



# Fire Executive Council

## Briefing Paper

**Date:** 6/13/2008

**Prepared by:** AMR Task Group

### **Topic:** Modifying Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy

**Goal:** Implement the Revised Direction to the existing Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. (WFLC Memorandum, May 2, 2008)

**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 establish a unified and cohesive definition and plan of action for implementation of Appropriate Management Response in federal wildland fire management. Deliverable #3 for the task group was to “Review the supplemental guidance to Federal Wildland Fire Policy and determine: a.) What needs to be changed, b.) Advantage of the change, c.) Consequences of the change, and d.) required actions to implement the change.

On March 24, 2008, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council agreed on modifying the guidance to the “Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2004),” contingent upon favorable counsel review. The proposed modifications or “revised direction” will be tested in a limited number of field units this summer and then incorporated into revised “Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy” that will be issued in November 2008.

The task group has developed recommendations and timeframes for a phased modification of the *Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003)*. These recommendations are broken down into the following 3 phases.

### **Implementation Strategy:**

#### **Phase 1 (Time frame: June – November 6 months)**

**Objective:** Revise operational statements from the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003), and develop new guidance for the implementation of revised direction by November of 2008.

**Step 1:** Propose modifications to “Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003).” (Done – WFLC Memo 5/12/2008)

**Step 2:** Select prototype units to test proposed modifications this summer under interim guidance that will be approved by FEC at their June 13 meeting. Approval of pilot units for the testing of Modified Federal Fire Policy Implementation will reside with the applicable agency. Proposed test units are described by Geographic Area and listed below:

**Northwest**

USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region 6: Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

**Northern Rockies**

USDA-Forest Service, Northern Rockies Region 1: Bitterroot National Forest and Lolo National Forest – (Wildland Fire Decision Support System prototype)

DOI-National Park Service, Intermountain Region: Yellowstone National Park

DOI-Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northwest Region: Flathead Agency

**Northern California**

USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region 5: Klamath National Forest

**Southern California**

USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region 5: Sequoia National Forest (Wildland Fire Decision Support System prototype)

DOI-National Park Service, Pacific West Region: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (Wildland Fire Decision Support System prototype)

**Eastern Great Basin**

USDA-Forest Service, Intermountain Region 4: Payette National Forest (Wildland Fire Decision Support System prototype)

DOI-National Park Service, Intermountain Region: Grand Teton National Park and John D. Rockefeller Memorial Parkway

**Rocky Mountain**

USDA-Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region 2: Upper Colorado River Fire Management Zone (includes White River National Forest and Grand Valley Ranger District of the Grand Mesa Uncompahgre Gunnison National Forest) (Wildland Fire Decision Support System prototype)

DOI-Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office: Grand Junction Field Office and Glenwood Springs Field Office, Northwest Colorado Fire Management Area (Craig)

DOI-US Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain-Prairie Region: Brown's Park National Wildlife Refuge

DOI-National Park Service, Intermountain Region: Colorado National Monument and Dinosaur National Monument (Wildland Fire Decision Support System prototype)

**Southwest**

USDA-Forest Service, Southwest Region 3: Gila National Forest (Wildland Fire Decision Support System prototype), and Kaibab National Forest

DOI-National Park Service, Intermountain Region: Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument and Grand Canyon National Park

## **Southern**

DOI-National Park Service, Southeastern Region: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

**Alaska** (Tanana Fire Management Zone) (Wildland Fire Decision Support System prototype)  
DOI-Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Fire Service and Fairbanks District Office  
DOI-US Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Regional Office: Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge,  
Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge, and Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge  
DOI-National Park Service, Alaska Region: Denali National Park  
DOI - Bureau of Indian Affairs - Alaska Region, Tanana Chiefs Conference and Tozitna  
Corporation are included for Native **allotment** land - not corporation land<sup>1</sup>  
State of Alaska

**Step 3:** National Office coordination with prototype areas to facilitate implementation of field test. Initial coordination sessions will be completed by June 27. The objective is to clarify interim guidance and uncover issues for use this summer. A Communications strategy is under review and will be available by June 20. A sample of initial issues discussed includes:

- ESR/BAER applicability
- Use of accounting codes
- Reporting acres burned “protection” vs. “benefit”? (OMB/GAO passback issue).
- Smoke emission from the air quality regulators perspective
- Fireline qualifications

**Step 4:** Monitoring pilot implementation and applying adaptive learning during the test phase. Initial coordination sessions with field units are developing schedules for coordination among test units and the National Offices. “Lessons Learned” venue will be conducted in September to complete information gathering from field tests. Report from the 2008 field trial will be completed by October 7, 2008.

Challenge here is the communication between the units as things are tried and what works and what fails and how these are documented and captured or the final rollout.

**Step 5:** Finalize guidance and issue “Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy” by November 2008.

## **Phase 2: (Time frame: 5 months after Phase 1 completion)**

Consider and potentially adopt a modification to federal wildland fire policy which differentiates on the planned or unplanned nature of the fire event and results in only two types of fire, wildfire

---

<sup>1</sup> There are also 2 Regional Native Corporations and 9 Village Native Corporations (total land area larger than any of the federal partners). These are the entities that are the most misunderstood in terms of our roles and responsibilities. They are **NOT** Indian Trust lands and are in essence private land, which under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act are to, “...receive wildland fire protection services from the United States at no cost.” This is important to understand and something that speaks to role Alaska Fire Service has.

and prescribed fire. Develop and implement training and communication strategy. Begin examination of feasibility of allowing unauthorized human ignitions to achieve resource objectives.

**Phase 3 (Time frame: 12-18 months after Phase 2 completion)** Implement the findings of the humans caused ignitions feasibility study.

**AMR Task Group 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](mailto: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](mailto:rlasko@fs.fed.us)  
(202) 205-0888