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:


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.

- NPS – Refer to RM 18.
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FS – Refer to FSM 5140.


Reporting Fuels Management Accomplishments

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

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

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

Reporting Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM)

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

BLM – Refer to MS-9214 and H-9214-1.

NPS – Refer to RM 18 and Documenting Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program Treatment Effectiveness Memo, 10/09/2012.

FWS – Refer to Fish and Wildlife Service Fire Management Reporting Requirements and Timelines Memo found on the FWS SharePoint site. https://fishnet.fws.doi.net/regions/9/nwrs/fire/Shared%20Documents/Memo's%20From%20The%20Branch/FY17/FY%202017%20FMIS%20NFPORS%20Fuels%20 Reporting%20Requirements%208.10.17.pdf.

FS – Refer to FSM 5140.

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

Reporting Planned Fuels Treatments Burned in a Wildfire

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

- The area burned was in a pre-existing NFPORS treatment unit;
- The accomplishment has been approved from the Regional and/or National level;
• NEPA is complete; and
• The planned objectives were met.
  ○ **BLM** – Offices will report (using instructions from Attachment 1 of IM FA-2017-034) all acres burned in a naturally-caused wildfire (accomplishments of resource objectives for known human-caused fires will not be reported) that accomplish resource objectives in the HFR module of NFPORS when:
    ▪ An interdisciplinary team approach is used to determine the specific burned acres where LUP resource objectives were met by wildfire; and
    ▪ An Agency Administrator approves the determination and notifies the State Fuels Lead/Specialist. Together they ensure appropriate reporting in NFPORS.
  ○ **FS** – Acres burned from an unplanned natural ignition may be reported as “Fire Use” accomplishment if the resulting fire effects meet objectives from the Land and Resource Management Plan or project-specific NEPA decision document. Human-caused wildfires may not be counted as accomplishment toward target regardless of the outcome. See Reporting of Wildfire Acres That Meet Resource Management Objectives section below for additional information.

### Reporting of Wildfire Acres That Meet Resource Management Objectives

Acres burned in a wildfire that achieve resource management objectives as defined in Land and Resource Management Plans/Fire Management Plans (LRMP/FMP) will be reported in the NFPORS Non-National Fire Plan (Non-NFP) module. While strategies for managing individual wildfires are established through the fire management decision process, the identification of acres which achieved LRMP/FMP objectives should be made after the fire is declared out, regardless of the fire management objective, strategy or tactic used (e.g., even though a wildfire strategy may be full suppression, the effects of a wildfire on resources may be beneficial). The determination of benefit must be based on land management objectives which are affected by fire severity, intensity, and other fire impacts. Post-fire impact, such as invasion of exotic species and the need for rehabilitation, should be considered in this determination. At a minimum, acres reported in the Non-NFP module must meet the following criteria:

• The LRMP/FMP supports attainment of resource benefit through use of fire;
• An interdisciplinary approach is used to determine whether the LRMP/FMP objectives were met; and
• Line manager approves the determination.

○ **FS** – Direction for reporting accomplishments from unplanned ignitions is found in the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Treatments Tracking and Accomplishments Reporting Requirements document posted on the FACTS support page at https://fsweb.ficel.wo.fs.fed.us/frs/facts/support/documents/index.shtml.

### Prescribed Fire During Preparedness Levels 4 and 5

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

- **BLM** – The State Director or designee will approve prescribed fire at National or Geographic Area Preparedness Level 4 or 5.

- **NPS** – At National Preparedness Level 4 or 5, concurrence from NPS Branch of Fire Management must be obtained prior to implementing prescribed fires. At Geographic Area Preparedness Level 4 or 5, NPS Regional Fire Management concurrence must be obtained prior to implementing prescribed fires.

- **FWS** – During Geographic Area Preparedness Level 4 or 5, written concurrence from RFMC is required prior to ignition. During National Preparedness Level 5, concurrence from Headquarters, Branch of Fire Management must be obtained prior to implementing prescribed fires. Refer to FMH, Chapter 17 for additional information.

- **FS** – The Regional Forester will approve or disapprove new prescribed fires or continue existing prescribed fire at National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5 or if National Fire Danger Rating System forecasted adjective rating is “Extreme” for the county that the prescribed fire is located or any adjacent county. Reference FSM Interim Directive WO-ID-5140-2017-1.

- **BIA** – At National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5, prescribed fire (Rx) applications can be initiated or continued if the proposed action is approved by an agency at the Regional level. The approval must be based on an assessment of risk, impacts of the proposed actions on Area resources and activities, and include feedback from the GMAC. At National Preparedness Level 5, for Rx applications to be initiated or continued that require additional support of resources from outside the local unit or require resource ordering of an IMT, the Regional Fuels Specialist must prepare a written justification to request permission to implement a new
prescribed fire and submit to the BIA Director of Fuels Management. A National MAC representative will assess risk and impacts of the proposed action(s) and present to NMAC for review prior to proceeding. The final decision to implement resides with the implementing agency.

**Federal Agencies Assistance**


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

- **FS** – USFS units will make every attempt to establish agreements in advance when planning to utilize resources from cooperating agencies to implement or respond as contingency resources for prescribed fire. However, for prescribed fire activities and exigent circumstances, where an agreement was not executed and funds were not obligated prior to commencing work, a ratification may not be necessary if an approved agreement is executed and funds obligated on I-web within 30 calendar days of the start of work. See FSH 1509.11 Chapter 10, Section 15.81.


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

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

**Non-NWCG Agency Personnel Use on Prescribed Fire**

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

**Use of Contractors for Prescribed Fire Implementation**

Agencies can contract to conduct all or part of the planning and implementation of prescribed fire operations and/or all or part of mechanical treatments for fuels management projects. Contractors must meet PMS 310-1 qualification requirements and agency standards for specific skill positions for prescribed fire operations.
If a contractor is actively involved in igniting, holding, or mopping up an agency prescribed fire, a Contracting Officer’s Authorized Representative (COR) or Project Inspector (PI) will be on site (exceptions can be made for late stage mop up and patrol) to ensure that the prescribed fire objectives are being met and that the terms of the contract are adhered to. The Agency Administrator and/or FMO will determine the qualifications required for the agency representative (COR or PI).

- **BLM** – Refer to H-9214-1, Chapter 5-3, Contractor and Cooperator Prescribed Fire Plan Development and Implementation.
- **FS** – Contractors must meet requirements for any specific skill positions for prescribed fire operations as described in PMS 310-1 or FSH 5109.17 for positions not found in the PMS 310-1 (e.g., RXB3). Reference FSM 5140.

**Use of AD Pay Plan for Prescribed Fire**

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

- **FS** – Forest Service does not have this authority.

**Activation of Contingency Resources**

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

**Non-fire Fuels Management Activities**

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