



NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

National Interagency Fire Center
3833 S. Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

MEMORANDUM

Reference: NWCG#001-2009

To: NWCG Executive Board

From: NWCG Chair *Brian McManis*

Date: January 7, 2009

Subject: Update on the Modifications to the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

Federal Wildland Fire Policy, adopted in 1995, stated that “Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, and across agency boundaries. Response to wildland fire is based on ecological, social, and legal consequences of fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs and the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources, and values to be protected dictate the appropriate response to fire.” Federal land management agencies have operated within this policy since its adoption, and a review conducted in 2001 affirmed that the policy was sound. Operational clarification and continuing guidance supporting implementation of this policy was issued in 2003.

As a result of the 2008 field test and review, Federal wildland fire leadership determined that the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Policy remains sound. They also determined that revising the 2003 Implementation Guidance would reduce confusion and provide a more flexible approach to wildland fire management that promotes the goal of managing fire to meet safety, protection, and natural resource management goals. Initial action on human-caused wildfire will continue to suppress the fire at the lowest cost with the fewest negative consequences with respect to firefighter and public safety.

Revised policy implementation guidance will move to two kinds of wildland fire: planned ignitions (prescribed fire), and unplanned ignitions (wildfire) by revising the “Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy” and rescinding the “3 Kinds of Wildland Fire” Memorandum (2003). The revision allows fire managers to manage a fire for multiple objectives and increase managers’ flexibility to respond to changing

incident conditions and firefighting capability while strengthening strategic and tactical decision implementation supporting public safety and resource management objectives.

A new wildfire analysis and decision process, the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS), is being developed to improve decision documentation, risk assessment/decision support, and operational implementation. This system will replace the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA), Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP), Long-Term Implementation Plan (LTIP), and Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) and enhance managers' ability to analyze fire conditions and develop risk informed strategies and tactics.

The revised policy implementation guidelines will be finalized by early February, 2009. Modification of National Wildfire Coordinating Group program coordination and standards and bureau and agency manuals and direction is proceeding concurrently to support field implementation of the revised guidance. Agencies and Bureaus will define unit requirements and a schedule for full implementation to accommodate differing capabilities. To the extent possible, roll out will be coordinated among adjoining units to limit confusion. This provides agencies the most opportunities and greatest flexibility to build capacity and understanding with internal staff and external audiences, coordinate with state and local air quality regulators, and revise annual operating plans with cooperating state and local fire management agencies.

Please send questions or comments to fire_help@fs.fed.us with "Fire Policy" as the Subject.

Contacts:

Richard Bahr, Co-Chair AMR Task Group
National Park Service
Branch of Wildland Fire
Fire Science & Ecology Program Leader
E-mail: dick_bahr@nps.gov
(208) 387-5217

Rich Lasko, Co-Chair AMR Task Group
USDA – Forest Service
Fire & Aviation Management
Assistant Director Fuels & Fire Ecology
E-mail: rlasko@fs.fed.us
(202) 205-0888