continues to be allowed under the revised guidance.
- There is no change in the objective for initial actions on human-caused wildfire; these fires will continue to be suppressed in order to minimize negative consequences with respect to firefighter and public safety.
- It reaffirms the need to work collaboratively with state, local, and tribal fire managers, as well as public and nongovernmental organizations in the management of wildland fire.

Effective as of the date of this memo, all National Park units are authorized to implement the policy changes described in the 2009 *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* to the extent the guidance is not inconsistent with existing requirements or restrictions contained in existing park Land/Resource and/or Fire Management Plans. Please note that in the 2009 guidance document:

- Terminology has changed - Wildland fire is a term describing any non-structural fire that occurs in the wildland. Wildland fires are now categorized into two distinct types:
  - Wildfires = Unplanned ignitions, as well as planned ignitions that are declared wildfires. The wildfire term is to be applied to all unplanned ignitions, including events formally termed wildland fire use.
  - Prescribed fires = Planned ignitions.
- A wildland fire, or portions of a wildland fire, may be concurrently managed for one or more objectives (e.g., cost, safety, resource benefits). Those objectives, and the ability of a fire to meet those objectives, can change as the fire spreads across the landscape, encountering new fuels, weather, social conditions, and governmental jurisdictions.
- Emphasizes the need to conduct fire management planning which is intergovernmental in scope and at a landscape scale, and to plan for the possibility of wildland fire crossing jurisdictional boundaries.
- Every wildland fire will be assessed following a decision support process that examines the full range of potential responses. The decision support process currently being developed and used is known as Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS). All NPS units are authorized to use WFDSS in lieu of a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) or a Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP), as they complete WFDSS training, preparation, and unit level testing, and become proficient with the WFDSS process and tools. (See WFDSS website at: <http://wfdss.usgs.gov>)

The NPS Branch of Wildland Fire Management is working with our Federal wildland fire management partners to transition the interagency wildland fire management program to the revised 2009 guidance, as well as to develop a more detailed, NPS specific transition plan.

This NPS plan will emphasize education, planning, preparation, training scenarios, evaluation, sharing of experience and knowledge, and mentoring. A task group comprised of fire management representatives from the park, regional, and national programs will be facilitating the implementation of the transition plan and will be available to assist individual parks as needed. Specifics of the transition plan will be released within the next month.

For further information, contact your Regional Fire Management Officer, or Tom Nichols, Chief, Division of Fire and Aviation, (208) 387-5216, [tom\\_nichols@nps.gov](mailto:tom_nichols@nps.gov) or Dick Bahr, Fire Science and Ecology Program Leader, (208) 387-5217, [dick\\_bahr@nps.gov](mailto:dick_bahr@nps.gov) at the NPS Fire Management Program Center.

#### Attachments

cc: Associate Regional Directors, Operations  
Associate Regional Directors, Natural Resources  
Regional Fire Management Officers