

## Chapter 17

### Fuels Management

#### Introduction

The purpose of the fuels management 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 fire management 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 include:

- 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 (L/RMP);
- All projects/treatments will have plans that contain measurable objectives;
- All projects/treatments will comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Clean Air Act 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.
- Consider the use of basic smoke management practices (BSMPs) when planning and implementing prescribed fires.

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

- 1 • **BLM** – *Reference BLM Fuels Management and Community Assistance*
- 2 *Manual and Handbook 9214-1.*
- 3 • **NPS** – *Refer to RM 18.*
- 4 • **FWS** – *Refer to Fire Management Handbook, chapter 17.*
- 5 • **FS** – *Refer to FSM 5140.*
- 6 • **BIA** – *Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Management Business Rules,*
- 7 *July 2008.*

### 8 **Reporting Fuels Management Accomplishments**

9 The Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFR) module of the National Fire Plan  
 10 Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) is the national system for  
 11 submitting proposed projects for approval, tracking accomplishments of the  
 12 program, reporting performance, measuring accomplishments, and  
 13 accountability for all agencies in the DOI.

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

18 Information on FACTS can be found at <https://fsweb.nrm.fs.fed.us/>. Acres  
 19 treated through FS funded State fire assistance grants are recorded directly in  
 20 NFPORS.

### 21 **Reporting Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring**

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

- 26 • **BLM** – *Refer to MS-9214 and H-9214-1.*
- 27 • **NPS** – *Refer to RM 18 and Documenting Hazardous Fuels Reduction*  
 28 *Program Treatment Effectiveness Memorandum, 10/09/2012.*
- 29 • **FWS** – *Refer to Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Fire Management*  
 30 *Reporting Requirements and Timelines Memorandum, FMB202015 -*  
 31 *Establishment of a Fuels Management Three-Year Program of Work.*
- 32 • **FS** – *Refer to FSM 5140.*
- 33 • **BIA** – *Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Fuels Treatment*  
 34 *Effectiveness Final Guidance Memorandum, 06/05/2013.*

### 35 **Reporting Planned Fuels Treatments Burned in a Wildfire**

- 36 • **BLM** – *BLM offices will report all acres burned in a naturally caused*  
 37 *wildfire that accomplish resource objectives in the HFR module of*  
 38 *NFPORS as “fire use” when:*
  - 39 ○ *An interdisciplinary team approach is used to determine the specific*  
 40 *burned acres where land use plan resource objectives were met by*  
 41 *wildfire; and*

- 1     ○ *An agency administrator approves the determination and notifies the*
- 2       *State fuels lead/specialist. Together they ensure appropriate reporting*
- 3       *in NFPORS.*
- 4     *See instructions in the BLM Fuels Management and Community Assistance*
- 5     *Handbook, H-9214-1. Note that accomplishments of resource objectives*
- 6     *from known human-caused fires will not be reported.*
- 7     ● **NPS/FWS** – *Acres burned in a wildfire may only be reported in the*
- 8       *NFPORS HFR module as “fire use” if all the following conditions are met:*
  - 9       ○ *The area burned was in a preexisting NFPORS treatment unit;*
  - 10      ○ *The accomplishment has been approved from the regional and/or*
  - 11       *national level;*
  - 12      ○ *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is complete; and*
  - 13      ○ *The planned objectives were met.*
- 14    ● **FS** – *Acres burned from an unplanned natural ignition may be reported as*
- 15       *“fire use” accomplishment if the resulting fire effects meet objectives from*
- 16       *the L/RMP or project-specific NEPA decision document. Human-caused*
- 17       *wildfires may not be counted as accomplishment toward target regardless*
- 18       *of the outcome. See “Reporting of Wildfire Acres That Meet Resource*
- 19       *Management Objectives” section below for additional information.*
- 20    ● **BIA** – *Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Management Business Rules,*
- 21       *July 2008, page 36.*

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

- 23 Acres burned in a wildfire that achieve resource management objectives as
- 24 defined in L/RMPs and fire management plans (FMP) will be reported in the
- 25 NFPORS Non-National Fire Plan (Non-NFP) module. While strategies for
- 26 managing individual wildfires are established through the fire management
- 27 decision process, the identification of acres which achieved L/RMP/FMP
- 28 objectives should be made after the fire is declared out, regardless of the fire
- 29 management objective, strategy, or tactic used (e.g., even though a wildfire
- 30 strategy may be full suppression, the effects of a wildfire on resources may be
- 31 beneficial). The determination of benefit must be based on land management
- 32 objectives which are affected by fire severity, intensity, and other fire impacts.
- 33 Post-fire impact, such as invasion of exotic species and the need for
- 34 rehabilitation, should be considered in this determination. At a minimum, acres
- 35 reported in the Non-NFP module must meet the following criteria:
- 36    ● The L/RMP/FMP supports attainment of resource benefit through use of
  - 37       fire;
  - 38    ● An interdisciplinary approach is used to determine whether the
  - 39       L/RMP/FMP objectives were met; and
  - 40    ● Line manager approves the determination.
  - 41      ○ **BLM** – *Reporting will take place in the HFR module in NFPORS, not*
  - 42       *in the NFPORS Non-National Fire Plan module. Reference the BLM*
  - 43       *Fuels Management and Community Assistance Handbook H-9214-1.*

- 1 ○ **FWS** – Reporting will take place in FMIS, not in the NFPORS Non-
- 2 NFP module. Reference the FMIS User Guide.
- 3 ○ **FS** – Direction for reporting accomplishments from unplanned
- 4 ignitions is found in the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Treatments
- 5 Tracking and Accomplishments Reporting Requirements document
- 6 posted on the FACTS support page at
- 7 <https://fsweb.nrm.fs.fed.us/support/docs.php?appname=facts>.

## 8 Prescribed Fire During Preparedness Levels 4 and 5

- 9 Approval at the regional or state office level is required prior to ignition of  
 10 prescribed fires at national preparedness levels 4 and 5. Approving officials  
 11 should consider relative risks and opportunities as well as availability of local  
 12 resources to implement without the need for additional outside resources that  
 13 could add additional strain on resource availability nationally. To limit the  
 14 potential for mixed messages when at Geographic Area Coordination Center  
 15 (GACC) or national preparedness levels 4 and 5, agencies should coordinate  
 16 information on planned implementation of prescribed fires with interagency  
 17 partners at the local, Geographic Area Multi-agency Coordinating Group  
 18 (GMAC) and National Multi-agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) levels.
- 19 • **BLM** – The state director or designee will approve prescribed fire at  
 20 national or geographic area preparedness level 4 or 5.
  - 21 • **NPS** – At geographic area preparedness level 4 or 5, written concurrence  
 22 from NPS regional fire management is required prior to implementing  
 23 prescribed fires. At national preparedness level 4 or 5, NPS regional fire  
 24 management and NPS Chief, Branch of Wildland Fire written  
 25 concurrence is required prior to implementing prescribed fires. A  
 26 notification to the regional director is required in both regional and  
 27 national preparedness level scenarios and is the responsibility of the NPS  
 28 regional fire management staff. Email is an acceptable method to satisfy  
 29 concurrence requirements.
  - 30 • **FWS** – During geographic area preparedness level 4 and 5, and national  
 31 preparedness level 4, written concurrence from regional fire management  
 32 must be obtained prior to implementing a prescribed fire. During national  
 33 preparedness level 5, written concurrence from regional fire management  
 34 and the Branch of Fire Management must be obtained prior to  
 35 implementing a prescribed fire. Refer to FMH, chapter 17 for additional  
 36 information.
  - 37 • **FS** – The regional forester will approve or disapprove new prescribed fires  
 38 or continue existing prescribed fire at national preparedness levels 4 and 5  
 39 or if National Fire Danger Rating System forecasted adjective rating is  
 40 “extreme” for the county that the prescribed fire is located or any adjacent  
 41 county. Reference FSM 5140.
  - 42 • **BIA** – At national preparedness levels 4 and 5, prescribed fire applications  
 43 can be initiated or continued if the proposed action is approved by an  
 44 agency at the regional level. The approval must be based on an assessment

1 of risk, impacts of the proposed actions on Area resources and activities  
2 and include feedback from the GMAC. At national preparedness level 5, for  
3 prescribed fire applications to be initiated or continued that require  
4 additional support of resources from outside the local unit or require  
5 resource ordering of an IMT, the regional fuels specialist must prepare a  
6 written justification to request permission to implement a new prescribed  
7 fire and submit to the BIA Director of Fuels Management. An NMAC  
8 representative will assess risk and impacts of the proposed action(s) and  
9 present to NMAC for review prior to proceeding. The final decision to  
10 implement resides with the implementing agency.

#### 11 **Federal Agencies Assistance**

12 Reference section VI of the *Interagency Agreement for Wildland Fire*  
13 *Management among the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs,*  
14 *National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States*  
15 *Department of The Interior, and the Forest Service of the United States*  
16 *Department of Agriculture, effective 2016-2021.*

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

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

#### 31 **Hazard Pay/Environmental Differential for Prescribed Fire** 32 **Implementation**

33 Hazard pay will not be paid for any prescribed fire. Under certain circumstances,  
34 (e.g., low-level flight operations), hazard pay, or environmental differential may  
35 be warranted. Offices should contact their servicing personnel office with  
36 specific questions.

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

38 For information regarding use of non-National Wildfire Coordinating Group  
39 (NWCG) agency personnel on prescribed fires, see chapter 13.

## 1 Use of Contractors for Prescribed Fire Implementation

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

7 If a contractor is actively involved in igniting, holding, or mopping up an agency  
8 prescribed fire, a contracting officer's authorized representative (COR) or  
9 project inspector (PI) will be on site (exceptions can be made for late stage mop  
10 up and patrol) to ensure that the prescribed fire objectives are being met and that  
11 the terms of the contract are adhered to. The agency administrator and/or fire  
12 management officer (FMO) will determine the qualifications required for the  
13 agency representative (COR or PI).

- 14 • **BLM** – Refer to H-9214-1, chapter 5-3, Contractor and Cooperator  
15 Prescribed Fire Plan Development and Implementation.
- 16 • **FWS** – Refer to Fire Management Handbook, Chapter 17, and 645 FW 1  
17 for fuels projects funded by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and  
18 Coastal Program.
- 19 • **FS** – Contractors must meet requirements for any specific skill positions for  
20 prescribed fire operations as described in PMS 310-1 or FSH 5109.17 for  
21 positions not found in the PMS 310-1 (e.g., RXB3). Reference FSM 5140.
- 22 • **BIA** – Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Management Business Rules,  
23 July 2008, page 22.

## 24 Use of Administratively Determined Pay Plan for Prescribed Fire

25 Administratively Determined workers may be used in support of prescribed fire  
26 under specific circumstances. Refer to the appropriate DOI or FS  
27 Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan for Emergency Workers (Casuals)  
28 for information regarding the use of emergency workers for prescribed fire.  
29 Administratively Determined pay plans do not allow for use of Casuals for  
30 mechanical or chemical treatment fuels reduction projects.

## 31 Activation of Contingency Resources

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

## 34 Non-Fire Fuels Management Activities

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