



Wildland Fire Key Messages

The National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Program commits to safety, science and stewardship each and every day.

- **Safety** is our core value.
 1. Safety of firefighters and the public is the number one priority of all NPS wildland fire management activities.
 2. The NPS approach is designed to increase safety for firefighters through less exposure on the fireline, increase effective use of available resources, and help reduce the hazardous accumulation of overgrown vegetation.
 3. We all have a hand in a safe fire season.
- The NPS works with interagency partners and neighboring communities to preserve natural and cultural resources, restore the land to more natural conditions, and maintain already healthy ecosystems.
 1. The fire management program balances the risks and benefits of wildland fire in the national parks. Communicating the need for fire prevention, suppression and for **using fire as a tool to protect people, communities and values at risk** is a requirement for effective wildland fire and land management.
 2. Changing environmental conditions and increasing numbers of large fires require more flexibility and use of a wider variety of responses, enabling the service to increase public and firefighter safety and effectiveness.
- **Fire is a management tool** used to accomplish specific objectives in a plan such as removal of excess vegetation or stimulating plant growth and regeneration.
 1. It is necessary to have the right response at the right time for the right reasons.
 2. **Naturally occurring fires**, such as those caused by lightning, are either suppressed or are closely monitored in a specific area, based on the fire management plan for the area.
 3. Sometimes it may be necessary and/or beneficial for land managers to ignite fires in a closely monitored and confined area to reduce hazardous fuel loads near developed areas, manage landscapes, and achieve ecological benefits. These fires are referred to as "prescribed fires."
 4. A fire program also may include non-fire treatments in situations where prescribed fire is not feasible or to prepare the land before natural or prescribed fire can be applied safely and effectively.

Many healthy ecosystems depend on wildland fire as a natural process.

- Fire has helped shape wildlands for thousands of years and is important for the survival of many plants and animals.
 1. Fire reduces accumulation of vegetation that can inhibit new plant growth.
 2. Some plants and animals are fire adapted. Periodic fire stimulates growth, reproduction of plants, and provides wildlife habitat.
 3. Excess vegetation and lack of fire in some areas is threatening plant and animal life.
- Fire behaves differently throughout the country.
 1. Every wildfire season is different due to annual and/or seasonal variations. There is not a single one-size-fits-all answer.
 2. In addition to fuels (vegetation), fire behavior is affected by weather and terrain.
 3. Virtually all vegetation types in the United States can experience wildland fire. Wildfire happens, be ready.

Science tells the story: wildfire seasons are changing because of recent, rapid changes in climate.

- Social and cultural approaches to wildland fire over the past century have focused on preventing and suppressing the majority of wildfires. This has led to a dangerous build-up of vegetation in our wildlands.
- The NPS Wildland Fire Management Program is grounded in science. We continue to learn and now have a more comprehensive understanding of the essential role fire plays in our environment.
- When paired with the right terrain and weather conditions, dense build-up of vegetation leads to fires that burn hotter, last longer, and spread faster. As a result, these fires become difficult to manage and can threaten areas of residential development and other values vulnerable to wildfire.
- On the issue of climate change: unique events are happening in national parks. For example (in your unit or area).

The National Park Service works with neighbors and other partners to balance the risks and benefits of wildland fire in an ever-changing environment.

- The NPS is working with other agencies, tribes, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), local fire departments, and communities to understand and accept what it means to live in a fire-prone area and to realize the benefits of managing fire in the wildlands while protecting lives and resources.
 1. The NPS and other agencies and tribes are managing public and tribal lands through overarching fire management plans and programs.
 2. The NPS and other agencies and tribes also are working with local governments and property owners to make their land and property more defensible against wildfire.
- People who live, work, and play in fire-prone lands assume a certain level of risk and responsibility due to the condition of the surrounding environment.
 1. People can live with fire, if aware and actions are taken to be prepared for local fire conditions.
 - a. Before a fire starts, contact your local park or other local, state, or federal agencies, or tribal fire management organization to determine your community's fire conditions and learn tips to reduce the community's fire vulnerability.
 - b. The more populated and closer a community is to fire-prone areas, the greater the need for proactive fire management.
 2. Smoke from prescribed fire is a sign that steps are being taken to reduce risks and realize benefits of fire. The more the NPS and other land management agencies can plan and manage fire, the more we can reduce smoke impacts.
- Fire burns where conditions are right. Fire does not acknowledge jurisdictional boundaries of federal, state, and local agencies; tribes; or private landowners.