

Chapter 17 Fuels Management

Introduction

The purpose of the Fuels Management (FM) programs within the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Forest Service (FS) is to reduce hazardous fuels and risks to human communities and improve the health of the land by creating fire-resilient landscapes and restoring fire-adapted ecosystems.

The DOI and FS, along with other federal, state, Tribal, and local partners, will work to ensure effective FM efforts are collectively planned and implemented.

These efforts will be consistent with the direction provided in:

- *Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001)*
- *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (February 13, 2009)*

Policy

The federal fire agencies use the *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (PMS 484)* to manage prescribed fire activities. This guide provides standardized procedures specifically associated with the planning and implementation of prescribed fire.

Fuels Management – Policy, project planning and implementation priorities, and standards common to all agencies:

- The safety of firefighters and the public is the number one priority when planning and implementing projects/treatments;
- All projects/treatments will support resource management objectives as identified in their agency-specific Land/Resource Management Plans;
- All projects/treatments will have plans that contain measurable objectives;
- All projects/treatments will comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and all other regulatory requirements;
- All projects/treatments will be tracked and progress will be reported within required timeframes; and
- All projects will be monitored to determine if treatment objectives were met and to document weather, fire behavior, fuels information, and smoke dispersion. Evaluation reports are to be completed and maintained in the project file.

Some programmatic differences are identified in the following agency-specific documentation and serve as agency-specific direction.

- *BLM – Refer to FA IM 2015-003.*
- *NPS – Refer to RM 18.*

- 1 • *FWS* – Refer to *Fire Management Handbook, Chapter 17*.
- 2 • *FS* – Refer to *FSM 5140*.
- 3 • *BIA* – Refer to *Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Management Business Rules,*
- 4 *July 2008*.

5 **Reporting Fuels Management Accomplishments**

6 The Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFR) Module of the National Fire Plan
7 Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) is the national system for
8 submitting proposed projects for approval, tracking accomplishments of the
9 program, reporting performance, measuring accomplishments, and
10 accountability for all agencies in the Department of Interior.

11 Forest Service fuels management accomplishments are entered into the Forest
12 Service Activity Tracking System (FACTS) as the official system of record for
13 tracking and reporting. This data is shared with NFPORS to facilitate
14 interagency joint reporting needs.

15 Information on FACTS can be found at
16 <https://fsweb.ftcol.wo.fs.fed.us/frs/facts/index.shtml>. Acres treated through
17 Forest Service funded State Fire Assistance grants are recorded directly in
18 NFPORS.

19 **Reporting Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM)**

20 Anytime a wildfire starts in or interacts with a fuel treatment area, policy for all
21 agencies requires that we document the outcome to examine whether the
22 treatment had the desired effect of reduced fire behavior and/or provided
23 opportunities to firefighters for effective management of the wildfire.

- 24 • *BLM* – *Offices will complete a fuels treatment effectiveness assessment and*
25 *input appropriate information into the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness*
26 *Monitoring (FTEM) online tool for all wildfires which start in, burn into, or*
27 *burn through any portion of a fuel treatment area that has been completed*
28 *and reported in the Hazardous Fuels Module of the National Fire Plan*
29 *Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) from fiscal year 2003 to*
30 *present. If offices have wildfire/treatment intersections that have occurred*
31 *prior to 2003 or are not in NFPORS, as long as offices can document that*
32 *fuels dollars were expended on these treatments and the wildfire is recorded*
33 *in the Wildland Fire Management Information (WFMI) system, the record*
34 *should be entered into FTEM. It is important that treatment data entered*
35 *into FTEM are consistent with the NFPORS, and that wildfire information*
36 *is consistent with the WFMI system. Refer to FA IM-2015-001.*
- 37 • *NPS* – Refer to *RM 18 and Documenting Hazardous Fuels Reduction*
38 *Program Treatment Effectiveness Memo, 10/09/2012.*
- 39 • *FWS* – Refer to *Fire Management Handbook, Chapter 17*.
- 40 • *FS* – Refer to *FSM 5140*.

- 1 • **BIA** – Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Treatment Effectiveness
2 Final Guidance Memo, 06/05/2013.

3 **Reporting Planned Fuels Treatments Burned in a Wildfire**

4 For NPS and FWS, acres burned in a wildfire may only be reported in the
5 NFPORS Hazardous Fuels Reduction Module as “Fire Use” if all the following
6 conditions are met:

- 7 • The area burned was in a pre-existing NFPORS treatment unit;
8 • The accomplishment has been approved from the Regional and/or National
9 level;
10 • NEPA is complete; and
11 • The planned objectives were met.
- 12 ○ **BLM** – Offices will report (using instructions from Attachment 1 of IM
13 FA-2017-034) all acres burned in a naturally-caused wildfire
14 (accomplishments of resource objectives for known human-caused fires
15 will not be reported) that accomplish resource objectives in the HFR
16 module of NFPORS when:
 - 17 ▪ An interdisciplinary team approach is used to determine the
18 specific burned acres where LUP resource objectives were met by
19 wildfire; and
 - 20 ▪ An Agency Administrator approves the determination and notifies
21 the State Fuels Lead/Specialist. Together they ensure appropriate
22 reporting in NFPORS.
 - 23 ○ **FS** – Acres burned from an unplanned natural ignition may be
24 reported as “Fire Use” accomplishment if the resulting fire effects
25 meet objectives from the Land and Resource Management Plan or
26 project-specific NEPA decision document. Human-caused wildfires
27 may not be counted as accomplishment toward target regardless of the
28 outcome. See Reporting of Wildfire Acres That Meet Resource
29 Management Objectives section below for additional information.
 - 30 ○ **BIA** – Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Management Business
31 Rules, July 2008, page 36.

32 **Reporting of Wildfire Acres That Meet Resource Management Objectives**

33 Acres burned in a wildfire that achieve resource management objectives as
34 defined in Land and Resource Management Plans/Fire Management Plans
35 (LRMP/FMP) will be reported in the NFPORS Non-National Fire Plan (Non-
36 NFP) module. While strategies for managing individual wildfires are established
37 through the fire management decision process, the identification of acres which
38 achieved LRMP/FMP objectives should be made after the fire is declared out,
39 regardless of the fire management objective, strategy or tactic used (e.g., even
40 though a wildfire strategy may be full suppression, the effects of a wildfire on
41 resources may be beneficial). The determination of benefit must be based on
42 land management objectives which are affected by fire severity, intensity, and

1 other fire impacts. Post-fire impact, such as invasion of exotic species and the
 2 need for rehabilitation, should be considered in this determination. At a
 3 minimum, acres reported in the Non-NFP module must meet the following
 4 criteria:

- 5 • The LRMP/FMP supports attainment of resource benefit through use of
 6 fire;
- 7 • An interdisciplinary approach is used to determine whether the LRMP/FMP
 8 objectives were met; and
- 9 • Line manager approves the determination.
 - 10 ○ **FWS** – Reporting will take place in FMIS, not in the NFPORS Non-
 11 National Fire Plan module. Reference FMIS User Guide at
 12 <https://fishnet.fws.doi.net/regions/9/nwrs/fire/FMR/FMIS1>.
 - 13 ○ **FS** – Direction for reporting accomplishments from unplanned
 14 ignitions is found in the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Treatments
 15 Tracking and Accomplishments Reporting Requirements document
 16 posted on the FACTS support page at
 17 <https://fsweb.ftcol.wo.fs.fed.us/frs/facts/support/documents/index.shtml>.

18 Prescribed Fire During Preparedness Levels 4 and 5

19 Approval at the Regional or State Office level is required prior to ignition of
 20 prescribed fires at National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5. Approving officials
 21 should consider relative risks and opportunities as well as availability of local
 22 resources to implement without the need for additional outside resources that
 23 could add additional strain on resource availability nationally. To limit the
 24 potential for mixed messages when at GACC or National Preparedness Levels 4
 25 and 5, agencies should coordinate information on planned implementation of
 26 prescribed fires with interagency partners at the local, GMAC and NMAC
 27 levels.

- 28 • **BLM** – The State Director or designee will approve prescribed fire at
 29 National or Geographic Area Preparedness Level 4 or 5.
- 30 • **NPS** – At National Preparedness Level 4 or 5, concurrence from NPS
 31 Branch of Fire Management must be obtained prior to implementing
 32 prescribed fires. At Geographic Area Preparedness Level 4 or 5, NPS
 33 Regional Fire Management concurrence must be obtained prior to
 34 implementing prescribed fires.
- 35 • **FWS** – During Geographic Area Preparedness Level 4 or 5, written
 36 concurrence from RFMC is required prior to ignition. During National
 37 Preparedness Level 5, concurrence from Headquarters, Branch of Fire
 38 Management must be obtained prior to implementing prescribed fires. Refer
 39 to FMH, Chapter 17 for additional information.
- 40 • **FS** – The Regional Forester will approve or disapprove new prescribed
 41 fires or continue existing prescribed fire at National Preparedness Levels 4
 42 and 5 or if National Fire Danger Rating System forecasted adjective rating

- 1 is “Extreme” for the county that the prescribed fire is located or any
2 adjacent county. Reference FSM Interim Directive WO-ID-5140-2017-1.
- 3 • **BIA** – At National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5, prescribed fire (Rx)
4 applications can be initiated or continued if the proposed action is
5 approved by an agency at the Regional level. The approval must be based
6 on an assessment of risk, impacts of the proposed actions on Area resources
7 and activities, and include feedback from the GMAC. At National
8 Preparedness Level 5, for Rx applications to be initiated or continued that
9 require additional support of resources from outside the local unit or
10 require resource ordering of an IMT, the Regional Fuels Specialist must
11 prepare a written justification to request permission to implement a new
12 prescribed fire and submit to the BIA Director of Fuels Management. A
13 National MAC representative will assess risk and impacts of the proposed
14 action(s) and present to NMAC for review prior to proceeding. The final
15 decision to implement resides with the implementing agency.

16 **Federal Agencies Assistance**

17 Reference Section VI of the *Interagency Agreement for Wildland Fire*
18 *Management among the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs,*
19 *National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States*
20 *Department of The Interior, and the Forest Service of the United States*
21 *Department of Agriculture, effective 2011-2015.*

22 Agencies will enter into separate agreements for personnel and other resources
23 provided for planning and implementation of fuels management treatments and
24 activities. This may or may not result in an exchange of funds subject to the
25 applicable statutory authority used.

- 26 • **FS** – USFS units will make every attempt to establish agreements in
27 advance when planning to utilize resources from cooperating agencies to
28 implement or respond as contingency resources for prescribed fire.
29 However, for prescribed fire activities and exigent circumstances, where an
30 agreement was not executed and funds were not obligated prior to
31 commencing work, a ratification may not be necessary if an approved
32 agreement is executed and funds obligated on I-web within 30 calendar
33 days of the start of work. See FSH 1509.11 Chapter 10, Section 15.81.
- 34 • **BIA** – Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Management Business Rules,
35 July 2008, pages 23-24.

36 **Hazard Pay/Environmental Differential for Prescribed Fire** 37 **Implementation**

38 Current policy is that hazard pay will not be paid for any prescribed fire. Under
39 certain circumstances, (i.e., low level flight operations), hazard pay or
40 environmental differential may be warranted. Offices should contact their
41 servicing personnel office with specific questions.

1 Non-NWCG Agency Personnel Use on Prescribed Fire

2 For information regarding use of non-NWCG agency personnel on prescribed
3 fires, see Chapter 13.

4 Use of Contractors for Prescribed Fire Implementation

5 Agencies can contract to conduct all or part of the planning and implementation
6 of prescribed fire operations and/or all or part of mechanical treatments for fuels
7 management projects. Contractors must meet NWCG 310-1 qualification
8 requirements and agency standards for specific skill positions for prescribed fire
9 operations.

10 If a contractor is actively involved in igniting, holding, or mopping up an agency
11 prescribed fire, a Contracting Officer's Authorized Representative (COR) or
12 Project Inspector (PI) will be on site (exceptions can be made for late stage mop
13 up and patrol) to ensure that the prescribed fire objectives are being met and that
14 the terms of the contract are adhered to. The Agency Administrator and/or FMO
15 will determine the qualifications required for the agency representative (COR or
16 PI).

- 17 • *FS* – Contractors must meet requirements for any specific skill positions for
18 prescribed fire operations as described in NWCG PMS 310-1 or FSH
19 5109.17 for positions not found in the PMS 310-1 (e.g., RXB3). Reference
20 FSM 5140.
- 21 • *BIA* – Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Management Business Rules,
22 July 2008, pages 22.

23 Use of AD Pay Plan for Prescribed Fire

24 Refer to the DOI Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan for Emergency
25 Workers (Casuals) for information regarding the use of emergency workers for
26 prescribed fire. The DOI AD Pay Plan does not allow for use of Casuals for
27 mechanical or chemical treatment fuels reduction projects.

28 Forest Service does not have this authority.

29 Activation of Contingency Resources

30 In the event contingency resources are activated, sending units should respond
31 and support the requesting agency immediately.

32 Non-fire Fuels Management Activities

33 For policy, guidance, and standards for implementation of non-fire fuel
34 reduction treatments (e.g., mechanical, biological, chemical), refer to agency-
35 specific policy and direction.