



NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

National Interagency Fire Center
3833 S. Development Avenue
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MEMORANDUM

Reference: NWCG#024-2010

To: NWCG Committee Chairs and Geographic Area Coordinating Group (GACG)

From: NWCG Chair *Wilbur Raage*

Date: April 30, 2010

Subject: Terminology Updates Resulting from Release of the *Guidance for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2009)*

The revised Implementation Guidance for Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy brought a paradigm shift in our response to federal wildfires. In order to effectively communicate this response to our internal and external audiences, we need to be consistent in our language. Consistency in terminology is essential for greater understanding by units and teams managing fires, as well as for the interested public. Terminology should reflect the use in the *Guidance for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2009)* and replace the outdated terminology in the NWCG Glossary.

To help alleviate confusion in the field, with our cooperators and partners, and with the public, those terms that changed or were deemed obsolete are listed in Attachment A of this memorandum. The attachment provides new definitions for terms whose meaning have changed, the intent associated with the change, as well as background reasoning associated with implementing each change. Agencies will need to revise or update their planning documents (Fire Management Plans and potentially Land Management Plans) to reflect the revised fire policy implementation guidance and terminology.

As leaders within the wildland fire program, it is critical that we apply the following key points about the terminology updates throughout our respective agencies:

- Use of existing terms within agency policies, guidance, plans, publications, brochures, exhibits, et cetera is acceptable. These documents still have good information and requests for immediate updates may be unnecessary; rather wait until current stock is exhausted and/or revision is planned. Recognize the number of materials in existence across the federal and state arena is vast and will take time and funding to replace.

- For both our internal and external audiences, we need to keep our terminology simple and continue to focus on telling our story versus getting caught up in explaining the difference between unplanned and planned ignitions and between wildfires and prescribed fires. The simplest way to approach our story for wildland fire is to describe our actions by telling our cooperators, regulators, and the public what we are doing operationally, why we are taking these actions, and how these actions affect firefighters, the public and the social, ecological, and economic communities.
- It is critical that local, regional, and national offices start or continue conversations with our partners, *especially at the local level*, whether they are cooperators, regulators or the public, before, during, and after any fire event to increase the understanding and our success with full implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and the terminology updates that are occurring. It is imperative that prompt notification to neighboring agencies, jurisdictions, and other key partners occurs when there is any potential for concern or impact about a pending or potential fire incident.

NWCG will issue a follow-up memorandum addressing terminology use in the *Guidance for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2009)* for external audiences focusing on communicating with cooperators, regulators, and the public.

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Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Attachment A: Terminology Updates (crosswalk for terms found in policy)

cc: NWCG Executive Board