



WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Briefing Paper

Topic: Modifying Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy

Goal: Allow for a full spectrum of fire management response on federal lands from aggressive suppression to passive management commensurate with the current and predicted risk, values to be protected, and land management objectives.

Background: In November 2006, the USDA OIG found that the Forest Service could strengthen the cost-effectiveness of its fire fighting without sacrificing safety by increasing wildland fire use to reduce forest vegetation and underbrush that may fuel future fires. Current policies put in place by Bureau Directors and Forest Service Chief in 2003 may unnecessarily restrict the application of wildland fire use and full spectrum of suppression response commensurate with risk, values to be protected, and land management objectives.

A task group has been assigned by the NWCG to develop recommendations and timeframes for a phased modification of the *Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003)*. Federal Agency Heads, after consultation with partners, will agree on policy modifications for discussion and final decision at the June WFLC meeting.

Phase 1 (Time frame: 4 months, June WFLC Meeting)

Objective: Issue new guidance following the June WFLC meeting so field units may implement once requirements (planning, training, data assessment, communication, etc.) are met.

Decisions are needed on following operational statements from the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy:

1. Only one management objective will be applied to a wildland fire. Wildland fires will either be managed for resource benefits or suppressed. A wildland fire cannot be managed for both objectives concurrently. If two wildland fires converge, they will be managed as a single wildland fire.
 - **Decision Needed:** Modify to permit any wildland fire or any combined wildland fires to be managed for one or more objectives based on the Land/Resource Management Plan objectives.
2. Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives.
 - **Decision Needed:** Modify to permit any wildland fire or any combined wildland fire to be managed for one or more objectives based on the Land/Resource Management Plan

objectives as an event moves across the landscape and fuels and weather conditions change.

3. The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis process is used to determine and document the suppression strategy from the full range of responses available for suppression operations. Suppression strategies are designed to meet the policy objectives of suppression.
 - **Decision Needed:** Modify to permit migration from WFSA to Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) that examines the full range of responses in single system.
4. Wildland fire use is the result of a natural event. The Land/Resource Management Plan, or the Fire Management Plan, will identify areas where the strategy of wildland fire use is suitable. The Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is the tool that examines the available response strategies to determine if a fire is being considered for wildland fire use.
 - **Decision Needed:** Modify to permit migration from WFIP to Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) that examines the full range of responses in single system.
5. When a prescribed fire or a fire designated for wildland fire use is no longer achieving the intended resource management objectives and contingency or mitigation actions have failed, the fire will be declared a wildfire. Once a wildfire, it cannot be returned to a prescribed fire or wildland fire use status.
 - **Decision Needed:** Change to permit reassessment of current considerations and managed as any other wildfire (see item 1 & 2).

Phase 2 (Time frame: 12-18 months after Phase 1 completion)

Expands the knowledge and understanding of the implementation and assessment process and examine the feasibility of human caused ignitions being appropriate to achieve resource benefits.

Phase 3 (Time frame: 12-18 months after Phase 2 completion)

Implement the findings of the humans caused ignitions feasibility study.

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