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:

- **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.
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 DOI.

FS fuels management accomplishments are entered into the FS 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.nrm.fs.fed.us/. Acres treated through FS funded State fire assistance grants are recorded directly in NFPORS.

Reporting Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring

Anytime a wildfire starts in or interacts with a fuel treatment area, policy requires that all agencies 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.

Reporting Planned Fuels Treatments Burned in a Wildfire

- **BLM** – BLM offices will report all acres burned in a naturally caused wildfire that accomplish resource objectives in the HFR module of NFPORS as “fire use” when:
  - An interdisciplinary team approach is used to determine the specific burned acres where land use plan 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.

See instructions in the BLM Fuels Management and Community Assistance Handbook, H-9214-1. Note that accomplishments of resource objectives from known human-caused fires will not be reported.

- **NPS/FWS** – Acres burned in a wildfire may only be reported in the NFPORS HFR module as “fire use” if all the following conditions are met:
  - The area burned was in a preexisting NFPORS treatment unit;
  - The accomplishment has been approved from the regional and/or national level;
  - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is complete; and
  - The planned objectives were met.

- **FS** – Acres burned from an unplanned natural ignition may be reported as “fire use” accomplishment if the resulting fire effects meet objectives from the L/RMP 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 L/RMPs and fire management plans (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 L/RMP/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 L/RMP/FMP supports attainment of resource benefit through use of fire;
- An interdisciplinary approach is used to determine whether the L/RMP/FMP objectives were met; and
- Line manager approves the determination.
  - **BLM** – Reporting will take place in the HFR module in NFPORS, not in the NPORS Non-National Fire Plan module. Reference the BLM Fuels Management and Community Assistance Handbook H-9214-1.
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 Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) or national preparedness levels 4 and 5, agencies should coordinate information on planned implementation of prescribed fires with interagency partners at the local, Geographic Area Multi-agency Coordinating Group (GMAC) and National Multi-agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) levels.

- **BLM** – The state director or designee will approve prescribed fire at national or geographic area preparedness level 4 or 5.

- **NPS** – At geographic area preparedness level 4 or 5, written concurrence from NPS regional fire management is required prior to implementing prescribed fires. At national preparedness level 4 or 5, NPS regional fire management and NPS Chief, Branch of Wildland Fire written concurrence is required prior to implementing prescribed fires. A notification to the regional director is required in both regional and national preparedness level scenarios and is the responsibility of the NPS regional fire management staff. Email is an acceptable method to satisfy concurrence requirements.

- **FWS** – During geographic area preparedness level 4 and 5, and national preparedness level 4, written concurrence from regional fire management must be obtained prior to implementing a prescribed fire. During national preparedness level 5, written concurrence from regional fire management and the Branch of Fire Management must be obtained prior to implementing a prescribed fire. 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 5140.

- **BIA** – At national preparedness levels 4 and 5, prescribed fire 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 prescribed fire 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. An NMAC 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**

Hazard pay will not be paid for any prescribed fire. Under certain circumstances, (e.g., 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-National Wildfire Coordinating Group (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 fire management officer (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.
- **FWS** – Refer to Fire Management Handbook, Chapter 17, and 645 FW 1 for fuels projects funded by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Coastal Program.
- **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 Administratively Determined Pay Plan for Prescribed Fire

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

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.